Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Equality in Schools: Teacher Perspectives, Changes and Supports

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Acknowledgments

Whilst the writing of thesis is very much an individual endeavour, the finished product very much reflects the insights of a range of friends, family and colleagues, whether they are aware of their influence or not. I would like to take this opportunity to thank several people from my life, without whom the production of this work would not have been possible.

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Abstract

Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Equality in Schools: Teacher Perspectives, Changes and Supports

This thesis has interrogated the relationship between teachers, advocacy and the inequality of LGBTIQ students in Australian schools. Despite improvements in Australian schools, educational environments remain profoundly unequal for LGBTIQ students, who continue to face victimisation and exclusion through policy, the curriculum, teacher practice and their day-to-day interactions with peers. At the core of sexual orientation inequality is the ongoing conflict between neo-liberal and social justice ideals, manifesting most prominently through competing agendas regarding the role of the teacher in society. Because of the significance of this conflict, this study sought to explore teacher perspectives regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools, as well as teacher perspectives regarding the role of the teacher in improving equality. Furthermore, this study investigated whether teachers could change their beliefs and behaviours regarding sexual diversity, as well as the supports required to assist and facilitate change.

The study was conducted utilising an emancipatory action research cycle of planning for action, action, observation and reflection. Following a one-off semi-structured interview, six secondary school teachers engaged in six group sessions over six months. The research group, consisting of myself and the teachers, participated in group discussions, reflective writing, guided observation and analysed passages of their transcripts, in order to express perspectives concerning a range of issues regarding LGBTIQ inequality and equality in schools. The teachers also engaged in change strategies, demonstrating changes to their beliefs, behaviours and the practice of sexuality and equality.

The study generated several significant findings relating to teachers and advocacy. The perspectives of teachers regarding diversity, their role in change, the role of the school and policy demonstrated the importance of awareness, and when awareness was lacking, the importance of exposure to alternative types of sexual identity. Regarding change, throughout the process, the teachers exhibited changes in their beliefs, in their emotional engagement, in their language and in the way they perceived the school and their own part in making the school more fair and equal place for LGBTIQ students. Whilst awareness, fear and anger presented as prominent barriers in both engaging and committing to advocacy, the teachers were able to overcome these obstacles with empathy, collaboration and an orientation to their values.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Contextualising LGBTIQ Inequality in Schools

Sexual orientation inequality represents a defining feature of the social landscape in Australian schools. Heterosexuality is the privileged sexual orientation in Australian society, and this privilege comes at the expense of other sexual identities (Gray et al., 2016; Wright & Clarke, 1999). The dominance of heterosexuality has been maintained through both legal and ideological avenues, as well as through the more extreme regulatory action of homophobia (Ramirez, 2015; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Benjamin (2012) and Connell (2009) have asserted that homophobia and heteronormativity, the normalising of heterosexuality as the desirable sexual identity, are components of a broader ideological network of masculinities. For Benjamin (2012), masculinities lie at the core of gender and sexual orientation discrimination, victimisation and inequality, disseminating and affirming across a range of social platforms including the school. Connell (2009) has asserted that masculinities operate in a hierarchy, whereby privilege is ascribed based on a set of attributes which make the ideal male. In this construction, femininity and alternative sexual identities are victimised and delegitimised in order to maintain masculinity as the desirable social identity.

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) students in Australian schools, the message is clear; they’re different. Across the western world, this difference has been associated with physical, psychological, emotional, social and developmental consequences for the LGBTIQ student population (Kosiw et al., 2013; Mills, 2012; Smith et al., 2015). A range of research studies have interrogated the mechanisms by which masculinities manifest in schools, including the use of homophobic language (Dragowski et al., 2015; Hillier et al., 2010; Msibi, 2012) and the exclusion of LGBTIQ themes from policy (Mary & Hillier, 2012), the curriculum (Shannon, 2016) and teacher practice (Vega et al., 2012). In response to these manifestations of violence, researchers have similarly documented the impact of victimisation and exclusion by investigating suicide rates, rates of mental illness, attachment to schools and LGBTIQ students’ sense of belonging (Baams et al., 2015; Heck et al., 2014; Pearson et al., 2007). Due to the prevalence of inequality in schools as well as the severity of the impacts of inequality, this is an important area of further research.

In response to research into masculine violence in schools, a body of literature has developed which addresses LGBTIQ equality in educational environments. Defining this research are the ongoing conflicts
between ideals of neo-liberalism, which frame students as individuals and responsible for their own success (Apple, 2013; Hursh, 2009; Shannon, 2016; Smyth, 2011), and social justice education ideals, which frame students as part of broader social systems of oppression and part of a social solution (Arshard, 2012; Leistyna, 2009; North, 2009; Smyth, 2011). These tensions have been documented in several measures which have aimed to improve the equality of LGBTIQ students in schools, including the development of policy (Mary & Hillier, 2012; Marsten, 2015) and the inclusion of LGBTIQ themes in the curriculum (Finnessy, 2016; Gray et al., 2016; Shannon, 2016).

Running through literature regarding violence as well as safety is the importance of the role of the teacher. Several studies demonstrated the role of the teacher in perpetuating masculinity through homophobic language (Dragowski et al., 2015; Saunston, 2015) and exclusion from practice (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Vega et al., 2012), as well as the importance of teachers in providing support (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010) and education regarding LGBTIQ themes (Finnessy, 2016; Malins, 2016). Recent studies have begun to attend to the relative absence of teacher perspectives in research investigating inequality and equality for LGBTIQ students (Malins, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016; Toomey et al., 2014), however there remains a noticeable gap in an area primarily focussed on capturing the voices of LGBTIQ students. Whilst these voices are undoubtedly important, as stated, teachers have been charged with the responsibility of administering school policy and curriculum, as well as playing a role in the support of LGBTIQ students, and therefore provide invaluable contributions to this ever growing field. Furthermore, due to the increasing responsibility placed upon teachers by research, educational policy and individual schools, I contend that there remains a definitive gap regarding the supports required for teachers to better sustain their role as advocates for equality.

Because of the insidious and often unknowable nature of masculinity and heteronormativity, Cosier (2009) Hytten (2015) and McDonald & Zeichner (2012) have commented that teachers cannot be expected to fulfil their role as social justice educators without reflection on their own deeply held beliefs and ethics. Several studies have documented teacher education programs designed to make teachers more aware of LGBTIQ inequality as well as a teachers’ role in change (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Kukner et al., 2016; Magnus & Lundin, 2016) however, they have either lacked an emphasis on reflection, morals or the ways in which teachers can more effectively enact their unique position. To this end, further research is required into the supports needed to help teachers become more aware of their beliefs, as well as to change their behaviours.
Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the literature, I have formulated four key research questions for investigation:

1) What are teacher perspectives regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools?

2) What are teacher perspectives regarding their role in improving equality for LGBTIQ students in schools?

3) Can teachers change their beliefs and behaviours regarding sexual orientation?

4) What are the supports required for teachers to engage and commit to advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality?

These questions are aimed to extend discourses relating to LGBTIQ inequality in schools through teacher perspectives. Furthermore, the questions are aimed to explore the supports which help teachers become more ethical, more reflective and more active advocates for LGBTIQ equality. In order to understand the role of teachers in society, it is important to understand the current Australian climate, both in broader society and specifically in education.

Contextualising the Australian Climate

Despite significant legal and social changes, LGBTIQ Australians remain unequal in Australian society today. In recent years, fundamental to the manifestation of inequality, has been the debate over marriage equality. Whilst many social groups are fighting for LGBTIQ relationships to be recognised in the same capacity as their heterosexual counterparts (Australian Marriage Equality, Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby), many conservative religious and social groups, as well as politicians, continue to lobby against changing the Marriage Act (2004) to include marriage between two same-sex attracted (SSA) people (Australian Christian Lobby, Australian Marriage, Marriage Alliance).

Given Australia's history of silencing non-heterosexual sexual identities (Bull et al., 1991), it is interesting that over the past few years, LGBTIQ people in Australia have moved from virtual invisibility to hyper-visibility as the foundations of their identity, their civil rights and their private lives are debated in the public arena. The marriage equality debate has received increasing media attention, and many social commentators have discussed the potentially harmful impact of this debate on the wellbeing of LGBTIQ Australians. In fact the climate within the Australian public sphere has become increasingly hostile, and
Figure 1.1 refers to pressure for corporations to withdraw support for marriage equality from the Australian Christian Lobby, with threats of the withdrawal of business.

These types of articles have become more common, as marriage equality has seemingly transformed into an ideological battleground between those who wish for society to change and those who wish for society to remain exactly as it is. Most significantly to the topic of this thesis, the influence of lobbyists and conservative politicians has extended to the domain of education in Australian schools. Aspects of education including the curriculum, support groups and teacher training have all come under fire as either helping or harming LGBTIQ students, or more recently, as indoctrinating all students in a supposed gay agenda.

Figure 1.2 refers to public and political debate regarding the Safe Schools Coalition, a program designed to support LGBTIQ students and to manage homophobia in school environments. Recently, this program has become political capital as competing parties have taken a stance, either supporting the program or else labelling it “ideology” (Donnelly, 2016).
The debate referred to in articles such as Figure 1.2 serve to demonstrate the intensity to which LGBTIQ students face inequality in Australian schools, as well as the lengths dominant groups will go to in order to maintain their heterosexual position as the desirable sexuality identity. Because of the dangers associated with allowing this inequality to continue, as well as the moral imperatives associated with fighting for equality, the nature of LGBTIQ inequality in schools remains an increasingly important research area. As well as understanding the broader Australian social climate, as an Australian social member, it was important for me to situate myself within the research prior to its commencement, throughout the research process, and after the collection of data.

**Situating the Researcher**

I have an impassioned approach to social justice in both academic and personal spheres of my life. Growing up as an SSA person forced me to think about my own sexuality and its place in society. This type of reflection allowed me to question the socially constructed nature of sexualities and to process my own grief about falling outside of what is considered ‘normal’ long before I embarked on this project.

For me, school was not a place where I felt comfortable sharing this aspect of myself, as I had witnessed firsthand the backlash of being openly SSA in a conservative, Anglican environment. For some close friends, this backlash consisted of relentless bullying from students and “anti-gay” counselling from the pastoral care workers of the school.

Having worked in a psychiatric facility for many years, I have seen the impact of negative school environments on a range of vulnerable young people. At the same time, through my work experience, I have seen a number of schools go above and beyond social expectations of duty, leading me to believe that perhaps staff at these schools really do care.

Working in a clinical psychiatric environment has made me wary of theories and strategies which feel disconnected from the realities of daily living. I have approached this project with a firm belief that change is possible, both on individual and social levels, and that to whatever degree I can, I would like to be a part of it. To this end, in order to make sense of the data and to help frame the areas of exploration, I have engaged with critical theories due to their emphasis on social change.
Critical Theory

Whilst there are a variety of conceptual frameworks through which to interpret LGBTIQ inequality in schools, critical theory remains focussed not only on social awareness, but also social change. In order to address the inequalities for LGBTIQ students in schools, the critical notions of oppression can enhance understanding of how broad systems of masculinity become embedded in the school. Althusser’s (1984) concept of ideology frames masculinity as a set of beliefs which serve to maintain heterosexuality and males as the dominant group in society, whilst Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony explains how we practice masculinity and heteronormativity in our day to day lives. Significantly, Althusser’s (1984) concept of institutional power connects the school to ideology and broader institutions within society, asserting that social institutions such as the school, media, law, church and family all serve to disseminate dominant ideology and to provide people with opportunities to practice it. In this way, inequalities within the school are indicative of, and subject to, broader social inequality. Significantly to this study, however, changing inequalities within schools is also seen as potentially changing inequalities in broader society.

Critical theories of social transformation have helped to, not only make sense of the data relating to teacher changes, but also to shape aspects of focus during the study. Freire’s (1968; 1998; 1999) philosophy of education was utilised to better understand aspects of curriculum, policy, teacher perspectives as well as teacher change. As praxis is constituted by both reflective and active components, it was a helpful guide throughout the process as well as during the data analysis. Freire’s (1968; 1999) notion of dialogue also played an important role, as this concept values the relationship between the teacher and student, or in this case, the teacher and the teacher. Through problem posing, a technique wherein a question is asked without a specific intended answer, the teachers could create new knowledge with their perspectives, experiences and suggestions for change. The limitations of critical social transformation theories, specifically the expectation that teachers can simply exist beyond ideology without reflection, were attended to with theories of social justice education. Specifically, I turned to ideas around ethics and teacher morals which suggest, in line with the literature (Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009), that teachers need their own process of reflection before they are able to engage their students (Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015). This idea was used in the analysis of data, but also helped shape many problems which were posed to the teachers throughout the action research process.
Methodology Plan

Both the literature and subsequent gaps have highlighted the important role of teachers in LGBTIQ inequality and equality within schools. In order to investigate both the perspectives of teachers regarding a range of features associated with LGBTIQ inequality and equality, as well as influencing and supporting change, the study engaged six secondary school teachers in an action research group comprised of six sessions over six months. The notion of teachers both learning and teaching was at the core of the methodology. This study has utilised action research for primary data collection as the group nature places the facilitator and participants as equal co-researchers (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Greenwood & Levin, 2006). This is important in engaging teachers in the study by giving them an equal voice, but it also stresses that teachers have as much to contribute to problem solving as researchers (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Through group discussions and guided observations, the teachers explored a variety of topics relating to LGBTIQ inequality and their own lives.

The study also used individual interviews and reflective writing in order to supplement the data and to give teachers an individual voice with which to reflect on their position in society and any changes they may have noticed. Furthermore, the teachers’ responses were analysed using theoretical ideas and distributed to the teachers each month, highlighting individual areas of development and encouraging individual aspects of change. These methods attend to the gap in the research regarding teacher perspectives as well as offering a meaningful way in which to inspire and reflect upon change. In response to Hanson’s (2013) critique that group methodologies may make some members uncomfortable which may cause group members to struggle with their own vulnerability, the use of individual contexts also provided a different avenue for sharing perspectives and any observed changes for the teachers.

Thesis Plan

This thesis consists of eleven chapters. This chapter has introduced the researcher and the social problem under investigation. I have also provided an overview of the research through a description of the conceptual framework and a summary of gaps in the literature. This chapter also introduced the methodology and presented four research questions.

Chapters 2 and 3 address the literature in greater detail. Chapter 2 focusses on LGBTIQ inequality in schools, exploring psychological and sociological concepts of violence as well the impact of violence and inequality on LGBTIQ students. Chapter 3 addresses literature regarding LGBTIQ equality in schools,
specifically the conflict between neo-liberal and social justice ideals and their influence on policy, on the curriculum and on the role of the teacher. Based on the gaps in the literature, this chapter also readdresses the research questions.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the conceptual framework, specifically my use of critical theory in order to analyse the data. Chapter 4 addresses the key concepts of oppression and institutional power, with a particular emphasis on ideology and hegemony and their relationship with LGBTIQ inequality. Chapter 5 presents and discusses critical concepts of social transformation. Specifically, I address transformative education, the role of the teacher in equality, as well as the importance of reflection and teacher morals and ethics.

Chapter 6 introduces the methodology of action research, detailing the importance of this methodology as well as the associated methods which constituted the action research cycle. This chapter also introduces a model for teacher advocacy which was generated by the data and was used to structure the data chapters.

Chapters 7 and 8 present the data and analysis relating to teacher engagement in LGBTIQ inequality, both in the personal and professional spheres of the teachers. Chapters 9 and 10 present the data and analysis relating to teacher commitment to LGBTIQ equality through the management of existing violence and through modelling. Each of Chapters 7-10 attend to the research questions by presenting both teacher perspectives and teacher changes throughout the process. As the final chapter, Chapter 11 discusses significant findings, implications and limitations and I conclude the thesis with some final reflections regarding my own participation in this project.


Chapter 2

Sexual Orientation Inequality in Schools

In Australia, there has been growing research into the nature and impact of sexual orientation inequality in secondary schools (Davies & McInnes, 2012). Schools are seen as having a dual role of not only preparing adolescents for the transition to adulthood with skills and knowledge, but also with social norms and values, which often discriminate against non-heterosexual sexualities (Pearson et al., 2007; Toomey et al., 2012; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Throughout the literature is a focus on sociological understandings of violence, and how it maintains the stigmatisation, marginalisation and denigration of LGBTIQ sexual identities through the prioritising of masculinity and heteronormativity. This chapter explores the concepts of sociological violence through masculinities, through heteronormativity and through the intersections between dominant and submissive social groups within a school environment, with particular attention to how these concepts help explain why LGBTIQ students are so consistently targeted across the schools of the world.

Research has demonstrated the nature and impact of homophobia in perpetuating masculinity and heteronormativity within school environments (Benjamin, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Mills, 2012). Through homophobic language, exclusive policy, curriculum and practice, LGBTIQ students are delivered a message that they are different and that they unequal (Mary & Hiller, 2012; Vega et al., 2012). Likewise, masculinity is also maintained through intersections with gender, and gender nonconforming students are met with hostility whilst judgements are made regarding their sexual orientation (Schippers, 2004; Smith et al., 2016; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). The impact of this victimisation and exclusion is clearly demonstrated in the reduced attachment of LGBTIQ students to their schools and poorer mental health outcomes during school years (Pearson et al., 2007; Kosciw et al., 2013). This chapter addresses the concept of school violence and the maintenance of masculinity through both victimisation and exclusion based on sexual orientation. Following this, I address the intersections of masculinity, gender and sexual orientation, gender-based victimisation as well as the impacts of inequality for LGBTIQ young people in our schools. I conclude the chapter by addressing the importance of enhancing psychological models of LGBTIQ victimisation and exclusion in schools with sociological understandings of sexual identity in order to explore the ongoing, harmful and unjust perpetuation of inequality for LGBTIQ Australian students.
School Violence

A significant and consistent feature of research into LGBTIQ inequality in schools are reports regarding the experience of anti-LGBTIQ violence. Both including of, and extending beyond the nature and impact of homophobia, social thinkers have argued that heterosexual dominance is maintained through various manifestations of violence (Ramirez, 2015; Robinson, 2012). In the context of sexual orientation inequality, several social thinkers have linked acts of homophobia with broader systems of inequality designed to reinforce the normality of heterosexuality, and subsequently, the abnormality of other sexual identities (Benjamin, 2012; Mills, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Whilst Chapter 4 will discuss these connections through the lens of critical theory, in this section, I introduce the concept of violence as a broader model of understanding homophobia and marginalisation, contextualising existing psychological understandings within broader systems of inequality for LGBTIQ students.

Homophobic violence occurs across developed and developing nations, however localised and cultural factors influence both the manifestations and perceptions of violence (Robinson, 2012). In Australia, Robinson (2012) has argued that violence is often sensationalised by the media with a tendency to overlook the nature and impact of normalised violence. For Robinson (2012) normalised violence represents acts of domination which are tolerated or accepted on a day to day basis, however serve to solidify and reproduce existing hierarchies of gender, age, sexual orientation and race (Robinson, 2012). This understanding expands notions of violence beyond grand acts of overt inequality, and encourages researchers to explore a more complex and covert system of violent acts which to a large extent, may not be recognised as harmful.

In this context, violence is inextricably linked with power (Ramirez, 2015). Whether violence is enacted through individual acts between people, or embedded within systemic institutional policies and practice, it serves to privilege certain groups over others at certain times and within certain societies (Ramirez, 2015; Robinson, 2012). As a result of violence, schools are potentially dangerous places for a variety of social members, as acts of violence can undermine the quality of educational and teaching experiences (Robinson, 2012; Vega et al., 2012). Whilst sociological perceptions of violence are certainly helpful in introducing and understanding broader systems of social power, I found that a more nuanced exploration of homophobic violence, was a helpful way of better grasping the complex social dynamics which maintain sexual orientation inequality in Australian schools. The concept of violence connects individual acts of victimisation and exclusion to systems of social power, however violence alone does not explain the intricate web of dominance and subordination, nor the reasons why alternative sexual
orientations are delegitimised in order to promote heterosexuality. The following section introduces and explores the concept of masculinity, both as a way of understanding homophobia as well as the importance of homophobia in a masculine system of power.

**Masculinities**

Many researchers have asserted that it is impossible to understand inequality for LGBTIQ people without understanding dynamics of gender and more specifically, of masculinity (Connell, 2009; MacNeill, 2013; Paechter, 2009; Rasmussen, 2009). Whilst there is no general consensus on what defines a masculinity, Paechter (2009) has stated that different masculinities will be dominant dependent on the particular social configuration; what is dominant in one context may well be subordinate in another. The idea of dominance and subordination implies that masculinities exist in a hierarchy, and this is reminiscent of Robinson’s (2012) notions of violence whereby one group is privileged over another. Indeed, this concept of hierarchy, domination and subordination form the basis of critical analysis of oppression which, in an effort to help gain perspective of existing literature and the present study, will be the focus of Chapter 4.

This privilege is not as simple as masculinity being privileged over other gender constructs, but rather that the hierarchy exists within masculinities as well. Connell (2009) has stated that the patriarchal dividend, that is the privileges and benefits that men receive simply for being a man, are not equally available to all men. In this hierarchy, certain masculinities are privileged over other forms of masculinity, and the subordinated masculinities are often associated with failure, powerlessness, a lack of status and often with femininity (Benjamin, 2012). Connell (2009) referred to the dominant masculinity as hegemonic masculinity, and whilst Wedgwood (2009) has commented that some researchers have explored hegemonic masculinity as a free floating construct, it is firmly situated at the top of a hierarchy of non-hegemonic masculinities and femininities. I will expand upon the relationship between masculinity and femininity later in this chapter when addressing the intersections between masculinity and gender.

Despite some variances in cultures and societies, several researchers have found commonalities in the ways in which masculinity is enacted in society (Benjamin, 2012; Connell, 2009; Mills, 2012). Typical masculine attributes may include assertiveness in interactions, great physical ability, lower interest in academia and a reluctance to seek help for physical and emotional injuries (Brookfield, 2012; Mills,
2012). These qualities have also been documented in literature which has focussed on masculinities in schools, and based on relevant literature, it appears that masculinities are maintained through the regulation of gender and through the regulation of sexual orientation. Whilst I will present these ideas in separate sections, the relationships between masculinity, gender, sexuality, homophobia and inequality are dynamic, connected and imperative to understand when interrogating the inequality faced by LGBTIQ students. Benjamin (2012) has stated that understanding masculinities as power and masculinities as hierarchies enhances understanding of the ongoing and relentless harassment of LGBTIQ people, as well as the perpetuation of structural inequalities in society and in schools. Based on research, it is clear that masculine dominance is primarily maintained through the victimisation of LGBTIQ students in school.

Victimisation

A key feature of LGBTIQ inequality in schools is victimisation of LGBTIQ students. Several studies documented overt forms of victimisation through physical assault (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Hillier et al., 2010; Guasp, 2012) however, perhaps in part due to the legal protections of LGBTIQ students in schools, the majority of reported cases of victimisation have been verbal in nature (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Guasp, 2012; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). This victimisation occurs through uses of homophobic language and through associations between sexual orientation and gender. In this way, victimisation towards LGBTIQ young people is demonstrative of the inequalities which exist in Australian school environments, and based on the varied ways in which this victimisation occurs, must be understood as a complex network of behaviours which promote inequality. This section explores the intersections between masculinity and sexual orientation through homophobic language from students and from teachers.

Masculinity and Sexual Orientation

Much sociological thought and school-based evidence has also highlighted the maintenance of masculinities through the regulation of sexual orientation (Benjamin, 2012; Mills, 2012; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Benjamin (2012) has asserted that conditions for homophobia are created by particular constructions of masculine gender, resulting in a climate of heteronormativity. As stated in Chapter 1, heteronormativity is best described as the privileging of heterosexuality over alternative sexualities, establishing heterosexuality as the benchmark against which sexuality is measured (Gray et al., 2016;
Van Beusekom et al., 2016; Wright & Clarke, 1999). In this context, LGBTIQ sexualities are denied legitimacy through a variety of means, the most extreme being acts of homophobic violence (Engel et al., 2011; Saunston, 2015). The concept of heteronormativity will be more fully explored in the following Chapter 4 framing it as an ideology within a critical context, however in this chapter, I will introduce the complex relationships between masculinity, heteronormativity and homophobia through school based examples.

Saunston, (2015) and Mills (2012) have used examples of derogatory terms typically used to describe SSA males such as “sissy”, which are more about gender than sexual orientation as they don’t even refer to sexual identity or activity. These terms reflect the dominance of masculinity as both femininity or deviance in general are grounds for vilification. Dominant masculinity is actually dependent on the subordinate status of alternative forms of masculinity and gender, and thus, harassment of those who are different is required in order to maintain its normative position (Robinson, 2012; Smith et al., 2016).

Benjamin (2012) has stated that heteronormativity, like gender doesn’t simply exist, but rather needs to be remade and reworked through the actions of individuals. Focusing on masculinity, Benjamin (2012) has asserted that boys negotiate their masculine identity by engaging in heteronormative practices, often actively casting-out homosexuality through homophobia. This construction is helpful in understanding the prevalence of homophobia in school research into LGBTIQ inequality, as it suggests that homophobia is a necessary part of maintaining heteronormativity; in turn heteronormativity is necessary in maintaining hierarchies of masculinity. In this way, heterosexual masculinity in fact requires alternative sexual identities in order to be dominant and the primary way in which this is achieved is through homophobic language.

**Victimisation and Homophobic Language**

Language is a powerful tool in which homophobia is entrenched. The work of Hunt & Jensen (2007), Guasp (2012), Msibi (2012), Dragowski et al., (2015) and Hillier et al., (2010) all reported on the prevalence of homophobic language within schools across the UK, South Africa, the US and Australia. The work of Dragowski et al., (2015) focussed on staff perspectives of LGBTIQ victimisation in US schools, surveying 968 school psychologists, school counsellors and teachers, aiming to explore environments which either supported or impeded advocacy. Regarding language, 90% of teacher respondents reported that they had heard students make LGBTIQ related derogatory comments within
the past year. Dragowski et al., (2015) found concerning results regarding the actions of teachers with 44% of teacher respondents having reported hearing school staff make derogatory comments regarding LGBTIQ students.

Based on student feedback, The School Report (2007, Hunt & Jensen; 2012, Guasp) and The Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010) concluded that homophobic language was a defining feature of LGBTIQ student school experiences. The School Report (Hunt & Jensen, 2007) explored the perspectives of LGBTIQ students in schools across the UK, and found alarming rates of heteronormative and homophobic language with 97% of students reporting having overheard homophobic insults including “faggot”, “dyke” and “queer” on a regular basis. Like the findings of Dragowski et al., (2015), more alarming was the study’s assertion that over a third of LGBTIQ students reported that teachers were responsible for homophobic incidents in their schools. Furthermore, 92% of respondents reported experiencing verbal harassment, and 17% reported having been on the receiving end of death threats. Another report was conducted in 2012 by Guasp, and unfortunately, similar results again demonstrated the prevalence of homophobic aggression in schools across the UK, with 55% of young people reporting ongoing homophobic bullying through language. These results indicate that whilst there may have been some changes in the nature, regularity and intensity of homophobic language in schools, it remains a salient feature of many LGBTIQ students’ experiences.

Similarly in Australia, the Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010) detailed the experiences of homophobic language for LGBTIQ students in Australian schools. The most commonly reported mechanisms of bullying were name calling, threats of physical harm and death threats from other students (Hillier et al., 2010). According to the report, 61% of respondents reported verbal homophobic abuse and 80% of participants reported that school was the most likely place to experience this type of language. In the Writing Themselves in Report 3, Hillier et al. (2010) documented their results from a nationwide survey of 3134 Australians aged between 14 and 21. The survey was completed online by young women (57%), young men (41%) and by young people who were questioning their gender (3%). The survey consisted of forced choice questions and open questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data, and thereby providing more scope for participant contribution than the Stonewall reports (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Guasp, 2012). Extending these findings, the work of Msibi (2012) has added depth to the growing research on homophobic language in schools. Researching in a South African context, Msibi (2012) collected life narratives from 14 students aged between 15 and 22. Msibi (2012) focussed on life stories as he wanted to challenge what he believed to be a helpless discourse for
LGBTIQ young people, instead choosing to frame them as actors within their social space. Msibi’s (2010) participants commented that anti-LGBTIQ language was a common feature of their schooling, with the boys in the study stating that they had often been referred to as ‘isitabane’, ‘moffie’ and ‘ongqingili’ which are isiZulu and Afrikaans words for ‘faggot’. The boys in the study also stated that they had often been compared to girls on the basis of perceived effemininity and have been called ‘osis-bhuti’, the equivalent of ‘sissy’. These stories add depth to what is often survey-based research by contextualising language within the cultural worlds of the participants and providing them with a space to share their feelings.

This section has detailed some clear examples of homophobic language in school environments. This language has seemingly been used either in a targeted a hurtful manner, or else casually through the association of alternative sexual identities with negativity; both of these examples indicate an inequality of sexual orientation in schools. In both large and small scale research, language has emerged as a key theme in LGBTIQ inequality. Whilst this section has explored language in the context of direct assaults, it, along with others, also features as a prominent method through which LGBTIQ students experience exclusion.

**Exclusion**

Across the literature, one of the predominant manifestations of homophobia and inequality in schools is exclusion (Hillier et al., 2010; Mary & Hillier, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). In relation to victimisation, exclusion constitutes the more subtle, less overt methods of highlighting the differences of LGBTIQ young people and this exclusion occurs on the levels of curriculum, teacher behaviour and student socialisation. Whilst the work of Hillier et al., (2010) found that social exclusion was often a form of victimisation, exclusion in this context does not only refer to physical exclusion and isolation, but also the absence of LGBTIQ themes in school environments, ineffective policy and the inaction of staff in managing homophobia. The silencing of LGBTIQ themes and relative invisibility of LGBTIQ sexual identities has been regarded by Benjamin (2012) and Mary & Hillier (2012) as vital in maintaining dominance. It is therefore no surprise that in a school environment, the literature suggests that LGBTIQ students are more often excluded from policy, from curriculum and from teacher practice.
Exclusion and Policy

Sexuality education in Australia has been investigated in the context of both curricula and policy (Mary & Hillier, 2012). Mary & Hillier (2012) analysed over 80 Australian policy documents which either directly or indirectly related to sexuality education of LGBTIQ students, sourcing the documents from national, state-specific and independent education provider websites. Overall, Mary & Hillier (2012) commented on the variation in state policy, contrasting New South Wales’ promotion of democratic education regarding homophobia and sexuality with the Northern territory’s lack of policy altogether. This research also highlighted the extreme ideological differences between restrictions and freedoms within a Victorian policy context. Mary & Hillier (2012) stated that Victorian policy contains the most progressively explicit anti-homophobia guidelines, as well as the most exemptions for sexual orientation discrimination within Catholic schools and these contrasts demonstrate the battle between equality and inequality in schools. In this context, exclusion remains a prominent theme, as in some states, LGBTIQ students are either completely excluded from policy, or else their rights to a safe, fair education are excluded from policy documents. Regarding the education of LGBTIQ students, in a similar fashion, exclusion also runs through Australian curricula.

Exclusion and Curriculum

Several studies have explored the exclusion of LGBTIQ themes from Australian subject curricula, suggesting that conservative discourses which focus on the development of male and female bodies and heterosexual procreation are still privileged in schools (Hillier et al., 2010; Mary & Hillier, 2012; Vega et al., 2016). Mary & Hillier (2012) explored this area by sourcing data from the Writing Themselves in 3 report (2010), specifically self-reported data from the 3134 students aged 14-21. This data investigated the extent to which students felt they were learning about LGBTIQ themes, and the exclusion of these themes was evident in the results. Notably, this research demonstrated that 84.59% of respondents were still learning only about biological reproduction between a male and a female, and that 84.59% were still learning about protection against STDs and pregnancy as a dominant feature of sexuality education. Mary & Hillier (2012) have argued that these statistics demonstrate an immersion in risk discourses as well as the privileging of heterosexuality as the ideal sexual orientation. In the context of exclusion, by not teaching about LGBTIQ themes, lifestyles and relationships, this research shows that LGBTIQ students are not legitimised in the same way as their heterosexual counterparts. In the Writing
Hillier et al., stated that excluded LGBTIQ students were instead turning to methods of self-education, most notably the internet, in order to overcome either homophobia in the curriculum or specific gaps (Hillier et al., 2010).

Similarly in the UK, the School Report (Hunt & Jensen, 2007) found that 70% of LGBTIQ students hadn’t been taught about LGBTIQ people in their studies, and for the 30% that had, there were reports that the content was often inaccurate and misleading. The 2012 School Report (Guasp) found that 53% of students still aren’t being taught anything about LGBTIQ themes, and that only 50% of students attended schools which openly stated that homophobia was wrong. This type of exclusion has been interpreted as the regulation of heterosexual identities through the silencing of alternative orientations (Vega et al., 2012). Vega et al., (2012) explored safety in school environments through a comprehensive literature review which focused on how teachers respond to homophobia in school environments across the US. This research will be further explored below when I introduce exclusion through teacher practice, however due to the scope of the literature review, Vega et al., (2012) made a contribution to discussion regarding exclusion in policy and curriculum. Vega et al., (2012) argued that silencing LGBTIQ themes delegitimises LGBTIQ sexual identities in favour of heterosexuality, and Mary & Hillier (2012) stated that exclusion in this context, replicates social inequalities which occur on a broader scale by sending messages which exclude LGBTIQ issues, pleasures and even identities (Mary & Hillier, 2012; Vega et al., 2012). Inextricably linked with both policy and curriculum are the experiences of exclusion of LGBTIQ students through teacher practice.

**Exclusion and Teacher Practice**

Social commentators have also discussed the exclusion of LGBTIQ students through teacher practice (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Hunet & Jensen, 2007; Vega et al., 2012). Practice in this context, generally refers to teachers responding to homophobia in the classroom and schoolyard (Writing Themselves In 3, Hillier et al., 2010; The School Report, Guasp, 2012). Significant to this review, the School Report (2007) questioned respondents about the responses of the school community to acts of homophobia. Whilst 58% of victims hadn’t reported incidents of bullying, when a teacher had been informed of an incident, no action was taken 62% of the time. The report asserted that half of teachers failed to respond to homophobic language when they heard it and 60% of students failed to intervene. Dragowski et al., (2015) also explored teacher inaction, with only 31% of teachers in this study reporting
that their colleagues intervened consistently when hearing students make homophobic remarks. Similarly, in The School Report (Guasp, 2012) 60% of students stated that teachers do not intervene in homophobic bullying that they have witnessed. Likewise in their literature review of teacher response to homophobia in the US, Vega et al., (2012) discussed the passive behaviours of teachers, arguing that a failure to respond to homophobia sends a message that homophobia is acceptable. By summarising and comparing existing research findings within the US, Vega et al., (2012) concluded that teachers may be passive, may be indecisive and may lack support in relation to responding to homophobia in the classroom. The passivity referred to by Vega et al., (2012) occurred when teachers remained silent after witnessing homophobia, and the indecision referred to teachers downplaying acts of homophobia or attempting to normalise homophobia within a classroom context. Furthermore, Vega et al., (2012) explored teacher responses to derogatory action such as a student calling another student “fag” or “homo”, whereby the teachers verbally reprimand the student without challenging homophobia. This means that the student is corrected for homophobic language without the language ever being addressed as homophobic. Vega et al., (2012) concluded that this dynamic constitutes exclusion through the denial of sexual orientation discrimination. In this context, victimisation of LGBTIQ students is not treated as sexually motivated, further delegitimising alternative sexual orientations; alternative orientations aren’t even recognised as legitimate enough to be attacked. This means that broader systems of inequality are not addressed, as bullying is seen as the behaviour of an individual. I will return to this issue when I address issues with inclusive policy in the following chapter, as this individualised perspective has been seen as a significant limitation of such equality measures (Marsten, 2015; Saltmarsh, 2012).

This section has introduced and explored the theme of exclusion throughout literature regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools. Exclusion was differentiated from victimisation through it’s more covert and indirect assault on the legitimisation of LGBTIQ sexualities, and has been documented in policy, in curriculum and in practice. Interestingly, similar reports of violence have been documented in research investigating the Australian social climate. In Australia today, LGBTIQ people continue to face unjust discrimination (Leonard et al., 2012). The Sex Discrimination Act (1984) still contains exemptions for certain clubs and religious groups to discriminate based on sexual orientation, and furthermore, the Marriage Act Amendment (2004) defines marriage as “the union between a man and a woman”, excluding LGBTIQ couples from civil marriage; some states still prohibit LGBTIQ couples from adopting children (Mary & Hillier, 2012). These examples of structural discrimination also impact LGBTIQ people
at both institutional and individual levels, perpetuating difference and sanctioning unfair and unjust attitudes and behaviours.

Despite changes to policy, findings from relevant literature suggest that LGBTIQ people continue to experience inequality and injustice in Australian society (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015; Leonard et al., 2012). LGBTIQ Australians face higher rates of bullying, violence and harassment impacting their emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and this section introduces the impacts of such inequality through two large scale studies of wellbeing; The Private Lives 2 Report (Leonard et al., 2012) and The National Consultation Report (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015). The Private Lives 2 report (Leonard et al., 2012) explored the nature of identity concealment, specifically where people felt comfortable expressing their LGBTIQ sexual identity. It was reported that 80% of respondents 'never' concealed their identity at home, however this statistic dropped dramatically to 50% of respondents stating that they conceal their identity at work and 60% who reported concealing their identity in public. These figures may reflect the social climate wherein alternative sexual identities are not treated with acceptance and LGBTIQ people do not necessarily feel comfortable showing themselves to people they don't know.

The most recent National Consultation Report (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015) found similarly disturbing impacts within the LGBTIQ Australian community. An online survey of over 1300 people demonstrated the ongoing harassment, violence and bullying experienced by LGBTIQ Australians, with 75% of respondents reporting having experienced these harmful behaviours. Furthermore, over 90% of respondents reported knowing someone that has experienced violence, harassment or bullying based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status. These findings demonstrate the connections between experiences for LGBTIQ students in the school and experiences of LGBTIQ people in Australian society. Whilst this connection between school and society will be the focus of a critical analysis of institutional power in Chapter 4, it illustrates the nature and impact of masculinities in society, as they infiltrate social dynamics and delegitimise alternative sexual identities across society. As well as sexual orientation, masculinity has also been seen to maintain its dominant position through intersections with gender, gender expression and through gender-based violence. The following section details the dynamics of gender and masculinity, exploring a discussion regarding the dominant and submissive relationships which will be continued throughout the critical frameworks of Chapters 4 and 5.
Masculinity and Gender

Across much literature, it has been argued that masculinity maintains dominance in society through the regulation of femininity (Benjamin, 2012; Paechter, 2006; Rasmussen, 2009). Paechter (2006) has argued that there can be no hegemonic femininity as hegemony is about power and dominance; this belongs to masculinity. In this construction, feminine attributes are not seen as independent enactments of gender, but rather are defined in relation to, and not separate to, masculinity. Rasmussen (2009) has affirmed this line of thought, stating that femininity is not constructed in the same way as masculinity, but rather it is a “variety of negations of the masculine” (p. 256). Benjamin (2012) has described these attributes as emphasised femininities and has commented on these enactments of masculinity as involving physical weakness, aversion to participation in sports, vulnerability and being attractive to males. Whilst socially typical of feminine constructs, through this line of thought, these remain examples of masculinity as they exist in relation to the opposing masculine attributes of strength, love of sports, infallibility and seeking attractive partners, not as separate, free floating constructs.

Regarding the attribute of sexual attraction, both Benjamin (2012) and Paechter (2006) have commented on both masculinity and femininity as manifestations of gendered power. Benjamin (2012) has stated that in being attractive to men, girls are seemingly in a position of control, however this enactment of femininity in relation to masculinity perpetuates the notion that happiness and fulfilment can best be achieved through desirability; this in fact places the power in the hands of the men. Schippers (2004) has asserted that an enduring value in a masculine society relates to the action of heterosexual desire. Schippers (2004) has stated that masculinity dictates that men should possess and enact an active and ever present erotic desire for the feminine object, whilst women should demonstrate the more passive desire to become the object of masculine desire. Paechter (2006) affirmed these comments by describing hyperfemininity as a powerless position; whilst seemingly in control of their sexual lives, femininity encourages the navigation of sexual and gender identity within existing masculine ideals.

In the context of a school environment, this enactment of masculinity can be seen in the high rates of teenage pregnancy amongst SSA females, as well as the stories of teenage boys who attempt to fit in
through the action of acquiring a girlfriend (Saewyc et al., 2008). Saewyc et al., (2008) explored the management of sexual orientation stigma in British Colombia in Canada, specifically the links between enacted stigma and teenage pregnancy. Saewyc et al., (2008) perceived adolescence to be a critical period in the management of sexual orientation stigma, whereby young people may manage their own LGBTIQ identities through overtly heterosexual behaviours. This is consistent with the impacts of homophobia on identity, as Pearson et al., (2007) explained that many young people internalise the heterosexual ideal and struggle to see their LGBTIQ identity in a positive light. In order to explore this topic, Saewyc et al., (2008) utilised data from the British Colombia Health Survey project, wherein over 70,000 students between years 7-12 were administered pencil and paper questionnaires by nurses. Saewyc et al., (2008) focussed on the age and sexual orientation of participants, noticing a higher than average pregnancy rate in young SSA females. Whilst the data itself didn’t provide any reasons as to why SSA females tend to get pregnant more than their heterosexual counterparts, Saewyc et al., (2008) concluded that these young women used sexual behaviour in order to be perceived as normal, and not as different. This conclusion is consistent with theories of violence and theories of masculinity which ascribe an ideal way of being, and the subordination and marginalisation of alternatives. In these situations, Saewyc et al., (2008) concluded, young women are overcompensating for their difference through heightened heterosexual activity, thereby performing the role of a good female within a masculine hierarchy by attempting to be sexually desirable. These findings also point to the links between masculinity and sexual orientation, as the participants utilised their gender roles in order to conceal their sexual identity.

**Masculinity, Gender and Sexuality**

Research has pointed to the connections between gender and sexual orientation in the maintenance of masculinities, and subsequently the maintenance of LGBTIQ inequality (Larsson et al., 2011; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Like much research, these links have been demonstrated in school environments, with Benjamin (2012) highlighting the negotiation of sexual and gender identities during adolescence, with young people either fitting into or falling outside of the masculine norm. Van Beusekom et al., (2016) have argued that homophobia and femininity are inextricably linked as masculinity is a rejection of femininity, and therefore to be an (SSA) male is to be feminine. As discussed in the section on victimisation, the work of Van Beusekom et al., (2016) explored these beliefs in the context of gender-conformity and nonconformity, finding that gender nonconforming people were perceived as SSA; in contrast, gender conforming individuals were considered heterosexual regardless
of their actual sexual preferences. In order to be considered a legitimate heterosexual person, an individual must perform their gender through their movement, bodies and language, in alignment with perceived social demands (Larsson et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2016). These findings demonstrate Benjamin's (2012) assertions regarding the association of non-hegemonic masculinities with a lack of status, a lack of power and with femininity.

Schippers (2004) has stated that the differentiation of masculine and feminine practices is crucial in the maintenance of heteronormative beliefs and that this results not only in the interpretation of SSA men as being feminine, but also in the perception of SSA women as embodying masculine characteristics. In a school environment, this has been demonstrated through the work of Larsson et al., (2011), who explored the intersections between gender and sexuality in physical movement within schools. Larsson et al. (2011) were interested in the stability of gender patterns in Swedish secondary schools, despite policy developments which stressed equal opportunity. In order to conduct their research, Larsson et al., (2011) visited 4 lower secondary schools in big urban areas in Sweden. In total, they accumulated data from 72 interviews lasting 45 minutes to 1.5 hours each. In total, 24 students, 12 boys and 12 girls, were interviewed 3 times across the project. Larsson et al. (2011) summarised that much of what students had to say about movement in relation to gender was based on the presupposition that heterosexuality is the expected and desired sexual disposition, linking gender to heteronormativity in the same fashion as Schippers (2004), Benjamin (2012) and Robinson (2012).

The study scrutinised how students talk about different kinds of movement activities and how they engender themselves and others as subjects of movement (Larsson et al., 2011). The findings of this study demonstrated intersections between gender and heteronorms through student perceptions of movement, specifically the examples of dance and playing ball (Larsson et al., 2011). With regards to dance, students reported that it felt more natural to dance with someone of the opposite sex, demonstrating strong heteronormative characteristics as guided by gender (Larsson et al., 2011). Furthermore, students stated that girls are good at dance and boys shouldn’t be (Larsson et al., 2011). Boys found it easier to acknowledge enjoyment of dancing when it involved elements they associated with masculinity such as speed, strength and agility, however found it harder to acknowledge enjoyment when dance was presented with emphasis on rhythm, coordination and expression (Larsson et al., 2011). For girls, the results were reversed with a stronger sense of enjoyment associated with rhythmic and expressive elements than with agility and speed (Larsson et al., 2011). In the example of playing
ball, it was reported that boys are good at it and that girls shouldn’t be (Larsson et al., 2011). The interviews revealed that boys felt that they had to make allowances for girls when playing, and girls linked gender to sexuality by reporting that straight girls shouldn’t be able to play ball (Larsson et al., 2011). These findings confirm the assertions of Benjamin (2012), Robinson (2012) and Paechter (2006) that masculinities define not only femininities, but also heterosexuality as the dominant form of sexual expression.

Again, these findings demonstrate the hierarchical nature of masculinities, as well as the associations between the subordinated masculinities of same-sex attraction and femininity, which take on particular significance through critical discourse. Interestingly, females thought to demonstrate masculine qualities were not celebrated for their embracing of social ideals, but rather were subordinated through their association with LGBTIQ identities. This may be demonstrative of Connell's (2009) assertions regarding hegemonic masculinity; that it belongs to the men. These findings also had significant implications for my study, as they suggest that in order to study homophobia, one must also consider the relationships between homophobia, heteronormativity, femininity and masculinity. The connections between these aspects of dominant and subordinated masculinities expands existing literature investigating LGBTIQ inequality which has, to a large extent, been focused on homophobia itself (Saltmarsh, 2012; Robinson et al., 2012). The work of Hillier et al., (2010) in the Writing Themselves In 3 report, whilst useful in identifying homophobia, does not frame homophobic bullying as enactments of masculinity, and therefore may be limited in approaches aimed to intervene in homophobia. I will expand upon these approaches in the following chapter regarding school safety. Furthermore, the findings of Larsson et al., (2011) and Van Beusekom et al., (2016) indicate that these relationships should be viewed within the hierarchy of masculinities, in order to better understand how power operates to sustain inequality in school environments. The conception of masculinities as hierarchical, as opposed to simply categorical, means that to challenge one aspect is to challenge the others, which may in fact lead to greater resistance to change (Benjamin, 2012). Again, I will continue this discussion when exploring change strategies in schools for safer environments, as the idea of resistance to change has been linked to more hierarchical forms of social power than many strategies incorporate (Payne & Smith, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Like sexual orientation, the intersections between masculinity and gender are also enacted through victimisation in schools.

Victimisation and Gender
In recent years, several researchers have also commented on the relationship between victimisation and gender (Bos & Sandfort, 2015; Toomey et al., 2014; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). The work of Toomey et al., (2014) explored the experiences of gender nonconforming students in US schools, concluding that victimisation is a key experience for these young people. Toomey et al., (2014) administered 318 surveys to middle school students, focusing not only on the self-reports of gender nonconforming students, but also peer reports from gender conforming students. Based on both reports, Toomey et al., (2014) concluded that adolescents who do not conform to gender social norms are at risk of negative peer relationships and are targets of peer aggression and peer victimisation.

Researching in the Netherlands, Van Beusekom et al., (2016) extended these findings by exploring the dynamics of victimisation, gender nonconformity and sexual orientation. Van Beusekom et al., (2016) defined gender nonconformity as not adhering to social standards of gendered adornment, such as makeup and stereotypically feminine clothing on boys and more stereotypically masculine clothing and hairstyles on girls. Van Beusekom et al., (2016) investigated the connections between gender nonconformity, sexual orientation and aggression, hypothesising and finding that gender nonconforming boys and girls were perceived as SSA, and encountered verbal harassment from peers regarding their sexual orientation whether they identified as LGBTIQ or heterosexual. Van Beusekom et al., (2016) administered paper and pencil questionnaires to 5 urban schools in the Netherlands, receiving responses from 517 boys and 509 girls aged 11-16. These results extended the findings of both Stonewall Reports (2007; 2012) by demonstrating the links between gender and sexual orientation. Young people perceived as not conforming to gender standards were considered to be same-sex attracted, and this link connects gender and sexual orientation through aggression. The results of Van Beusekom et al., (2016) demonstrated the verbal harassment and aggression faced by those whose sexual orientation was perceived as different, regardless of the reality of their sexual identity. In this case, inequality against LGBTIQ students was so strong, that gender nonconforming students experienced the same aggression as LGBTIQ students. The work of Bos & Sandfort (2015) found similar results, as they similarly aimed to explore the association between same-sex attraction, gender nonconformity and peer relationships. Bos & Sandfort, also researching in the Netherlands, administered a questionnaire to 486 Dutch students across schools, and found that gender nonconforming young people had strained peer relationships. Whilst the work of Van Beusekom et al., (2016) found that gender nonconforming students were targeted regardless of sexual orientation, Bos &
Sandfort (2015) concluded that SSA students who conformed to gender expectations had more positive relationships with their peers. These findings demonstrate a link between gender, sexual orientation and victimisation, whereby victimisation is moderated depending on a student’s gender or sexual identity.

The similarities of research conducted in the UK (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Guasp, 2012), in the Netherlands (Bos & Sandfort, 2015; Van Beusekom et al., 2015), in South Africa (Msibi, 2012), in the US (Dragowski et al., 2015; Pearson et al., 2007; Toomey et al., 2014) and in Australia (Writing Themselves In 3, 2010) have demonstrated the prevalence of LGBTIQ victimisation in schools across the western world. This victimisation is inextricably linked with inequality, as the extent of victimisation suggests that LGBTIQ, or perceived LGBTIQ, students are not only seen as different, but that their difference is worthy of harassment, bullying and harm. This section has explored the influence of masculinities on hierarchies of heteronormativity and homophobia, as well as the moderation of these dynamics through gender. Certainly two prominent experiences of LGBTIQ young people in schools have been victimisation and exclusion, both of which have profound impacts on both the attachment of LGBTIQ students to their school environments as well as their overall mental health.

**Victimisation, Exclusion and Attachment**

Researchers have commented on the harmful impact of homophobia and sexual orientation victimisation on the attachment of LGBTIQ students to their schools (Baams et al., 2015; Kosciw et al., 2013; Pearson et al., 2007). The work of Baams et al., (2015) explicitly connected experiences of victimisation and rejection with an LGBTIQ student’s poorer sense of belonging. Using a five item scale, Baams et al., (2015) measured a variety of ways in which 1061 LGBTIQ students across the US felt either connected or disconnected from their school environment, concluding that students with greater incidence of victimisation had a greater sense of disconnection. Pearson et al., (2007) have stated that LGBTIQ students feeling the weight of stigmatisation may not develop an attachment to the community which stigmatises them, leading to students becoming disengaged and less interested in academic and social aspects of the school environment (Pearson et al., 2007). To this end, both Pearson et al., (2007) and Kosciw et al., (2013) have explored the gap in research by looking at attachment as well as the impacts of disconnection on academic performance.
Pearson et al., (2007) used data from the Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement study (AHAA) and the National Longitudinal Study to investigate whether LGBTIQ adolescents had compromised academic outcomes when they left high school, using a national representative random sample of 20,745 participants from Grades 7-12 across the US. In order to measure sexual orientation, Pearson et al., (2007) drew data from the “romantic attraction” question from the AHAA study, stating that they believed the data to be valid as it was based on self-reports from the participants, not guided in interviews with adults. In order to measure educational outcomes, Pearson et al., (2007) used Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and investigated whether the students were enrolled in advanced course. Attachment was measured using a 1-5 self-reported social integration scale in which the participants rated how attached they felt to the school, and disengagement was measured through self-reports regarding concentration issues and school absences.

Pearson et al., (2007) hypothesised that disengagement would result in poorer academic outcomes for LGBTIQ students and the findings of this research indicated that LGBTIQ students had more difficulty meeting the minimum requirements of their course, and also were more vulnerable to emotional distress and substance abuse issues. Through the self-reports, Pearson et al., (2007) concluded that LGBTIQ young people felt less integrated into their school and that this isolation may have interfered with their ability to actively engage in the classroom. Pearson et al., (2007) have commented that academic success and the ability to meet the requirements for education beyond high school involves a successful interface between the adolescent and the institution. LGBTIQ students may have more difficulty than others negotiating this relationship, impacting their ability to perform and meet requirements of academic curricula. As Pearson et al., (2007) noted, this may have consequences well into adulthood, as they found that one third of respondents stated that their school experience as an LGBTIQ person had put them off pursuing tertiary education. Pearson et al., (2007) argued that this type of inequality and its impact on attachment can therefore impact a person’s career, and how they see themselves in relation to academia.

Similarly, Kosciw et al., (2013) investigated the issue by using GPAs and missed school days as evidence of academic performance and school attachment. Through both an internet and paper survey of 7,261 LGBTIQ young people aged between 13 and 21, Kosciw et al., (2013) extended the work of Pearson & Wilkinson (2007) by adding a self-reported self-esteem component to their research in order to explore the impact of school victimisation on academic outcomes as well as identity. Kosciw et al., (2013)
concluded that school victimisation based on sexual orientation predicted decreased self-esteem and worse educational outcomes for LGBTIQ students. These conclusions were based on the results which demonstrated that victims of homophobic abuse had lower GPAs and more absences from school. As well as impacts on academic achievement, experiences of victimisation and exclusion have also been found to impact the mental health of LGBTIQ students.

**Victimisation, Exclusion and Mental Health**

Sexual orientation inequality and victimisation of LGBTIQ students has also been found to have a significant impact on mental health. The work of Heck et al., (2014), Baams et al., (2015) and Hillier et al., (2010) has addressed the connections between sexual orientation inequality, victimisation and depression. With the purpose of informing school psychologists, the work of Heck et al., (2014) aimed to focus on the impact of homophobia on both school attachment and mental health through the school experiences of 145 LGBTIQ students across the US. Using an online survey, Heck et al., (2014) concluded that school victimisation based on sexual orientation was linked not only to a student’s sense of belonging, but also to incidence of depression. Likewise, the work of Baams et al., (2015) explored LGBTIQ student experiences in schools in the context of rejection. Using open ended questions to report victimisation and a 20 item questionnaire to assess depression, Baams et al., (2015) concluded that victimisation negatively impacted the levels of depression and suicidal ideation for LGBTIQ young people in the US.

Researching within an Australian context, the Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010) report similarly detailed the consequences of being a disconnected LGBTIQ adolescent in a secondary school. Homophobic abuse was associated with feeling unsafe, excessive drug use, self-harm behaviours as well as suicide attempts (Hillier et al., 2010). Through the qualitative open question options, the study was able to link self-harm behaviours and suicide attempts with experiences of loneliness for individuals who had yet to disclose their sexual identity (Hillier et al., 2010). In contrast to the work of Heck et al., (2014), the addition of this qualitative data to the closed answer quantitative data, allowed this report to more fully examine the impact of homophobic bullying on the personal wellbeing for LGBTIQ young people and not just the impact on their schooling as participants had space to describe their experiences in their own words (Hillier et al., 2010). Whilst academic considerations are important, the results of the Writing Themselves 3 (Hillier et al., 2010) report explored the impact of homophobia on attachment and
subsequently, psychosocial development. In this way, The Writing Themselves In 3 (Hillier et al., 2010) report also extended the work of Pearson et al., (2007) and Kosciw et al., (2013), by demonstrating that for many LGBTIQ students, it is about surviving school, not fulfilling their academic potential.

Whilst Hillier et al., (2010) covered a range of impacts, DeCamp et al., (2016) addressed the impact of sexual orientation victimisation on mental health through the lens of self-harming behaviours. DeCamp et al., (2016) hypothesised that increased victimisation for sexual minority young people would result in increased self-harming behaviours of cutting, scraping and burning, and used a Youth Risk Survey of 130 questions in order to estimate the prevalence rates of risk behaviours. DeCamp et al., (2016) analysed data from a sample size of 7, 1326 heterosexual and LGBTIQ US school students and noticed significant differences in the rate of self-harming behaviours. Whilst 7% of heterosexual males and 14% of heterosexual females acknowledged engaging in self-harm behaviours, 33% of sexual minority males and 42% of sexual minority females reported having hurt themselves. The significantly higher occurrence of self-harm was considered by DeCamp et al., (2016) to be demonstrative of the victimisation experienced by LGBTIQ students in schools. In a similar fashion, the work of Huebner et al., (2014) focussed specifically on the link between school victimisation and substance abuse, framing attachment as the moderating factor. Huebner et al., (2014) hypothesised that LGBTIQ students experiencing victimisation in school will have decreased attachment and subsequently increased substance abuse. Huebner et al., (2014 recruited 504 adolescents aged 14-19 across 3 US cities for an in person survey and concluded that LGBTIQ adolescents who reported more anti-LGBTIQ victimisation in their schools also exhibited more severe substance abuse. Huebner et al., (2014) linked substance abuse to an affiliation with deviant peers, stating that LGBTIQ adolescents who have been victimised make these friendships due to impacts on their self-esteem and poor attachment to their school.

These studies have shown the nature and impact of victimisation and exclusion on LGBTIQ students in schools, both within Australia, and abroad. Through an exploration of peer and teacher language, policy, curriculum and teacher practice, it is clear that sexual orientation inequality remains an issue in schools today. Furthermore, it is clear that LGBTIQ inequality in schools is a complex and complicated issue, with a variety of factors that require consideration. The research addressed in this part of the literature review constitutes the psychological model of LGBTIQ inequality, addressing what is happening in
schools today. Whilst this approach is helpful in establishing the scope of the problem, it does not attend to why this issue continues to impact the lives of LGBTIQ students.

**Psychological and Sociological Understandings of Inequality**

Various perspectives on LGBTIQ inequality in schools help paint a picture of the experiences of LGBTIQ students and the need for greater efforts for equality. Despite the helpful perspectives of psychological models, Ramirez (2015) has pointed to their limitations in the ways in which the prevalence of violence is interpreted through this lens. In his literature review, Ramirez (2015) clearly acknowledged the prevalence of violence, and stated that LGBTIQ students are often spending their time in a “hostile and violent school climate” (p. 29), however he has used the examples of indirect homophobia to criticise the way that violence is discussed in research.

Data collected from the Stonewall Report (Hunt & Jensen, 2007) indicated that even if LGBTIQ students are not directly experiencing bullying, they are learning in an environment where homophobic language and comments are commonplace. The results indicated that 98% of LGBTIQ students hear the phrases “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay”, and Ramirez (2015) discussed the phrase “that’s so gay”, arguing that this utterance is a clear example of how non-homophobic people can appear homophobic through their everyday language. Ramirez (2015) stated that it is important to differentiate between homophobia which is designed to attack the LGBTIQ community and more casual uses of homophobic language where the user may in fact be unaware of the homophobic associations. For Ramirez (2015), both concepts are important to understand, and he has stated that they work in tandem and have historically been oppressive and discriminatory forces that, if left unchallenged, result in negative consequences for LGBTIQ populations.

For Ramirez (2015), this kind of LGBTIQ inequality has been woven into the fabric of society and he has argued that school violence does not occur in a vacuum; rather it is symptomatic of broader institutional violence in society. To this end, whilst the psychological models of LGBTIQ inequality are invariably helpful in understanding the prevalence of homophobia and the social, psychological and emotional consequences of sexual orientation inequality for LGBTIQ young people, they do not explain why LGBTIQ people are continuously targets for harassment and unjust treatment in society.
This notion has interesting implications for existing psychological research into wellbeing and the nature of homophobia in schools. Reflecting on The School Report (Guasp, 2012) and The Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010), the findings regarding ongoing verbal and physical harassment of LGBTIQ students are enhanced by not only connecting isolated incidents of homophobic aggression to broader ideas of masculinity, but by asserting that homophobia will continue to exist as a function of the larger social systems of heteronormativity. Whilst in parts I have discussed gender and sexual orientation as separate concepts, due to the hierarchy of masculinities, ultimately, they are seen as intersecting and overlapping in social spaces.

Regarding the literature on victimisation and exclusion, connecting the reported prevalence of homophobia to systems of sexuality may provide more insight into why LGBTIQ people are so consistently harassed for their perceived difference. Robinson's (2012) assertions regarding heterosexual dominance shed light on studies such as The School Report (Guasp, 2012) and the Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010) by framing name calling and physical aggression as acts designed to maintain heterosexuality as the desired orientation in society. Furthermore, a more complex understanding of violence legitimises the role of exclusion, not only in the harmful impacts on LGBTIQ young people, but also in perpetuating heterosexual dominance. By excluding LGBTIQ themes from curriculum and policy, and by ignoring homophobia in teacher practice, schools become connected to broader social systems of inequality which delegitimise alternative sexual identities.

**Conclusion**

This review has interrogated various themes relating to the inequality experienced by LGBTIQ students in Australian schools. Through an analysis of themes relating to both psychological and sociological models of violence, it is clear that inequality impacts LGBTIQ students in schools. I have addressed the effects of victimisation and exclusion on the attachment and mental health of LGBTIQ students, and what was interesting were the conclusions that teachers and school staff may play as significant a role in perpetuating violence as student peers.

Despite the ongoing nature of inequality in Australian schools, it is important to note, however, that many individuals, schools and state Governments have recognised the issue of LGBTIQ inequality, and have introduced measures to make school environments more equal for LGBTIQ students. The following chapter continues the literature review through an exploration of the concept of equality and safety in
school environments, addressing the various steps schools and governments have taken in order to reduce homophobia and to improve equality for LGBTIQ young people.
Chapter 3

Sexual Orientation Equality in Schools

In response to the rampant violence against LGBTIQ students as documented in research (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Guasp, 2012), a common question facing school environments is how to successfully build safe communities (Robinson, 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). Safety in this context usually refers to environments in which students and teachers can engage in learning without harassment, bullying, victimisation or violence (Biegel & Kuehl 2010; Mary & Hillier, 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). In the context of the previous chapter, safety in schools can be interpreted as the minimisation of victimisation and exclusion for LGBTIQ young people, in response to the recognition of the impacts of this type of violence on mental health and attachment; for many people, safety is in fact synonymous with equality (Saltmarsh, 2012).

Several researchers have observed the tensions which often arise between models of safety and of equality (Dean, 2012; Marsten, 2015; Robinson et al., 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). I begin by exploring this conflict through the contrasting lenses of neo-liberalism and social justice education and these tensions between fairness and more tokenistic attempts at inclusion are evident throughout measures in schools designed to improve equality. Following this introduction, I address the identification of inequality through policy as well as explore inclusion through curriculum, both of which have been influenced by neo-liberal and social justice ideals. One of the most fiercely debated areas of LGBTIQ equality remains the role of the teacher, and to this end, I explore the navigation between potential roles as change agents for equality and more restricted and neutral conduits of knowledge and curriculum whereby LGBTIQ students are seen as responsible for their own inequality. The role of teachers, though researched regarding perspectives, requires more exploration if they are to play their part in social change for sexual orientation injustice in our schools.

Competing Agendas: Neo-liberalism and Social Justice Education

Measures to improve equality in schools have been seen to be influenced by two starkly contrasting agendas; neo-liberalism and social justice education (Hytten, 2015; Hursh, 2009; Shannon, 2016; Sleeter, 2009). Neo-liberalism is defined by its association with the free market (Rodriguez & Magill, 2016) and Worth (2015) has stated that the social embracing of neo-liberal ideals creates a “competition state” (p.294) in which nations engage with the global economy, seeking investment in order to succeed. Neo-
liberal ideals stipulate that the state’s main purpose is to create favourable conditions in order for private investment to thrive, and this has impacted social inequality through the rise of consumerism and the focus on marketability at all levels (Alfred, 2016; Lynch et al., 2009). Whilst introduced as an economic idea, Worth (2015) has argued that neo-liberalism has permeated all levels of society, whereby even schools and hospitals must now appear marketable and this saturation will be explored in the context of critical notions of hegemony in Chapter 4. Hursh (2009) has argued that neo-liberalism not only changes social structures, but also changes the relationship between the individual and society. Through social democratic liberal policies, social inequality is viewed as a social issue, perpetuating the belief that everyone is accountable for the marginalisation of certain groups within society (Hursh, 2009). In stark contrast, under neo-liberal policies, Hursh (2009) has argued that inequality is the product of individual choice, and this notion of individualism has had a significant impact on the ways in which inequality manifests in schools.

**Neo-liberalism and the School**

Several researchers have commented on the impact of neo-liberalism in perpetuating inequality in school environments (Bagley & Beach, 2015; Hooks, 2013; Orlowski, 2011). Bagley & Beach (2015) have stated that the purposes of education in the 21st century have been articulated away from playing a central part in a more inclusive, just and egalitarian society to one in which the central concern is the individual abilities of pupils, schools and workers to compete in a global market economy. Hooks (2013) and Orlowski (2011) have both noted that the emphasis on the individual learner has shifted the ways in which teaching occurs, as neo-liberal education is focussed on developing workers with the skills necessary for their ultimate vocational position. Orlowski (2011) has stated that neo-liberal beliefs instill a sense of individualism through the myth that everyone has a fair chance, and the assumption that social conditions don't impact a person's ability to perform at school. Shannon (2016) has similarly stated that the tenets of good neo-liberal citizenship are the ability to be self-managing, self-responsible and self-advancing, emphasising a vision in which individuals are not disadvantaged by gender, race, class or sexual hierarchies; these beliefs perpetuate inequality by ignoring the issues faced by students in marginalised groups, and by suggesting that individuals within these groups can improve their situation if they choose to. Referring back to the discussion in Chapter 2, this underestimation of the impact of marginalisation works in contrast to the literature regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools, with studies highlighting the significance of victimisation and exclusion on academic performance (Pearson et al., 2007; Kosciw et al., 2013). Furthermore, theories of masculinity directly link the experience of
individual LGBTIQ students with broader systems of domination, highlighting the role of social dynamics of power in maintaining heterosexuality as a dominant status (Benjamin, 2012; Connell, 2009; Paechter, 2006). In this way, individual students cannot simply overcome the social inequalities they face in school environments.

**Social Justice Education**

In contrast, the purpose of social justice education is to transform inequality by connecting individuals to broader systems of social power through education for a just society (Arshard, 2012; Noguera, 2008; North, 2009; Smyth, 2011). Education for freedom denies that people are abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world, recognising the social foundations of a society which are seemingly so easy to ignore (Noguera, 2008). This frame thereby works in opposition to Shannon’s (2016) interpretation of neo-liberalism by encouraging people to see themselves not as individuals, but as a part of something larger. Hytten (2015) has asserted that there is a sophisticated theoretical and practical body of research which grounds this practice in its ideals and realities of equality and fairness in society.

Leistyna (2009) has stated that educational institutions should be used to encourage young people to recognise their power to act upon the world via critical awareness. Leistyna (2009) has contended that it is essential to move beyond the simplistic notion that young people inhabit a land of innocence, rather that they are initiated in to social beliefs from birth. To this end, social commentators have highlighted the importance of prioritizing criticality above neo-liberal compliance. This compliance, which North (2009) has described as functional literacy, helps to create workers and citizens who sustain, rather than challenge existing social orders. In contrast to functional literacy, Brookfield (2012) has asserted that critical thinking, a hallmark of social justice education, intends to get people to think more deeply about the issues and relations of power that affect them and the people around them, involving the identification of assumptions that frame our thinking, determine our actions, and induce compliance, as well as applying values to the application of values to new actions. By applying a critical framework to the violent context of Chapter 2, students wouldn’t refrain from inflicting violence on their LGBTIQ peers because they are worried about being caught or punished, but rather they would embrace diversity because it is the right thing to do. North (2009) has supported this notion of values in criticality, arguing that critical literacy helps individuals know how to examine one’s own and others’ lives in relation to sociopolitical and cultural contexts.
These vastly differing perspectives, motivations and strategies intersect at the level of LGBTIQ equality in schools through the role of policy, the role of the curriculum and the role of the teacher. Upon reviewing relevant literature, policy and curricula in Australia and abroad, it is clear that the concepts of social justice education play a significant role in improving equality for LGBTIQ students in schools, and also that these measures designed to improve equality are susceptible to neo-liberal forces.

**Identification through Policy**

One of the key themes regarding safety in schools is the concept of identifying violence against LGBTIQ students. The previous chapter addressed the misrecognition of LGBTIQ harassment as typical adolescent behaviour, as general bullying, or even as acceptable (Mills, 2012; Warwick & Aggleton, 2013), and therefore being able to identify harassment, bullying and other forms in equality is an important step in making schools safer for LGBTIQ students (Hillier et al., 2010). One of the most prominent strategies used to improve identification has been the development and implementation of policies aiming to improve the safety, wellbeing and ultimately, equality for LGBTIQ Australian students (Mary & Hillier, 2012). Clear anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policy has been a consistent recommendation across much literature exploring LGBTIQ inequality in schools. Both The School Report (Guasp, 2012) and The Writing Themselves In 3 Report (Hillier et al., 2010) recommended schools implement policy which sends a clear message to all stakeholders within school environments that homophobia is unacceptable. In this way, both Guasp (2012) and Hillier et al., (2010) have argued that clear policy defines boundaries of behaviour, promoting equality through respectful interactions and minimising harm to LGBTIQ students through the identification of homophobia in both the UK and Australian schools.

The work of Hillier et al., (2010) found several positive impacts associated with policy which clearly identified LGBTIQ discrimination. In the Writing Themselves In 3 Report (2010), Hillier et al., concluded that perceived policy-based protection had a highly significant relationship with the reduced likelihood of students thinking about self-harm, actual self-harm, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide. Through quantitative and qualitative self-reports from Australian students, Hillier et al., (2010) also concluded that policy which identifies LGBTIQ students has a highly significant relationship with LGBTIQ students’ increased feelings of safety at school, as well as students feeling good about their sexuality. These findings demonstrate the potentially powerful impact of policy, as identification of issues and indeed, marginalised sexualities themselves may serve to counteract the harmful impact of the enactment of masculinity and heteronormativity through victimisation and exclusion (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010). In this
context, identification has the power to disrupt heteronormativity by breaking silences which Grey et al., (2016) have highlighted as being harmful to the LGBTIQ community as a whole.

This section outlines several key Australian policies designed to identify homophobia and to improve equality for LGBTIQ students in Australian schools. Despite the intentions of the policy makers, there remain issues with policy development and implementation in the context of focussing on safety in schools. I will conclude the section by addressing the potentially restrictive aspects of safety-focussed policy, which based on literature, may impact ability of a policy to influence change for equality.

Policy in Australia

Within the last 10 years, overall policy in Australian schools has developed a focus on identifying homophobia and making schools safer (Mary & Hillier, 2012). These policy changes have occurred at both federal and state levels, ranging from the protection of students and staff from discrimination and homophobia to the encouragement of sexual diversity in school environments. This section addresses two significant Australian policies which were developed in the context of improving sexual orientation equality in schools; the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) and Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools (SSDS, 2008).

In Australia, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) was signed by the Education Ministers of each state and territory, to ensure equity and excellence in Australian education. The agreement outlines a commitment from all governments to ensure education free from discrimination based on race, class, disability, gender and sexual orientation (Mary & Hillier, 2012), informed by the understanding that such discrimination impacts educational and wellbeing outcomes for young people in schools.

This statement demonstrates the identification of harassment, discrimination and school violence against LGBTIQ young people, as well as a brief allusion to the academic and social consequences of such discrimination. Accordingly, the MCEETYA (2008) is an important statement regarding the identification of LGBTIQ inequality in Australian schools. Whilst the policy doesn't provide any frameworks or strategies to deal with homophobic violence, by identifying sexual orientation discrimination as sexual orientation discrimination, it has attended to exclusion of LGBTIQ identities from anti-bullying campaigns. In this way, according to the policy, it is not reasonable to frame homophobia as typical adolescent behaviour, instead providing a prerogative for teachers and school
leaders to actually identify and confront homophobia in their classrooms and wider school environments.

Similarly, the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DETV), the government body responsible for administering state and federal policy to government schools, have endorsed the “Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools” (2008) guidelines. These guidelines similarly, but in greater detail, identify the ongoing harassment, discrimination and bullying occurring in schools and reported across a bulk of research; the policy refers to the Writing Themselves in Again report (2006), as well as the Equal Opportunity Policy (1995) in its justification section. The policy guides school leaders and teachers around acceptable behaviour, unacceptable behaviour, homophobia as well as actions they are required to take if they witness homophobia. Again, this policy was designed to help school staff identify sexual orientation inequality, however it remains particularly focussed on reducing homophobia. In this way, the policy has not connected homophobia to broader systems of masculinity and heteronormativity, which Saltmarsh (2012) has argued may impact the efficacy of policy implementation or indeed the longevity of any changes in behaviours, attitudes and school climate as a result of policy implementation.

Social commentators have connected this limitation of policy with the focus on decreasing bullying, not addressing school culture (Cosier, 2009; Robinson et al., 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). For Saltmarsh (2012) and Robinson et al., (2012), anti-bullying discourses are problematic as they describe school culture as either negative or positive, lacking the nuances and influences of social beliefs which regulate students’ positioning within a social hierarchy. In this framework, it is not enough to address negative behaviour, but rather Robinson et al., (2012) have argued that policy protections for LGBTIQ students must consider the ongoing subordination of LGBTIQ sexual identities within masculine hierarchies. To this end, categorising behaviours as positive or negative is too simplistic to capture the various influences of social power through which homophobia thrives in schools.

Robinson (2012) has similarly criticised the zero tolerance approach to bullying, describing it as a Band-Aid strategy which covers up deeper social beliefs that underpin heteronormative violence, as homophobic discourses are often not addressed. Whilst the work of Hillier et al., (2010) and other psychological approaches are helpful in identifying the issues faced by LGBTIQ students, a focus on statistics fails to explore why the same groups of students are targeted across various countries (Cosier, 2009). By focussing on the minimisation of bullying behaviours and not on broader systems of masculine and heteronormative violence, students may be learning how to suppress their potentially
negative attitudes regarding sexual diversity, not how to change their attitudes regarding the importance of diversity (Robinson, 2012).

This view has been affirmed by Marsten (2015), who through her work with Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH), has argued the dangers of policy which acknowledges certain harms whilst silencing others. Marsten (2015) has described the individualising of bullying in policy, whereby bullying is viewed as an individual act by an individual perpetrator, and neglects to connect to broader systems of social power. Marsten (2015) has argued that it is more constructive to view some acts of homophobia as heteronormativity, instead of framing the behaviour as hate-fuelled, it is instead viewed as demonstrative of the privileging of heterosexuality. Again, the sociological connections between masculinities and heteronormativity frame homophobic violence as enactments of deeper social belief systems, and are potentially more helpful with regards to understanding and dealing with the root causes of ongoing violence towards LGTBIQ students in schools, and arguably, society as a whole (Ramirez, 2015). I will explore this notion in greater depth in Chapter 5 when addressing critical theories of social transformation.

Whilst these two documents (MEETYA, 2008; SDSS, 2008) have demonstrated some progression within the Australian educational environment, there also remain issues associated with the narrow focus on improved safety as the outcome of policy implementation. Mary & Hillier (2012) have argued that legal protections, and by extension school policy, are a critical component in the pursuit of equality and opportunity for LGBTIQ students, however that a reliance on laws and policies is problematic. Saltmarsh (2012) has stated that this reliance allows schools to maintain a reactionary position with regards to their responsibility for safety, as opposed to a proactive approach which progresses beyond existing policy. In this context, school staff manage violence when it occurs, as opposed to modelling less violent ways of interacting.

Although this argument has demonstrated potential limitations of policy under neo-liberal influences, many schools have considered social justice values and equality as significant objectives. Indeed, the research of Hillier et al., (2010) and Mary & Hillier (2012) discussed the importance of clear policy in helping students feel safe and supported in their school environments, and the work of Porrecca (2010) detailed the impact of school ethos in helping teachers feel that they can support LGBTIQ students in their classroom and beyond. The Department of Education and Training in Victoria (DETV) specifically addresses sexual orientation and gender for their potential for victimisation and poorer mental health outcomes, however the identification of transgender students still falls under the "specific condition
support” section along with cancer, pregnancy and epilepsy (DETV, 2016). In this way, whilst the policy document has contributed to LGBTIQ equality through identification, it has simultaneously perpetuated inequality through what Shannon (2016) described as neo-liberal risk discourses and the pathologisation of identities.

To this end, whilst neo-liberalism can impact policy through a focus on risk and a disconnection of homophobia from masculinity and heteronormativity, the work of Hillier et al., (2010) and Porreca (2010) has demonstrated that individual schools can still infuse their policy statements with values of equality, diversity and fairness. Furthermore, social justice educators have espoused the necessity for policy and formal structures to be supported by a curriculum which teaches students about social justice themes of inequality, oppression and power and simultaneously about inclusion, equality and values (Hytten, 2015; Meyer et al., 2016). The following section explores examples of a social justice curriculum for sexual orientation equality in schools, which in the same vein as policy, are not immune to neo-liberal influences.

**Inclusion through Curriculum**

Researchers have suggested that an inclusive curriculum can be pivotal in deconstructing stereotypes and binaries which can make school environments unsafe for LGBTIQ people (Davies & McInnes, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Curricula inclusive of LGBTIQ themes has been seen to potentially combat the impacts of exclusion and aggression in schools (Gray et al., 2016; Hiller et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012). This can be seen as extending identification, moving beyond the reactive management of violence to a more proactive educative stance. From a psychological perspective, an inclusive curriculum has been seen to help LGBTIQ students through education about aspects of their sexuality, through peer exposure to heterosexual alternatives and ultimately, through the normalising of alternative sexual and gender identities in society (Hillier et al., 2010). From a sociological perspective, an inclusive curriculum has been viewed as having the potential to disrupt masculine hierarchies by including, as opposed to excluding or punishing, non-hegemonic forms of masculinity (Davies & McInnes, 2012). In this way, curriculum which explores LGBTIQ themes in a respectful way, acknowledges LGBTIQ people, validates their experiences and includes them as valued members of society; this action is particularly disruptive to masculinities, which as explored in Chapter 2, rely on the subordination of alternative ways of being in order to thrive and maintain their dominant position (Benjamin, 2012; Paechter, 2006). This section introduces sexual diversity in the Australian curriculum, before introducing the neo-liberal influences on existing curriculum standards. I also address social justice influences on inclusive curriculum in the US,
the UK and Australia, which serve to introduce LGBTIQ themes and to disrupt existing hierarchies of social sexual power in schools.

**Sexual Diversity in the Australian Curriculum**

If violence towards LGBTIQ members of society is constructed, enacted and perpetuated through hierarchies of masculinity which determine unjust sexual privilege and visibility, then education for justice becomes a potentially emancipatory force (Noguera, 2008; North, 2009; Robinson, 2012). In Australian schools, sexual diversity has been typically relegated to Health and Physical Education (Australian Curriculum, 2015) and this situating of sexuality discussions has been associated with several limitations which may impact the promotion of safety of inclusive education (Shannon, 2016). Shannon (2016) has commented that overall, some teachers struggle to attend to equality in sexuality education in an already crowded curriculum. Shannon (2016) referred to the New South Wales Crossroad curriculum (NSW Department of Education 2015) which expects teachers to engage with sexual diversity whilst also addressing issues of bullying, self-esteem, personal safety, the dangers of drugs and alcohol, family relationships and more recently, religious radicalisation. Finnessy (2016) likewise found teacher perceptions regarding the crowded nature of the English curriculum in the US, with the teachers commenting that they don’t have time to introduce LGBTIQ themes, and despite being aware of sexual diversity resources, stated that they weren’t prepared to go beyond their current time constraints. Shannon (2016) asserted that the content designed to be inclusive of marginalised students struggles to find its place within a predominately health-based curriculum attributing this struggle to the influence of neo-liberal ideals.

**Neo-Liberalism in the Curriculum**

In recent years, there has been increasing research attention paid to the interaction between neo-liberalism, education and the perpetuation of discrimination (Hursh, 2009; Shannon, 2016; Smyth, 2011). In the context of exploring challenges to inclusivity, I will introduce two facets which impact inclusive sexuality education, namely the neo-liberal interpretations of risk and of individuality.

Shannon (2016) has discussed the concept of neo-liberal risk management within sexuality discourses, commenting that the emphasis is often placed on risks and dangers such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy. Shannon (2016) has stated that this emphasis often occurs at the expense of curriculum content which may seek to portray sexual pleasure, intimacy and diversity of relationships which are necessary aspects of inclusive education for LGBTIQ students due to a lack of
LGBTIQ relationship role models (Hillier et al., 2010), as well as the historical pathologisation of homosexuality and its association with disease (Marsten, 2015); certainly this was evident through the DETV policy regarding gender identities. Risk management discourses may impact inclusivity designed to minimise the impact of exclusion on identity development and on the ability of young people to see their diversion from the norm in a positive light (Shannon, 2016). These comments extend the discussion in Chapter 2, whereby Pearson et al., (2007) and Kosciw et al., (2013) highlighted the damaging impact of exclusion, instead suggesting that even if themes are included, they may not necessarily help LGBTIQ students form a positive self-identity. Despite Shannon's (2016) critique, there are examples of inclusive curriculum which infuse LGBTIQ themes into a variety of subjects, through a variety of ways.

**LGBTIQ Themes in Curriculum**

The inclusion of LGBTIQ themes in subject curricula has been framed as education for equality (Yang, 2009). For Yang (2009), education describes all forms of learning, and he is clear to define education from schooling. Yang (2009) has stated that schooling is a peculiar institution that conditions people into reproduced systems of legitimated knowledge; education however, is learning beyond these systems. In this framework, a person can be highly schooled, but “miseducated” (p.455). This places schools as dialectical spaces in which both education and miseducation are possibilities (Yang, 2009). Regarding Shannon's (2016) assessment of LGBTIQ themes in health and physical education, focussing on risks and diminishing the possibilities of LGBTIQ students developing positive self-identities could be considered miseducation. In contrast, a curriculum which presents LGBTIQ themes, openly explores social inequalities and acknowledges the importance of hierarchies of masculinities, from a social justice perspective, would be framed as education. The notion of schools as dialectical spaces continues the discussion of Chapter 2, whereby researchers have framed schools as places which can serve to perpetuate dominant masculine and heteronormative social orders, or else challenge them (Robinson, 2012; Smyth, 2011). Again, both The School Report (Gausp, 2012) and the Writing Themselves In 3 report (Hillier et al., 2010) found that school policy, subjects and teachers demonstrated this dual capacity to either help LGBTIQ students or else to harm them through victimisation and exclusion. This section addresses the exposure of LGBTIQ themes, before extending the discussion of Chapter 2 by addressing education which goes beyond simple inclusion to actually disrupting hierarchies of masculinity.
A prominent interpretation of inclusion is the focus on exposing students to LGBTIQ themes. In The UK, the Classroom Project serves to design inclusive curriculum, making sample lesson plans available online to teachers interested in including LGBTIQ themes into their curricula. What is interesting about this project is the scope of subjects included, as all of the lesson plans have been contributed by qualified teachers working in the UK, ranging from inclusive lessons about geography, maths and religion. The Classroom Project demonstrates the scope to which LGBTIQ themes can be included in the Australian Curriculum beyond the realm of Health and Physical Education. Due to the importance of challenging existing hierarchies of masculinity, several social justice educators have argued that inclusion of LGBTIQ themes is the beginning of an inclusive curriculum (David & McInnes, 2012; Marsten, 2015; Robinson, 2012), to work alongside themes and discussions which directly disrupt masculine and heteronormative hierarchies.

**Inclusive Curriculum as Disruption**

Inclusive education can go beyond the exposure to alternative themes, serving to disrupt existing social structures through direct challenging, growing awareness of systems of power and the provision of more equitable alternatives (David & McInnes, 2012; Sleeter, 2009). The explicitness of this attention is extremely significant in light of the critiques of safety measures in schools for LGBTIQ students. Robinson (2012) and Marsten (2015) have suggested that all too often, violence against LGBTIQ students was regarded as individual acts of bullying as opposed to the enactment of broader social structures of masculinity. As discussed in the section exploring safety, this focus simply contains violence, it does not attend to the belief systems underpinning the violence (Marsten, 2015; Payne & Smith, 2012; Ramirez, 2015; Saltmarsh & Robinson, 2012). Instead, social commentators have suggested alternative frameworks which focus on disrupting inequality as an educative goal, as opposed to focussing solely on the important, but potentially narrow, exposure to alternative themes (Davies & McInnes, 2012). The following section explores two examples of social justice education which attempt to disrupt heteronormativity, masculinity and neo-liberalism in schools.

Davies & McInnes (2012) have discussed inclusivity in the context of what they have described as circuits of recognition. Circuits of recognition have been defined by Davies & McInnes (2012) as the discursive constructions that inform behaviours and attitudes, thereby attending to broader social inequalities which manifest in beliefs and actions. According to Davies & McInnes (2012), an inclusive curriculum provides teachers with opportunities to deconstruct stereotypes through circuit breakers, legitimising ways of being other than masculine, heteronormative ideals which circulate within classrooms and
school environments. Drawing on prominent critiques by Robinson et al., (2012) and Saltmarsh (2012) regarding school policy and its neglect of underlying social beliefs, this type of pedagogical approach explicitly addresses these social dynamics of inequality, whilst linking inequality with beliefs and behaviour. These connections go beyond the exposure of alternative themes which are seemingly present in subject-based curricula, instead labelling inequality as inequality and helping students question the origins of how they see the world. Due to this consideration, Davies & McInnes' (2012) conceptualisation is profoundly disruptive to existing notions of neutral teaching within masculine constructs. The concept of breaking circuits is a useful introduction to social justice education pedagogy and can be applied to a range of social inequalities. Whilst this type of discussion represents the types of ideas found in academic literature, there have also been social justice programs introduced into Australian classrooms by the Safe Schools Coalition.

A clear example of disruption can be found in Australia's Safe Schools Coalition teaching package "All of Us" (2016). The Safe Schools Coalition is an organisation funded by the Victorian Government working towards supporting sexual diversity, intersex and gender diversity in schools. The organisation was developed in response to alarming findings of experiences of LGBTIQ students in Australian schools (Safe Schools Coalition, 2016), and features several online resources for school leaders and teachers in order to make schools safer. Safe Schools was initially limited as it, like much broad social policy, identified bullying and victimisation without addressing the underpinning socio-cultural and political discourses of masculinity and heteronormativity (Robinson et al., 2012). However the most recent teaching package All of Us, a resource for Year 7 and 8 students, has accounted for this criticism by labelling heteronormativity as heteronormativity. The eight lesson plan addresses the concepts and realities of sexual diversity through group discussions and video interviews with SSA, intersex and transgender young people in Australia, before highlighting the nature of heteronormativity and opening up the idea of students being allies for the LGBTIQ community.

The stated aims of the program are to improve school safety through inclusivity by raising awareness, encouraging reviews of policies and procedures and encouraging students to act for equality. The program is disruptive of both masculine and neo-liberal systems by detailing the nature and impact of heteronormativity and homophobia, whilst simultaneously encouraging inclusion in curricula beyond physical health as well as activities outside of the classroom including sporting events and school formals; literature has highlighted both sports and formals as arenas of exclusion for LGBTIQ young people (Larsson et al., 2011; Paechter, 2003; Smith et al., 2016). In this way, "All of Us" extends beyond.
the Classroom Project, as it specifically attends to broader systems of inequality, teaching students that they live in an unequal society. Furthermore, each lesson focuses on language and the way everybody can be more equal through more respectful uses of language. In a social justice context, the package also contains lessons devoted to exploring heteronormativity as the underlying belief system of homophobia, questioning and interrogating the norms on both large social scales and more day-to-day enactments. For example, students are asked to write a paragraph about the many ways they exhibit heteronorms in their lives, including asking a new parent if their baby is a boy or a girl, or assuming that their friend’s new partner is of the opposite sex. Without directly naming masculinities, this framework establishes a hierarchical relationship between heteronormativity and the ways in which we act out homophobia and assumptions about sexual orientation, and therefore goes beyond the inclusion of LGBTIQ themes in the curriculum.

This section has explored two interpretations of inclusive curriculum designed to improve LGBTIQ equality in schools and beyond. In the UK and Australia, there have been efforts to incorporate LGBTIQ themes into existing subject plans (The Classroom Project; All of Us, Safe Schools Coalition, 2016), however critiques have highlighted the susceptibility of these inclusive strategies to neo-liberal ideals of risk and self-management, undermining both the social nature of power dynamics as well as framing sexuality in a negative light (Shannon, 2016). Theories and models relating to social justice education, however, explicitly explore the relationships between heteronormativity, masculinity and inequality, extending LGBTIQ themes to explore power relations and the ways in which we act out these relations on a daily basis (Davies & McInnes, 2012).

Despite the attendance to broader social systems, as well as the disruption of masculinities, social justice educators have commented on the necessity of having engaged and committed teachers facilitating the lessons (Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009). Reading through the All of Us package (Safe Schools Coalition, 2016), it is clear that teachers are expected to understand and agree with the concepts presented based on some information regarding policy and statistics about the mental health of LGBTIQ students in schools. Given that sociological perspectives have stressed the insidious, hierarchical and hegemonic nature of masculinities and heteronormativity, it is perhaps an oversight to expect teachers to simply transcend the beliefs and practices which potentially make up the milieu of their daily lives. Therefore, whilst social justice educational programs can contribute to the equality of LGBTIQ students in schools through direct education regarding social inequalities, hierarchies and the importance of diversity, these programs must be facilitated, motivated and maintained by teachers who
themselves, are aware of inequalities and broader social dynamics, and who value and embrace change (Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009; Meyer et al., 2016). The following section explores both the role of teachers and current teacher education, before concluding that much education in Australia and beyond may not adequately prepare teachers to deliver and foster more socially equal ways of viewing and interacting with the world.

**The Role of the Teacher**

A much discussed, debated and heralded aspect of LGBTIQ equality in schools is the role of the teacher (Meyer et al., 2016; Richard, 2015; Smyth, 2011). Again, neo-liberal and social justice education ideas regarding the role of the teacher differ greatly between apolitical purveyors of knowledge to active social change agents (Smyth, 2011). Within research into LGBTIQ equality, teachers have been shown to play a role by supporting students, intervening in bullying and modelling fairer and more equitable ways of interacting (Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012). Despite the significance of this role, there appear to be barriers which limit, stifle or divert teachers’ abilities to improve equality in their schools, specifically the importance of life experience and the role of fear. Based on existing findings, I argue that teacher education programs are vital in helping teachers realise and enact their role in equality for LGBTIQ students.

Neo-liberal and social justice education understandings of the teacher work in opposition to one another. Smyth (2011) has stated that teachers have been treated harshly by neo-liberal reform policies, being systematically excluded and denied a voice within school changes. Orlowski (2011) and Hooks (2013) have both commented on teacher accountability of test-results, which Orlowski (2011) described as a neo-liberal assault on education. Hooks (2013) commented that teaching for testing enhances discrimination and inequality, as students are viewed as responsible for their own situation in school and larger society, and as Sleeter (2009) described, teachers become implicated in the requirement to convert schools into consumerist businesses. Sleeter (2009) went on to say that the subject centred focus on state standards has redefined teacher quality in a way that makes teacher education all but unnecessary. Through the neo-liberal model, teachers are more accountable to standards, minimising their individuality and ability to influence social justice and equality agendas. Smyth (2011) has stated that the neo-liberal identity of the preferred teacher is dutiful, compliant, market responsive and uncritical of social circumstances. Smyth (2011) viewed this identity as a neutering of teachers which renders them apolitical and non-partisan.
In direct contrast, perspectives from social justice education place the teacher in the role of an active, vocal and critical agent of change. Sleeter (2009) has stated that a teacher’s role is to foster democratic engagement among young people and to advocate for marginalised students by situating inequalities within a systemic sociopolitical analysis and Kukner et al., (2016) have argued that teachers need to be considered as activists for equality, not people who tolerate difference. In this framework, teachers work as social advocates, acknowledging inequality, challenging existing social structures which promote inequality and showing students alternative and fairer ways of interacting with each other and the world (Cosier, 2009; Kukner et al., 2016). These assertions enhance the discussion of Chapter 2, where it was demonstrated that across both psychological and sociological models of sexual orientation in schools, teachers have been consistently recognised as significant to inequality for LGBTIQ students (Cosier, 2009; Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Vega et al., 2012). Like policy and curriculum, teachers have been seen to have the dual capacity of either disrupting heteronormative and masculine hierarchies by supporting LGBTIQ students and educating students about alternative sexual identities (Hillier et al., 2010), or else simultaneously perpetuating hierarchies by either excluding LGBTIQ identities (Mary & Hillier, 2012), ignoring victimisation (Vega et al., 2012) or in extreme cases, participating in victimisation (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Teachers have been seen as uniquely positioned to both support LGBTIQ students and manage homophobia, in particular the casual and targeted use of homophobic language (Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012). Furthermore, teachers have also been regarded as uniquely positioned to role model more equitable ways of interacting, both through the curriculum and through behaviours (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010).

**Support and Language**

Several researchers have concluded that when teachers are perceived by LGTBIQ students as supportive, students are less likely to experience problems at school (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Vega et al., 2012). Based on their comprehensive literature review, Vega et al., (2012) concluded that support has most commonly been observed through proactive behaviour, specifically in teachers who proactively counter heteronormativity and initiate actions to address homophobia. Whilst there are numerous ways in which teachers can proactively promote safety and challenge social hierarchies of masculinities and sexualities, across the literature, the confronting of homophobic language has been most commonly addressed as a form of support for the purpose of safety (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Given the discussion in Chapter 2 regarding the importance of homophobic language in perpetuating masculinity, this assertion is not surprising. Based on the results of the Writing
Themselves In 3 report (2010), Hillier et al., concluded that teachers play a vital role in supporting students, linking this role to increasing rates of disclosure from students regarding their sexuality. Hillier et al., (2010) concluded that teachers were increasingly seen by students as supportive figures to whom they can confide their sexual identities in the school environment. Beyond support, Pearson et al., (2007) linked the attachment of LGBTIQ students to their school through perceived teacher inclusion and openness, concluding that whether intentionally or not, teachers play a part in student development.

In both Victoria and New South Wales, Mary & Hillier (2012) recognised that extensive teacher training efforts had made significant differences to practicing teachers by giving them strategies for combatting students’ homophobic language and information on LGBTIQ sexualities. Cosier (2009) has stressed the need for teachers to support LGBTIQ students by confronting homophobic speech and linking it to a larger social problem, which affirms Vega et al’s (2012) assertions regarding the danger of correcting homophobic language as an isolated action of harassment. This notion has been threaded throughout this chapter, as Robinson et al., (2012) have stated, simply attending to bullying as individual acts does not contribute to safety in schools for LGBTIQ students. Robinson et al., (2012) argued that homophobic language must be linked with broader systems of masculinity and heteronormativity if it is to be meaningfully challenged in a systemic way. In a similar vein, Cosier (2009) has asserted that it is the role of the teacher to make these links clear, otherwise the issue of LGBTIQ inequality in schools will be ongoing. However, researchers have also commented that correcting language and identifying homophobia alone is not enough (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010; Vega et al., 2012), instead suggesting the idea of modelling as a pivotal role of the teacher.

Support and Modelling

Researchers have discussed the importance of modelling equality when teaching for equality. The Safe at School Report (Biegel & Keuhl, 2010) discussed the specific role of LGBTIQ teachers in supporting students through both knowledge and through role modelling. This appears too obvious a strategy, as it does not address underlying heteronormative or masculinity discourses and absolves other teachers of their vital role in sexuality equality advocacy. Vega et al., (2012) firmly stated that the responsibility for countering heteronormativity should not be placed solely on the shoulders of LGBTIQ teachers, but rather that the responsibility lay with teachers who identify with the dominant heterosexual group. For Vega et al., (2012), these assertions are based on evidence that heterosexual teachers are more likely to continue to display heteronormative ideologies and behaviours, including the failure to interrogate the
norm or to address homophobic name-calling. Therefore, both Biegel & Keuhl (2010) and Vega et al.,
(2012) have acknowledged the unique position of teachers in modelling equality for their students,
despite their differences in opinions regarding which teachers are more suited. Cosier (2009), however,
had overtly stated that modelling equality is the responsibility of all teachers, and that this modelling
extends to all students, not just LGBTIQ students. Cosier (2009) has extended beyond Biegel & Keuhl’s
(2010) reliance on LGBTIQ lived experience in order to do this modelling, instead highlighting the
importance of teacher education as the route by which teachers learn to acknowledge, accept and enact
this responsibility.

The work of Gray et al., (2016) explored the role of Australian LGBTIQ teachers in Victoria, specifically
the ongoing impact of heteronormativity on their daily lives; more significantly to this section, this study
explored how teachers have challenged these norms at school. Gray et al., (2016) highlighted the
importance of teachers in using “points of interruption” (p.296), arguing that despite socio-political
changes to the lives of LGBTIQ Australians, schools continue to be dominated by a heteronormative
discourse which assumes heterosexuality and gender conformity from teachers. Gray et al., (2016)
conducted interviews with nine teachers, both primary and secondary, working across government,
Catholic and Independent schools in Victoria. The participants identified as five lesbian females, two gay
males and two queer males and what is interesting about this study is the idea that the teacher’s role
extends beyond the content being taught through the curriculum. Certainly, two of the participants in
Gray et al.,’s (2016) study viewed their role as inherently political, describing activism and education
around inequality as vital teacher actions. These assertions extended existing literature which had
framed teachers as important in discipline, correction and challenging of homophobia (Biegel & Kehul,
2010; Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012). The work of Gray et al., (2016) has opened up the idea of
teachers as political actors, an idea consistent with the nature and purpose of social justice education
(Hooks, 2013; Sleeter, 2009).

This section has explored various perceptions regarding the role of the teacher. Whist neo-liberal ideals
frame the teacher as a neutral and detached conduit of state approved knowledge, social justice
education places the teacher front and centre in the fight against equality. Research into LGBTIQ
equality in schools has observed the importance of the teacher, both in supporting LGBTIQ students,
challenging harmful language and role modelling more equitable ways of interacting with each other,
and therefore social justice education ideals clearly have an important place within teacher discourse
(Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009; Meyer et al., 2016; Richard, 2015). Whilst this active teacher is a social
justice ideal, there remain barriers which interfere with a teacher's engagement with, and commitment to, their role in advocacy (Apple, 2013; 2016; Hursh, 2009).

**Barriers to Teacher Advocacy**

Despite the important role teachers may play in LGBTIQ equality, several key studies have demonstrated the barriers which may interfere with both the acceptance and enactment of this importance (Finnessy, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016; Richard, 2015). Across the literature, there are two primary barriers which seemingly divert and suppress the role of the teacher in supporting and modelling equality, namely the role of exposure and the role of fear.

Researchers have commented on the importance of exposure or experience in providing the awareness, understanding and confidence around LGBTIQ inequality required to act as an educational agent of change within a school (Finnessy, 2016; Malins, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016; Richard, 2015). This exposure can be viewed in the context of life experience and professional experience, whereby experience with LGBTIQ inequality served as a motivator for intervention in schools and a lack of experience served as a deterrent from action, and studies have observed the difference between LGBTIQ and heterosexual teachers regarding their management of inequality in the school. The work of Meyer et al., (2016) investigated the perceptions of 3400 Canadian K-12 teachers, 13.6% of whom identified as LGBTIQ, regarding a range of topics to do with gender and sexual diversity education. Through a large scale survey, Meyer et al., (2016) found that teachers' personal values and beliefs had a strong impact on what content they included in their classrooms, and concluded that teachers with experience of being a sexual minority were more likely to be committed to human rights and social justice in the classroom. Finnessy (2016) likewise investigated the hypothetical integration of LGBTIQ themes into an English curriculum, and explored this through the perceptions of six self-identified heterosexual teachers. Finnessy (2016) noticed a reluctance to integrate materials about alternative sexualities, and upon questioning the teachers further, discovered that a major cause of concern was their collective, but limited life experience. Through semi-structured interviews and written reflections, Finnessy (2016) recorded that the teachers didn't feel they had the necessary life experience to give credence to a sexual minority curriculum; Finnessy (2016) even observed one of the teachers to deny ever having taught an LGBTIQ student. Based on these responses, Finnessy (2016) concluded that teachers have personal experiences which guide their professional instruction of student learning, and that either consciously or unconsciously, teachers reproduce their own experiences in their classrooms.
Expanding upon this concept, the work of Richard (2015) explored LGBTIQ inclusive practice in schools, focussing on the different factors which improved teacher willingness to advocate for LGBTIQ equality. Richard (2015) investigated this topic in a Quebec context, stating that whilst Quebecois policy was progressive, the province lacked programs to adequately address heteronormativity in schools. Richard (2015) hypothesised that teacher education did not prepare teachers to tackle sexual diversity in their classrooms, and utilised a survey questionnaire in order to explore the beliefs of 243 high school teachers. The questionnaire covered the teachers’ background information, demographics, sexual-diversity related content as well as content pertaining to any interventions into homophobia and heteronormativity that the teachers may have carried out. For the teachers who actively intervened in incidents of homophobia and perceived heteronormativity, Richard (2015) found three main categories which she believed explained their willingness. Based on the findings Richard (2015) concluded that teachers were more willing to advocate for equality, intervene in homophobia and disrupt heteronormativity if they were living as an LGBTIQ person, which was known as experiential training, if they were closely acquainted with an LGBTIQ person, known as contact training, or if they had been educated regarding LGBTIQ issues and themes, known as professional training.

In both large scale surveys and more intimate and in-depth interviews, teachers have identified that life experience with LGBTIQ issues can impact their willingness to advocate for equality. These comparative studies are interesting in the context of social justice education literature, specifically Tan's (2009) concept of exposure. Based on these findings, it appears that many teachers teach what they have been exposed to, whether that be a more traditional and homogenous curriculum of sexuality or a divergent one. As exposure is an important factor, Meyer et al., (2016) have argued that if researchers and advocates can find more ways of helping non-LGBTIQ teachers see how LGBTIQ issues are human rights and social justice issues, than there may be more opportunities to help more teachers find ways to integrate this content into their curriculum. This notion was supported by the findings of Malins (2016) which highlighted teacher perceptions regarding their professional experience through training. In her small scale study of five Canadian teachers, through interviews, Malins (2016) found that a significant concern and potential barrier for teachers embracing their role in LGBTIQ equality was a lack of teacher training. Malins (2016) herself noticed the difference in training when interviewing the teachers, and used an example regarding gender to illustrate this difference. When asked to define gender, Malins (2016) reported one participant who described gender in the context of social construction and gender roles, demonstrating awareness of masculine hierarchies, and another teacher who defined gender as male and female. To Malins (2016), this difference was indicative of a substantial difference in
professional experience through teacher training. This was further highlighted through the work of Lee & Carpenter (2015), who investigated teacher preparedness in New Zealand. Lee & Carpenter (2015) found that overall, student teachers didn’t feel prepared to manage the complexities of sexual diversity in their classrooms. Furthermore, LGBTIQ student teachers reported having been advised not to disclose their sexuality whilst completing their practicums, and all student teachers felt that the University programs had little to no input from LGBTIQ people. Lee & Carpenter (2015) concluded that teachers were abdicating their responsibility to ensure that the voices and perspectives of LGBTIQ people were included. These findings again suggest that teachers are vulnerable to social norms around sexuality, but also that teacher education itself is not enough; it must be a certain type of education. The notion of more exposure to sexual diversity training has been echoed in the recommendations of Hunt & Jensen (2007), Guasp (2012), Hillier et al., (2010) and Sleeter (2009).

Exposure is not the only barrier to advocacy for teachers. In a neo-liberal climate of risk, another important consideration for understanding LGBTIQ inequality is understanding the role of teacher fear. For Meyer et al., (2016), although the findings indicated the greater commitment to advocacy of LGBTIQ teachers, they similarly demonstrated LGBTIQ teacher perceptions that they are more vulnerable to backlash than their heterosexual counterparts if they take a stand against anti-LGBTIQ behaviours. The heterosexual teachers interviewed by Finnessy (2016) demonstrated the role of fear in several areas. Firstly, they expressed concern for perpetuating stereotypes, providing misinformation and opening up opportunities for negative discussions, instead stating that it is something which is easier to avoid. Whilst the teachers themselves did not realise administrative concerns, the two additional administrator participants did discuss concerns about community perceptions if they were to introduce LGBTIQ inclusive themes into the English curriculum. Finally, the teachers expressed fear about being perceived as gay by association to the extent that Finnessy commented that "discomfort was a common refrain" (p.46). Seemingly, empowering sexual minorities was seen as being done at the cost of power, an idea which demonstrated the depth to which the teachers have been impacted by masculinity. By including alternative sexualities, the teachers would have been challenging the dominance of masculinity, which Benjamin (2012) has argued would result in a loss of status; unfortunately for the teachers in this study, this was too high a risk. The teachers interviewed by Malins (2016) also demonstrated their fear by reporting a strong sense of caution with parents when considering an LGBTIQ inclusive curriculum. Malins (2016) went as far as to conclude that pleasing parents was the first priority regarding the introduction of an inclusive curriculum, which shows the orientation to neo-liberal priorities of risk, and away from social justice priorities of values. Based on such findings, Malins (2016) recommended social
justice education and diversity specifically around issues of gender and sexual identities, as well immersing teachers in theories of critical literacy.

**Becoming Critical: Teacher Education**

Several social justice educators have commented on the purpose of teacher education (Lee, 2011; McDonald & Zeichner; Russo, 2004). Lee (2011) has stated that to become a teacher for social justice, teachers need to understand who they are and their views on the sources of inequities and privileges. Hytten (2015) has affirmed this by highlighting the importance of teachers reflecting on the origins of their beliefs and assumptions and Arshard (2012) has argued that teachers should consider the influence of their family and home, their personal experiences of discrimination, the influences of religion and being part of the “other” (p.3). McDonald & Zeichner (2012) described this kind of education as gaining a greater understanding of oneself as a cultural being. This process counteracts the harmful individualising impacts of neo-liberalism by explicitly helping teachers realise that they are connected to broader society through their beliefs and subsequently, their actions. Sleeter (2009) and Hytten (2015) have further discussed the importance of teachers becoming aware of their values and morals in an effort to counteract the impact of focussing on risk and performance; this idea works against neo-liberalism by stating that there is a greater social good and individuals should make decisions based on their values (Sleeter, 2009).

The notion of reflection takes on particular importance in light of research which points to the complexity of sexual orientation beliefs (Magnus & Lundin, 2016; Robinson, 2012). Drawing on the discussion of Chapter 2, theories of masculinity link heteronormativity, masculinity and homophobia, and indeed, the ability to connect these beliefs is an important part of being critical (Benjamin, 2012; Robinson, 2012). Researching preservice teacher education in Germany, Magnus & Lundin (2016) investigated the heteronormative beliefs of a group of 22 university students. The students responded to a question “how does heterosexuality influence educational situations?”, firstly through a discussion and then through written reflections. The participants also read an article exploring heteronorms in school environments and were asked to speak to a person from their personal life about the topic. Magnus & Lundin (2016) found that most students welcomed equality of people of different sexes, genders and sexualities in educational settings, however, on closer analysis, Magnus & Lundin (2016) were able to see that some teachers saw difference as something to be tolerated, but not addressed in schools. Rather, many participants in the study felt that the school’s role was to carry on the norms of society. In contrast, many participants felt that the educators themselves should actively work to a state
where diversity is embraced and equality is realised. These differences highlight the framing of heteronormativity as actually underlying homophobia (Robinson, 2012), as whilst all participants denounced homophobic acts, some demonstrated profoundly heteronormative attitudes. Magnus & Lundin (2016) further noticed this undercurrent of heteronorms when they observed the differences with which group discussions addressed the notion of coeducation to how they addressed the benefits of sexual diversity. Magnus & Lundin (2016) concluded that the enthusiasm with which coeducation was discussed occurred as it fit within a heteronormative understanding of gender binaries, whilst they attributed the relative quietness during the discussion around sexual diversity to the content transgressing heteronormative boundaries. The results of this study lend support to Cosier’s (2009) assertions regarding teacher education; that it can’t be assumed because someone is a teacher that they are not subject to social norms. Furthermore, specific to LGBTIQ inequality, this study suggests that just because a teacher does not display overt homophobia, does not mean that they aren't profoundly heteronormative.

In order to encourage the development of criticality and social justice ethics in teachers, teacher education programs have been designed to immerse preservice teachers in the nature of LGBTIQ inequality in schools, as well as their role in change. Kitchen & Bellini (2012) developed a 3 hour workshop entitled "Sexual Diversity in Schools" which was attended by 134 teacher candidates. The primary source of data was a survey which the teachers completed following the workshop, with the purpose being to gather teacher perceptions on teacher education for LGBTIQ inequality in schools. The workshop consisted of word games and activities around key LGBTIQ terms, discussions about personal experiences with inequality and information about the nature of inequality in schools as well as the role teachers play in change. In a similar fashion as previous research (Finnessy, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016), the teachers reported comfort based on personal experiences with LGBTIQ issues, however extended these findings by also reporting comfort based on prior exposure to relevant theories as well as general approval of the topic. This suggests that there are several ways to engage teachers in advocacy for LGBTIQ equality.

Kukner et al., (2016) developed a two year longitudinal study by integrating their Positive Space I and II program into two mandatory Year 1 courses in a Bachelor of Education program in Canada. Within these programs, teachers were immersed in social justice education concepts such as power, privilege, cultural capital, critical thinking and forms of oppression with the aim of helping teachers become better activists for LGBTIQ equality. In order to gather data, Kukner et al., (2016) adopted a mixed methods
approach, using surveys as well as interviews before and after the teachers had their field experience in
schools. Overall, Kukner et al., (2016) found an increased awareness and understanding of LGBTIQ
issues and reported the benefits of acquiring a language with which to confidently discuss LGBTIQ
equality with others. Kukner et al., (2016) also found that overall, the teachers expressed a desire to
shift curriculum as part of their commitment to social justice work, however the power differentials
between preservice teachers and mentors who did not wish to intervene in LGBTIQ violence were a
significant barrier for some teachers.

Despite the comfort reported by teachers in Kitchen & Bellini’s (2012) study and the growing awareness
reported in the work of Kukner et al., (2016), in the context of social justice education, these programs
were limited. The teachers in Kitchen & Bellini's (2012) study expressed a desire for more time to
explore issues, and Kitchen & Bellini (2012) concluded that teachers not only need a safe space in which
to learn, but also a space to create ethical knowledge. In this way, whilst the program generated
awareness and engagement, it did not offer the teachers many chances to reflect on their own cultural
being, as well as their own beliefs and values and the origins of these. These are what Hytten (2015),
Sleeter (2009) and Cosier (2009) have described as fundamental elements of social justice education.
Similarly, whilst the work of Kukner et al., (2016) created new awareness for the teacher candidates,
again what was absent were explicit reflective spaces throughout the process in which the teachers
could become reconnected to their place in society, their beliefs around sexual orientation and equality
as well as their role in change. Whilst the teachers learned about hierarchies of social power,
oppression and inequality, they were not specifically guided to consider their own place within these
systems.

In line with social justice education literature, I contend that reflection is an important part of teacher
education for LGBTIQ equality. By researching the training available to teachers in Victoria through the
Kaleidoscope Manual (DETV, 2016), it becomes clear that the majority of professional development
occurs in 1-2 day sessions. The current online manual offers teachers links to 4 professional training
services which target LGBTIQ themes and issues in Victoria, as well as an extensive list of videos, articles
and policy for teachers interested in supporting LGBTIQ students. However, this training remains at the
discretion of individual teachers and school leaders, which as Saltmarsh (2012) has argued, can be
problematic in many Australian schools as this discretion may be influenced by heteronormative or neo-
liberal ideals which minimise the importance of sexual orientation equality (Robinson, 2012; Shannon,
2016). Furthermore given that the concept of masculinities and heteronormativity are presented as
being so invasive, intrusive and insidious in social practice, I question whether self-directed learning is the best way to challenge one’s own beliefs, or if one to two days is long enough to inspire the level of reflection which will motivate activism within teachers to the extent that they will initiate change in their schools. I suggest that more comprehensive education, experiential education, and reflection are required in order for teachers to be aware of their existing heteronormative beliefs and behaviours, as well as to feel prepared in their role as equality advocates. In the same way that inclusive education may not attend to broader social dynamics of power, similarly, some training may not have the scope to tackle the extent to which many teachers will live out heteronormativity in their daily lives. To this end, whilst there has been some research regarding the perspectives of teachers, given their important role in both the inequality and equality of LGBTIQ students in schools, further research into their attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practice relating to sexual orientation is required. Furthermore, I propose that more research is required into the supports which may enable teachers to change their beliefs and behaviours relating to sexual orientation inequality, as well as their role in change.

**Conclusion**

This review has interrogated various themes relating to equality for LGBTIQ students in Australian secondary schools through the competing lenses of neo-liberalism and social justice education. What has emerged from this review is the vital role played by teachers in supporting students, supporting learning and ultimately in supporting equality, and this has become evident in the growing attention paid to teacher perceptions over the last few years. Based on the literature, it has become clear that teaching for sexual orientation equality involves understanding the extent to which inequality manifests in schools, and importantly, understanding how manifestations of homophobia connect to broader systems of masculinities and of heteronormativity. In reviewing the literature, it is also clear that teachers can benefit from understanding the importance of policy, and of inclusive curriculum which connects management of homophobia with the modelling of equality, extending many existing policies and programs to include direct education about social inequality and the nature of masculine hierarchies.

What is also clear following a review of the literature is the importance of teachers understanding their role, and the importance of teachers reflecting on their own place within masculine and heteronormative societies. What is not clear from the literature reviewed is whether teachers have enough spaces to offer perspectives and voices in research, or the space to adequately prepare for their advocacy roles through existing teacher education. Furthermore, there remains a question as to whether
infusing each education program with reflection and values supports changes in teacher practice. To this end, my research aimed to address four significant gaps:

1) **What are teacher perspectives of LGBTIQ inequality in school?**

2) **What are teacher perspectives regarding their role in improving equality for LGBTIQ students?**

3) **Can teachers change their beliefs and behaviours regarding sexual orientation?**

4) **What are the supports required for teachers to engage and commit to advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality?**

There are a variety of conceptual tools which would further understanding regarding these questions. The following chapter explores the concepts of LGBTIQ inequality through a critical lens of oppression and institutional power, before contextualising equality efforts through critical understandings of social transformation in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4
Critical Theory

The nature and impact of LGBTIQ inequality in schools can be understood through the lens of critical theory. As discussed in Chapter 2, inequality has been seen to be maintained through homophobia and exclusion which serve to perpetuate the dominance of masculinity and heteronormativity. Critical understandings of oppression, domination and power strengthen and deepen understandings of the prevalence, mechanisms and consequences for LGBTIQ students in Australian schools. Critical theory developed in the context of social inequality relating to the impacts of capitalism in Europe (Alway, 1995; Brookfield, 2005; Small, 2005), and has evolved throughout the 20th century to include analysis on the inequalities based on race, gender and more recently, sexual orientation (Crossley, 2005). In Chapter 3, I determined that the most significant gaps for exploration of LGBTIQ inequality in schools were the lack of teacher perspectives regarding sexual orientation inequality as well as gaps in research relating to changes in teacher beliefs and behaviours. To this end, critical theory provides researchers with the tools to analyse existing inequality through the lens of oppression. This chapter addresses the key concepts of critical theory which were used to explore the concept of inequality in the data, specifically relating to the perspectives and experiences of secondary school teachers.

Key Concepts

This chapter introduces the key concepts used to analyse the data in this study. According to contemporary theorists such as Alway (1995), Brookfield (2005) and Gross (2011) critical understandings of oppression stress the hierarchical relationship between dominant and submissive social groups across a range of ideologically determined social categories, and in the first part, I address oppression as a critical concept. The notion of oppression is particularly significant for understanding the conflict between heterosexual and non-heterosexual members of the school environment, which as demonstrated in Chapter 2, operate by way of dominant and submissive social positions. For theorists such as Althusser (1984), ideology as a critical concept lies at the core of oppression, shaping and moulding individuals into acceptable ways of being whilst highlighting the abnormalities of people whose identities fall outside of social acceptability, and this will be the featured discussion of the second part. Critical understandings of ideology help explain the nature and impact of masculinity and
heteronormativity in schools. In the third part, I expand upon ideology, exploring how Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony addresses the ways in which ideologies are practiced in our everyday lives, securing consent in our own social oppression, and this discussion sheds light of the prevalence of homophobia and our acceptance of neo-liberalism in schools. Finally, I discuss how Althusser’s (1984) critical understandings of institutional power provide a framework for analysing the role of social institutions, in particular the school, in both disseminating ideology and providing young people and educators with a place to practice their dominant and subversive social roles. This section attends to the research presented in Chapter 2 which so consistently recognised the significance of schools as sites of masculinity, of heteronormativity and of LGBTIQ inequality.

**Oppression**

“Human beings do not kneel down to pray because they believe in God but rather believe in God because they kneel down to pray” (Pascal, cited by Althusser, 1984, p42).

The above quote describes the relationships between beliefs, society and individual identities which critical theorists believe privilege certain groups whilst oppressing others. The quote also describes the importance of practice in social oppression, as a person enacts a belief so often they herald it as the right way to behave and to be. Oppression forms the basis of critical analysis, with Crossley (2005) having described the inextricable links between capitalist structures and the ways in which social groups are organised; to have more, someone else must have less. Small (2005) has affirmed this construction, stating that a focus on material needs exacerbates dominant/subversive tensions as "people with more needs are vulnerable to deprivation" (p. 6). This has been seen as resulting in the exploitation of certain groups which Freire (1968) has stated hinders people's ability to become fully human. For Freire (1968), it is the task of every person to humanise themselves within society, whereby we all struggle to be recognised as human, and not as an object of production. Freire (1968) has argued that this becomes a particularly challenging endeavour for the oppressed, who are denied many opportunities to do so by systems of domination put in place by the dominant group. Through policy, laws and education, the oppressed are limited in their ability to become human, which Freire (1968) has actually argued constitutes violence.

Small (2005) has discussed this violence as alienation, stating that alienation occurs where “human activity does not express and confirm human nature” (Small, 2005, p22), instead turning people into
subjects of their beliefs about the world. This distancing from human values, whilst originally framed within the context of labor, has significant implications for societal conceptions of morality and ethics (Small, 2005). Small (2005) concluded that growing individualism and a focus on personal, rather than societal needs and values, disconnects people from their social spheres and disengages them from social issues of injustice. In the context of LGBTIQ inequality, oppressed LGBTIQ people are viewed as responsible for their own circumstances, and sexual orientation injustice is not viewed as a social issue. This viewpoint becomes problematic to critical notions of social change, as social change is seen as a fundamentally social, and not individual, act. In this way, critical understandings of individualism are consistent with the neo-liberal agenda outlined in Chapter 3.

Both Brookfield (2005) and Adams (2007) have stated that this focus on beliefs is achieved primarily through the dissemination of harmful ideologies, by way of complex belief systems which privilege certain social groups over others. These belief systems, or ideological networks, are perpetuated through hegemonic practices, which constantly reinforce, through both large scale decisions and day-to-day behaviours, that the beliefs which constitute ideology are natural and in our best interests (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011). This section introduces, explores and critiques the concepts of ideology and hegemony in the context of understanding the experiences of inequality for LGBTIQ students in schools as well as the challenges faced by teachers in advocating for equality.

**Ideology**

Ideology, as the central concept in critical theory, describes the system of beliefs and values that both reflect and reproduce existing social structures, relations and systems (Althusser, 1984; Brookfield, 2005). For Althusser (1984), these structures of beliefs serve to oppress certain groups, thereby allowing other groups to maintain their dominant position. Ideology in this context, has been seen as a useful concept in interpreting social dynamics, interrogating scientific method and understanding oppression (Lewis, 2005). Lewis (2005), in his interpretation of Althusser’s writings, has stated that ideology exists only as it is performed and enacted by social members, and constitutes our lived experience in the world. In this way, Lewis (2005) argued that ideology critique can be seen as cultural critique, and this view frames ideology as an important component in investigating sexual orientation inequality in schools. This section outlines the interactions of ideology and identity before exploring the relationships between ideology, masculinity and heteronormativity. I conclude this section with a critique regarding the broadness of ideological analysis, framing the concept as a useful, if incomplete, tool for exploring inequality in schools for LGBTIQ students.
Ideology and Identity

Critical theorists have commented on the oppressive nature of ideology with regards to identity development (Freire 1968; Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991), in a similar vain to Althusser (1984), examined the influence of social ideology on individual identity through what he described as “lifestyle choices” (p81). Giddens (1991) argued that we all follow lifestyles, and are in fact forced to do so whereby our only choice is to choose which lifestyle to live. Giddens (1991) argued that lifestyles give material form to self-identity, stating that lifestyle choices are about how to act but also who to be. To this end, Giddens (1991) asserted that an individual’s choices of lifestyle provide insight into the ways in which ideologies have impacted their identity, and stated that these decisions reflect a person immersion in those milieu at the expense of possible alternatives. Regarding the discussion in Chapter 2 relating to the construction of identity within masculine hierarchies, Giddens’ (1991) assertions frame heterosexuality as the desired lifestyle choice, and alternative sexual identities as undesirable lifestyles. This understanding of ideology contextualises the challenges faced by LGBTIQ students in schools as they try to either fit into heterosexual models or else suffer the emotional, psychological and social consequences of being different, which were clearly demonstrated in literature relating to LGBTIQ victimisation in schools (Hillier et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2007; Van Beusekom et al., 2016).

Ideological impacts on identity development can have significant negative consequences for the individual (Freire, 1968; Giddens, 1991). Both Freire (1968) and Giddens (1991) have described the emotional impact of ideology on subjected individuals, as uncomfortable feelings or even distress arise from either opposing or witnessing the opposition of a dominant ideology. Freire (1968) stated that for the oppressed, the effects can be seen in an attraction to the oppressor’s way of life, despite the impossibility of this aspiration coming to fruition. For Freire (1968), the emotional and psychological effects of this impossibility manifest in self-depreciation, derived from the oppressed members of society internalising the opinion the oppressors hold of them. Freire’s (1968) framing of ideology is consistent with Pearson et al.’s (2007) assertions regarding identity, with Pearson et al., (2007) having concluded that LGBTIQ students struggle to develop a positive identity in the face of stigma for being different. Freire (1968) stated that as the oppressed are led to believe, through ideology, the invulnerability and power of the oppressor, then the possibility of defying that ideology can lead to feelings of guilt and hopelessness.

Certainly, similar feelings of hopelessness were reported in Kosciw et al.'s, (2013) work regarding the impact of students both disclosing their LGBTIQ identity as well as the impact of keeping their LGBTIQ
identity concealed; in both scenarios, students reported feelings of hopelessness and difficulties attaching to their school environments. This framework can also shed light on psychological studies which described consequences such as suicide, self-harm and the abuse of drugs and alcohol (Hillier et al., 2010), framing these acts within the connections between ideology and individual identity. Whilst Freire (1968) explored this relationship in a general sense, I will now expand upon the concept of ideology and identity through a more comprehensive exploration of masculinity and heteronormativity as specific ideologies.

Masculinity, Heteronormativity and Ideology

The concepts of masculinity and heteronormativity can be connected to ideology through the ways in which people come to think about themselves, society and the world. In critical theory, ideology functions by recruiting subjects among individuals, or in most cases by transforming an individual into a subject (Althusser, 1984). For Althusser (1984), this process takes place in such a covert and pervasive manner that those who are perpetuating the dominant ideologies of a society believe themselves, by definition, to be outside ideology. Regarding the discussion in Chapter 2 relating to the dominance of heterosexual members of a school environment, through this lens, heteronormativity can be regarded as a successful ideology. Wright & Clarke (1999) have stated that heteronormative ideology assumes heterosexuality from its subjects, or in other words assumes a person is heterosexual until they say otherwise, and like all ideologies, heteronormativity acts as a form of social control through the naturalising and normalising of male-female sexual relations (Gray et al., 2016; Van Beusekom, 2016; Wright & Clarke, 1999).

Subjects of ideology have been shaped in their thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and actions, believing that these factors are simply who they are as members of society (Crossley, 2005). Already, this idea of subject is helpful in the way it gives context to observations by Vega et al., (2012) in their research on heteronormativity in the classroom. Vega et al., (2012) concluded that a feature of heteronormativity is a person’s inability to realise that they are demonstrating heteronormativity, which is reminiscent of Althusser’s (1984) assertions regarding the unknowable quality of ideological interpellation; that a person believes that’s how people should be. This process, known as “interpellation” (Althusser, 1984, p49), or “dehumanization” (Freire, 1968, p26), involves individuals coming to think of themselves in accordance with their relationship to ideology, either believing themselves to be the same as everyone else, or suffering the political, social, emotional and often physical consequences of being different (Crossley, 2005; Freire, 1968). These consequences include the feelings of guilt and hopelessness for
LGBTIQ students as reported by Pearson et al., (2007), as well as the ongoing verbal and physical harassment reported by Hunt & Jensen (2007) and Hiller et al., (2010). In fact, both McNeill (2013) and Watt et al., (2008) have commented that through heteronormativity, heterosexuality has been made the sexual orientation benchmark against which other sexualities are measured or compared. Reflecting on the literature regarding violence in Chapter 2, there are also clear links between understandings of masculinity and ideology. Benjamin (2012) asserted that masculinity exists within a hierarchy, a social structure which parallels critical ideas regarding domination and subordination. In the context of masculinities, those who display masculine qualities are privileged, whilst those who do not are marginalised (Benjamin, 2012).

For Stoddart (2007), however, ideology represents a problematic notion due to its perceived stability and universal applicability. Stoddart (2007) has questioned the framing of ideology as a relatively stable body of knowledge that the dominant group transmits to the subordinate group, arguing that this model neglects to consider the everyday social interactions of individuals within society. In this way, Althusser’s (1984) conception of ideology remained too unitary and too abstracted from the realities of daily life (Stoddart, 2007). Stoddart (2007) instead suggested that social power is in fact diffused among a gigantic web that lacks a definite centre, not unidirectional in its flow from the ruling to the subordinated class. Stoddart (2007) concluded that the concept of ideology is productive as it shows that social power exists and operates between various groups in society, however lacks the nuance to explore and explain how social power works between various social groups.

With this critique in mind, ideology as a concept can be viewed as helpful in identifying oppression in society. In the context of sexual orientation and gender, the concept of ideology highlights the hierarchical nature of masculinity and heteronormativity, which working as ideologies, subordinate alternative sexual and gender identities in order to maintain their dominance. This is a useful way of conceptualising the ideas and features of masculinity and heteronormativity as a whole, as it connects individuals to a broader social system. This connection is consistent with Robinson et al.,’s (2012) critique of some anti-bullying policy in schools which they argued does not connect homophobia to masculinity. Whilst ideology does connect masculinity to the dominance of heterosexuality in a broad sense, as a concept it doesn’t account for the ways in which we live out masculinity and heteronormativity in our daily lives; in a simple sense, ideology explains the what of oppression, but not the how. To this end, I turned to the critical concept of hegemony in order to explore the dynamics of these ideologies in school environments.
Hegemony

Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony adds complexity to ideology. Hegemony expands on the understanding of ideology, moving from a system of dominant ideas designed to reinforce the power of a dominant group to an embedded system of practices, behaviours and actions that people live out on a daily basis in all aspects of their personal, professional and social lives (Brookfield, 2005; Gross, 2011; Worth, 2015). In this way, hegemony frames oppression not as a static body of knowledge, but rather a series of beliefs which gain their dominance through practice. The idea of practice has significant implications in the context of the oppression of LGBTIQ students and their sexual identities in schools. Extending beyond the ideology of masculinity, the concept of hegemony opens up the social critique of inequality, factoring in the larger scale school decisions of policy and curriculum as well as the individual behaviour of teachers and students. Like ideology, hegemony connects these social elements to a broader system, however focuses on the enactment of ideology whilst framing psychological constructs of homophobia and internalised homophobia as extreme enactments of heteronormativity. This section explores the enactment of two ideologies which, based on literature, have seemingly impacted the unequal status of LGBTIQ students in schools; heteronormative hegemony and neo-liberal hegemony.

Hegemony as Practice

Hegemony operates as a sum of social, cultural and political practices that have been used to “consolidate power under a certain ideology” (Worth, 2015, p.xvii), distinguishing itself from ideology which operate as a set of beliefs (Althusser, 1984). For Worth (2015) hegemony goes far beyond ideology, exploring the set of norms, common assumptions and social stereotypes that have been legitimised through various social and cultural agents; in essence, how we practice social beliefs on both large social scales as well as the way we live out our daily lives. For Gramsci (1971), hegemonic power works through both coercion and consent, whereby individuals are convinced to subscribe to social beliefs which are inherently exploitative. Stoddart (2007) has commented on Gramsci's (1971) conceptions, highlighting hegemony's reliance on voluntarism and participation, as opposed to the ongoing threat of punishment for disobedience. For Stoddart (2007), hegemony as a concept extends ideology by accounting for both the role of the individual in their own subjectification as well as the necessity of social and individual action in both the creation and reproduction of hegemonic power.

In this regard, the concept of hegemony attends to the complexities of sexual orientation inequality in schools, as it prioritises the many ways we enact ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity in our
daily lives. Whilst the concept of ideology allows for the identification of masculinity and heteronormativity, hegemony explores and explains the many and varied ways in which these ideologies maintain their dominance through small and large scale actions which serve to delegitimise alternative sexual and gender identities.

**Heteronormative Hegemony**

Several commentators have stated that heteronormative hegemony privileges heterosexuality in society (Engel et al., 2011; Warwick & Aggleton, 2013). For Engel et al., (2011) heteronormative hegemony exists as a formation of state power grounded in civil society and rooted in language. Terms such as “heterosexuality”, “homosexuality” and “gender” are articulated by a variety of groups ranging from intellectuals, the medical industry and social sciences to the legal system, and these terms form the basis of state power as the state addresses subjects on the basis of these hegemonic views. Examples of these addresses include kinship/marriage regulations, family tax policies and laws, however heteronormative hegemony does not only operate in this top-down fashion; it is firmly rooted in everyday practices within civil society (Engel et al., 2011). Engel (2011) has argued the dynamic nature of hegemonic power as it works as both an effect of and the terrain for social struggles; the articulations that define sexual orientation are produced, undermined, reinforced and shifted even within social struggles for equality. The terminology used in this research (LGBTIQ) as well as the research under analysis, in this review serves as a classic example of this dynamic power as they are separated from non-LGBTIQ people. As introduced in Chapter 2, heteronormativity not only maintains the dominance of heterosexuality, but also of masculinity, and one of the most prominent examples of masculine hegemony in schools is homophobia (Benjamin, 2012; Connell, 2009; Robinson, 2012). Whilst this section has focused on language as hegemonic practice, as Chapter 2 iterated, there are many forms of homophobic violence which serve to preserve social hierarchies of masculinity (Hiller et al., 2010; Mills, 2012; Robinson, 2012).

**Homophobia**

Through a hegemonic construction, theorists have viewed homophobia as an extreme enactment of heteronormative ideology (Mills, 2012; Robinson, 2012). The maintenance of heterosexual hegemonic status relies on the policing of its boundaries by both subtle and obvious means, with homophobia constituting the latter (Ramirez, 2015; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Robinson (2012) has stated that messages, serving as warnings or deterrents to young people, are delivered in the form of myths that
frame LGBTIQ members of society as isolates and social deviants. The message of abnormality and deviancy is also delivered in both private and professional domains through threats of rejection by family and friends, as well as exclusion from jobs (Engel, 2011; McNeill, 2013). As explored in Chapter 2, homophobia can also be exercised through abuse, both physical and verbal (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007), which represents an overt form of social regulation (Warwick & Aggleton, 2013). In Chapter 2, I highlighted the prevalence of such abuse in school systems, where heterosexual authority is maintained through violence as well as threats of violence against LGBTIQ young people (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Furthermore, as addressed in the ideology section, heterosexual and masculine ideals are internalised by those existing outside of them, maintaining heteronormative hegemony through internalised homophobia as well as external homophobic threats and realities.

**Internalised Homophobia**

MacLaren (2015) has argued that a significant impact of both heteronormativity and homophobia are the concepts of internalised homophobia and self-censorship within the LGTBIQ population. MacLaren (2015) has categorised internalised homophobia by self-loathing and discomfort which mimic reactions and belief systems of members of heterosexual society and has stated that this reaction can produce divisions within the LGBTIQ community (MacLaren, 2015). The effect of internalised homophobia is the creation of acceptable LGBTIQ identities which more closely align to a heterosexual identity, and unacceptable LGBTIQ identities, which do not resemble a heterosexual identity.

The work of McLaren (2015) supported these assertions, stating that internalised homophobia exists as a direct result of living in a heteronormative society, though McLaren’s (2015) study looked specifically at internalised homophobia as a predictor for suicide in LGBTIQ people. Conceptually, this internalisation of heteronormative ideology by the oppressed is consistent with Freire’s (1968) ideas around self-regulation and has the significant impact of undermining radicalism through ‘in-fighting’, and allowing perpetrators of violence, harassment and discrimination to get away with it.

The framing of homophobia as a hegemonic practice designed to perpetuate ideologies of heteronormativity and masculinity has significant implications for notions of safety in schools. Critiques of safety programs and policies have argued that the focus on individual acts of bullying merely contains violence (Robinson et al., 2012). Critical frameworks of heteronormative hegemony through homophobia enrichen dialogue regarding underlying causes of these enactments of inequality, and had
significant implications for the ways in which these issues were discussed with participants of the present study; acts of violence were consistently linked with broader social ideologies. The internalisation of homophobia also has significant implications for the ways in which bully-perpetrator binaries are addressed in schools (Robinson et al., 2012), broadening the conversation by indicating that everyone is subject to these ideologies. This process of internalising and regulating is also a tenant of neo-liberal ideology, and the following section addresses the hegemonic status of neo-liberalism within Australia and beyond.

**Neo-liberal Hegemony**

Sexual orientation inequality in schools has also been seen to be influenced by neo-liberal ideals which are expressed in neo-liberal hegemony (Shannon, 2016; Worth, 2015). Neo-liberal ideals were addressed in Chapter 3 in the context of school curriculum which Shannon (2016) has argued prioritises risk and individualism, thereby undermining social connections and positive role-modelling of LGBTIQ identities and promoting self-regulation amongst LGBTIQ students. Further impacts of neo-liberalism were explored in this chapter, addressing the focus on individuality, on teaching for testing and on the creation of the ideal neo-liberal teacher who exists in contrast with the social justice educator (Hursh, 2009; Sleeter, 2009; Smyth, 2011). This section will explore ideology of neo-liberalism in a critical context, securing hegemonic compliance in social institutions and creating challenges for social justice educators and education programs aiming to transform the inequality of LGBTIQ students in schools.

There has also been research regarding the role of self-regulation under neo-liberal ideologies (Rasmussen, 2004). Through this examination of neo-liberal hegemony, people regulate themselves based around desired ways of being (Crossley, 2005). In the context of LGBTIQ experiences of internalised homophobia or externalised homophobia, this concept has implications for the way people are supposed to dress, behave, have relationships and other indicators of hegemonic masculinity. Rasmussen (2004) has discussed the concept of “coming out”, arguing that the celebratory discourses with which this process is addressed are problematic, as they do not factor in the multitude of factors which may influence a person’s decision to “stay in”. These concepts have implications for teachers regarding the identification of issues of LGBTIQ people, as so much suffering is internalised. Rasmussen’s (2004) assertions have extended discourse regarding internalised homophobia, calling for greater sympathy and compassion for people who are not comfortable with themselves. These notions are consistent with literature addressed in Chapter 3, which explored the discomfort of teachers who felt unprepared or unqualified to help support LGBTIQ students (Finnessy, 2016; Malins, 2016). To this
end, as recommended by Finnessy (2016), Malins (2016) and Meyer et al., (2016), teachers may need support in overcoming this barrier of fear.

Neo-liberal ideals stipulate that the state’s main purpose is to create favourable conditions in order for private investment to thrive, and this ideology has become hegemony through the rise of consumerism and the focus on marketability at all levels (Alfred, 2016; Lynch et al., 2009). Whilst introduced as an economic idea, Worth (2015) has argued that neo-liberalism has permeated all levels of society, whereby even schools and hospitals must now appear marketable. As explored in Chapter 3, this marketability has had serious impacts on schools, whereby teachers face increasing pressures and accountability for test results (Orlowski, 2011).

To this end, neo-liberal hegemony prizes results over values, which can interfere in both engagement with, and commitment to social advocacy for teachers, students and school leaders (Apple, 2013; 2016; Hursh, 2009). Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemony attributes greater agency to members of society through either active or passive consent (Gross, 2011). Active consent involves a person intentionally giving consent for their own personal benefit within society, in contrast to passive consent which describes the more traditional notions of ideology wherein a person is unaware of their domination (Bell, 2007; Gross, 2011). The interactions between neo-liberalism and active consent may in part, explain teacher reluctance to intervene in homophobia or address LGBTIQ themes, as from a position of teacher marketability, it is not in their best interests to do so (Smyth, 2011). This adds depth to the understanding of teacher reluctance to intervene in LGBTIQ inequality as documented in some literature (Finnesty, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016). The framing of neo-liberalism as hegemonic has potentially interesting implications for research into teacher motivations in advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality, as it suggests that the individualism and prioritisation of risk may serve as barriers to teachers’ ability to engage in issues of inequality and to enact their role in change.

Both the concepts of ideology and hegemony are helpful ways of understanding oppression and inequality of LGBTIQ identities in schools. Ideology frameworks are useful in identifying masculinity and heteronormativity as well as positioning both within hierarchies of domination and subordination. Ideology also connects individual identities to broader social structures of domination and oppression, however may lack the complexity to explain the day-to-day enactments of beliefs in collective and individual lives. The concept of hegemony more complexly attends to the enactments of ideology in both social and individual spaces, stressing the importance of social practice in both the creation and maintenance of hegemonic dominance. This dominance has been reflected through both
heteronormative hegemony and neo-liberal hegemony, both of which impact the experiences of LGBTIQ students, the design of inclusive curriculum and the motivations of teachers in their advocacy. Despite the efficacy and applicability of ideology and hegemony as concepts to explore inequality, they do not adequately explain why schools are such contentious spaces of domination and transformation in the literature. To this end, the following section explores the nature and role of schools through the critical concept of institutional power.

**Institutional Power**

In a critical sense, the school is seen as a pivotal terrain upon which ideology and hegemony are nurtured, conditioned and perpetuated to the next generation of society (Althusser, 1984). Indeed, critical theorists such as Apple (2016) and Brookfield (2005) have commented on the importance of policy, curriculum and teachers in either reinforcing existing ideological structures or else challenging existing ideologies through counterhegemony. This commentary is reminiscent of similar debates addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 which have taken place in research relating to LGBTIQ inequality, where similarly, policy, curriculum and teachers were all heralded as either helping or harming LGBTIQ students (Saltmarsh, 2012). The duality of schooling is a prominent theme in critical thought, and this concept, along with critiques of the role of the school in social change will be addressed in the following section. Althusser (1984) has framed the school as a social institution of ideological oppression, connecting it to other social institutions including the media and the church. This connection has implications for research into LGBTIQ inequality and I will begin my discussion by exploring the connections between the school, ideology and institutional power.

**Ideology, Hegemony and Institutions**

Althusser (1984) developed a prominent theory which framed schools as institutions of social power and connected schooling to broader social dynamics of oppression. Althusser (1984) differentiated between repressive institutional power and more ideological-grounded structures and techniques. Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) “fight fire with fire” (Crossley, 2005, p152), and are designed to enforce order when conflict emerges, with prominent societal examples including the army and the police force (Althusser, 1984). Brookfield (2005) has stated that this type of State coercive power is only implemented as a last resort, in the event that ideology and hegemony have failed to secure the consent of people in their own oppression. There are many difficulties associated with a society’s reliance on RSA as the primary mechanism of power, with Crossley (2005) citing the numerous political overthrows
in African nations as examples of how a successful government requires both repressive and ideological power technologies in order to maintain oppression; “if repression were the sole tool at capitalism’s disposal, order would be fragile indeed” (p152). The mechanisms of power involved in successful social oppression secure moral and intellectual leadership, rendering repressive state actions as the exception rather than the rule (Crossley, 2005). Althusser (1984) theorised that because of this fragility, RSAs also function by the mechanism of ideology, but that ideology is secondary to the function of violence. Althusser’s (1984) construction developed at a time in which rampant inequality based on gender, race, sexual orientation and class existed within RSAs. However, as explored in Chapter 2, there have been large advancements in legal protections for LGBTIQ Australians, and yet inequality still exists in social settings. To this end, Althusser’s (1984) conception of ideological networks may account for the gap between legal and social equality.

In order to account for the failings of RSAs, Althusser (1984) also argued that the maintenance of ideology and hegemony by dominant groups in society requires equally insidious and covert techniques referred to as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which as the name suggests, function by ideology. Althusser (1984) viewed capitalism as securing consent to ideological and hegemonic oppression by way of ISAs, and the media, church, family and schools are viewed as sites of practice where human subjects or agents are, in effect, shaped as compliant and willing members of a capitalist society. It is through these social institutions that ideologies are presented, disseminated and reinforced (Althusser, 1984) serving to convince people that the way they live is both natural and preordained and more importantly, works in their best interests (Brookfield, 2005). Adams (2007) has commented that the social institution plays a significant role in the dissemination of ideology through the prioritisation of dominant beliefs as well as its perpetuation through an innumerable series of practices which serve to legitimise that ideology.

Contemporary theorists such as Yang (2009) and Smyth (2011) have acknowledged more nuances in the securing of consent, and the section regarding hegemony, the role of neo-liberalism was discussed as a more intricate form of oppression than capitalism, or as a form of oppression in advanced capitalism whereby capitalist ideals have been firmly entrenched into the social condition. Where there is consensus, however, is in the role of the school as capable of both indoctrinating and simultaneously liberating students (Apple, 2013; Brookfield, 2012; Coffey, 2001). The following section discusses the dialectic nature of schooling and education, reframing social justice issues through a critical lens.
Schools as Dialectic Spaces

For critical theorists, in contemporary western democracies, the most influential, and therefore dominant, ISA is the Education system (Althusser, 1984; Apple, 2013; Brookfield, 2005). Freire (1998) addresses this concept in a direct manner, stating that all education is political; it can either be used for liberation and freedom or else the continuation of oppression (Small, 2005). If schooling is never a neutral act, then it must always be fundamentally contradictory (Freire, 1998; Gross, 2011); whilst it has the potential to legitimate dominant ideology through learned consent, it also has the potential to simultaneously cultivate counterhegemonic efforts (Gross, 2011).

Whilst Yang (2009) has stated that schooling is not the only sphere of education, Gross (2011) has acknowledged it’s distinctly important function in maintaining ideology and hegemony (Gross, 2011). Theorists such as Althusser (1984) have argued that the school-family relationship has in fact replaced the church-family relationship, thus making schools the most important weapon for dominant groups to use against their subjects; schools have the power to immerse students in ideologically determined practices which support “segmented and biased ways of understanding and ordering the world” (Brookfield, 2005, p75). Brookfield (2005) further affirmed Althusser’s (1984) notions of traditional schooling, stating that as students progress through years of schooling, they are exposed to the worldview of dominant social groups. The consequences of this exposure may be that students accept this view as legitimate, universal, rational and as Gramsci (1971) described, commonsense. Hegemony in schools has also been seen to impact teaching, with Gross (2011) having described a good teacher in the eyes of a dominant group as one who enforces certain dress codes, moral codes and appropriate uses of language. In the context of oppression, this means that the structure and content of a teacher’s work will inevitably privilege certain groups over others, thus making teaching inherently political (Gross, 2011). Due to the covert nature of this process, “neither group can see the ideological web in which it is caught” (Brookfield, 2005, p75). Whilst this construction frames teachers as weapons of ideology, they have similarly been viewed by critical theorists such as Gramsci (1971) and Gross (2011) as powerful agents of counterhegemony.

Counterhegemony

Gramsci (1971) viewed education as being central to the fostering of critical consciousness, a type of thinking that works in opposition to hegemonic consent. Similarly, Gross (2011) has defined critical consciousness as the process of reflecting critically on one’s position in society relative to broader social
structures, making hegemony visible to both oppressors and oppressed alike. Gross (2011) has stated that Gramsci (1971) wanted schools to nurture critical thinking and self-awareness, accepting that in order for this to be possible, teachers would have to engage in this process first. These ideas echo the assertions of many social justice educators, in particular the concepts of critical awareness compromising critical engagement and critical thinking (Brookfield, 2012; Hooks, 2013; Yang, 2009). Many teachers have found ways of incorporating social justice issues into curricula which deny them relevance, and through a critical lens, these actions can best be described as counterhegemonic (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011; Worth, 2015).

According to theorists, for those who pursue education for the purpose of transformation, education allows individuals to come to a new awareness of selfhood, whereby they look critically at their social situation and take the initiative to transform social beliefs and practices (Apple, 2013; Kumashiro, 2016; Lykes & Mallona, 2008). Freire (1968) has commented that social transformation relies on the transformation of both the oppressors and oppressed alike as the development of reason, knowledge and intelligence in the population works as the primary catalyst for social change. Despite these assertions, there remain critical debates regarding the relevance of schools in social change in light of the often overwhelming ideological pressures faced by schools today.

Both Yates (2006) and Apple (2016) have questioned the role of the school in social change. Yates (2006) has critiqued the ways in which society use schools as a first "knee-jerk reaction" (p.3) solution to social problems by parents, media commentators and politicians. Yates (2006) stated that we routinely have impossible expectations of schools, expecting schools to solve social issues whilst simultaneously inundating schools with pressures of efficiency and performance regarding academic achievement. Yates (2006) concluded that these pressures, which almost directly conflict with the agenda of social equality, mean that whilst schools do have the potential to develop students who care about other people, they also have the potential to develop students who don't care if others get trampled on their path to success. Similarly, Apple (2016) has stated that the ways in which schools are forced to compete, marketise and subscribe to the corporate model of operation actually increases social inequality. Apple (2016) has identified the influences of neo-liberalism, stating that like a religion, the ideology is impervious to empirical evidence which he has argued consistently demonstrates the negative impacts of neo-liberalism on schooling and education today. Apple (2016) also argued that in Australia, conservatives have been very effective in placing limits on our ability to make public the critically democratic answers to questions of social inequality. Apple (2016) has referred to the
contradictory discourse of competition, markets and choice as well as performance objectives, standards, national testing and a national curriculum, arguing that because of this contradiction, it is difficult for members of a school community to attend to anything else. Despite his critique of schools and change, Apple (2016) has also demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of education in social transformation, arguing that the task has extended to overcoming ideological influences which seemingly interrupt, divert or diffuse transformation. Apple (2013) has referred to policy and practice as being key factors in educational transformation, highlighting the significant role played by teachers in secondary schools. These aspects of transformation form the basis of the following chapter, which extends the analysis of LGBTIQ inequality through the lens of critical theory, to apply this lens to the notions and practices of LGBTIQ equality.

This section has explored critical notions of institutional power, differentiating between repressive and ideological manifestations of social dominance. Through a critical lens schools are seen as dialectical spaces, capable of either perpetuating harmful ideologies and or challenging ideological practice through counterhegemonic actions. Critical understandings of institutional power had significant bearing on the present study, as they extended my view of the school as an important site of emerging identities and LGBTIQ violence as described in the literature (Robinson, 2012; Toomey et al., 2012), to an enriched understanding of schools as social institutions within broader social frameworks. Whilst Benjamin (2012) and Robinson (2012) had connected the school to larger society, critical frameworks do so through ideology, thereby connecting schools to other social institutions including the media, the health system, the church and even family structures (Althusser, 1984). Furthermore, critical notions of institutional power also introduce the notion of counterhegemony, framing teachers in an equally significant light regarding their role in social change. These ideas suggest that teachers can contribute to sexual orientation equality in schools, which according to critical theorists means that teachers also contribute to sexual orientation equality in society. This idea of change is essential to critical understandings of social inequality (Brookfield, 2005), and in the same vein as oppression, theorists have developed concepts for the purpose of social transformation.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has addressed critical theory as a unit for analysis regarding the inequality of LGBTIQ students in Australian schools and as potential inspiration for change. The concepts which make up critical understandings of oppression and transformation can be helpful in exploring hierarchies of
masculinity and heteronormativity which relegate alternative sexual identities to a submissive status, and perpetuate social inequalities through the school system.

Of particular significance to my study are the links between ideology, hegemony and institutions. Critical conceptions of this ideological network add needed complexity to research regarding masculinity, heteronormativity and homophobia in schools. Regarding inequality and oppression, the relationship between these constructs highlights the often insidious, covert and unknowable quality of how ideologies gain and maintain their power from the state all the way down to how we practice sexual identity every day. This conception expands the conversation beyond homophobia and encourages the researcher to consider a wide range of ideological manifestations in the social group under analysis, as well as a range of perspectives from social agents working within institutions.

Whilst an understanding of oppression is a core component of critical discourse, Brookfield (2005) has stated that a distinguishable feature of critical theory lies in its focus on simultaneously attempting to transform the world. Regarding the present study, this involved focussing on both understanding existing oppression, as well as influencing changes in teachers who can in turn influence their schools. The following chapter explores the concept of social transformation as well as critical pedagogies which influenced the design of this research as well as the analysis of generated data.
Chapter 5

Social Transformation

“The world in which we find ourselves living must be comprehended, transformed, even subverted in order to become that which it really is” (Marcuse, 1964, p127).

Whilst critical concepts of oppression are helpful in analysing teacher perspectives, critical concepts of social transformation can influence change in the teachers. For theorists such as Marcuse (1964; 1968; 1975), understanding, interpreting and critiquing inequality in society was not sufficient for changing the situation of marginalised groups; rather society also had to be transformed. In the above quote, Marcuse (1964) refers to the notion of comprehension, which can be interpreted as a growing awareness of social dynamics which perpetuate inequalities through ideologies, hegemony and their impact on our daily lives. Marcuse (1964) also refers to subversion, an idea closely associated with Gramsci’s (1971) notion of counterhegemony, as people learn to resist and oppose the system which oppresses them. Significantly to this section, Marcuse (1964) also refers to transformation, an idea which extends beyond awareness and beyond resistance, to imply a world which is fairer, more just and more equal; in short, a changed society (Brookfield, 2005). Brookfield (2005) has in fact argued that it is this goal of transformation which distinguishes critical theory as a sociological movement, and that the validity of the theory can be found in the ways in which society has been transformed. This idea makes transparent the inextricable links between critical theory and social change.

In this chapter, I discuss critical understandings of transformation through education. I firstly introduce education as a transformative force before I specify Freire’s philosophy of education. Along with the importance of education, critical theories also highlight the importance of educators, and I debate the role of the teacher, in particular the need for teacher reflection around social justice issues. I conclude the chapter by stressing the need for a methodology which accounts for both the perspectives of teachers and possibilities for providing support for teacher changes, attending to both the gaps in the literature as well as the emphasis of concepts in this chapter.
**Transformative Education**

Brookfield (2005) has argued that critical theory is distinguished from other theories through its balanced approach to both analysing existing oppression, as well as envisioning a fairer future. Due the link between critical concepts and change, critical notions of transformation may have potentially significant implications for sexual orientation inequality, both in schools and in broader society. Transformation extends beyond understanding inequality by suggesting pathways to change and as Small (2005) has stated, focusses on the values which make us human by moving away from the beliefs which alienate us. This focus looks beyond ideological constructions of gender and sexual orientation which categorise people as either fitting in to hegemonically determined social roles or else falling outside of what is considered, normal, natural and acceptable, to what Brookfield (2005) has described as universal themes of justice, fairness and equality. In short, critical notions of transformation seemingly focus on what unites people, as opposed to what divides us. Whilst Brookfield (2005) has acknowledged the criticism from post-structuralists such as Bagnall (1999) that people do not innately possess values and morals that a critical theorist can nurture and transform, he maintains that people can change, and subsequently, societies can change.

Given the emphasis placed on the oppressive power of educational institutions in maintaining ideological dominance, critical understandings of transformation by theorists such as Marcuse (1964) and Freire (1968; 1998; 1999) similarly emphasise education as the key to liberation from oppression. There are a variety of critical notions of education, highlighting the relationships between the individual and ideology, as well as the relationships between individuals and other individuals. Synonymous with education are critical views regarding the role of educators, who are often heralded as significant agents of change and important advocates for social equality.

Typically, transformative efforts have focussed on the exposure of harmful ideologies which as Althusser (1984) has stated, serve to differentiate people and prioritise certain groups over others; this educative process was referred to by Althusser (1984) as ideology critique. In the context of the discussion from Chapters 2 and 3, this critique would involve labelling ideologies such as masculinity and neo-liberalism as ideologies, and not alternatives such as values, normalcy or commonsense. Responding to the limitations of ideology critique as an educational strategy, later theorists, in particular Marcuse (1964) and Freire (1968) further highlighted the importance of education in transformation, with Freire (1968) going even further to describe a certain type of transformative education which he called praxis. For Freire (1968), the key to transformative education lay in the relationship between teachers and students...
as they uncover, explore and co-create social realities together. The following section outlines and addresses transformative education through a discussion of Althusser's ideology critique, Freire's philosophy of education and both Marcuse's and Freire's conceptualisation of teachers as integral social figures in transformation.

**Moving Beyond Critique: Transformative Education**

For critical theorists such as Althusser (1984), Marcuse (1964) and Freire (1968; 1998; 1999), transformation in society is inextricably linked with developing awareness regarding the dominant and subversive social positions which constitute oppression. The deconstruction and exposure of social ideology formed the conceptual basis of Althusser's (1984) first method of social transformation which he referred to as ideology critique. This technique involves the exposure of underlying ideologies which guide our thoughts, feelings and behaviour on both micro and macro social and individual levels. In the context of the literature regarding LGBTIQ inequality presented in Chapter 2, much criticism of policy and practice involved policy makers and school practitioners not labelling heteronormativity as heteronormativity, masculinity as masculinity and homophobia as homophobia (Marsten, 2015; Robinson et al., 2012). To this end, ideology critique can be considered a potentially important step in the transformation process as Althusser (1984) has argued that ideologies must be labelled as ideologies before they can be transformed.

Whilst ideology critique is a seemingly logical way of developing awareness in people, Alway (1995) has highlighted the limitations of this technique in transforming oppression. As explored in the preceding section, the pervasive nature of ideology and hegemony are seen as establishing a power which extends beyond discursive positions, as the conditions and limitations of the capitalist process of production become introjected by its subjects (Alway, 1995). Alway (1995) has stated that this internalisation of dominant ideology becomes self-regulatory in interpellated individuals, meaning that people reproduce their own oppression by adjusting their identities in order to fit in with dominant groups in society. Indeed, the Marriage Equality Campaign in Australia serves as an example of this internalisation, as associated LGBTIQ people fight for rights to enter the existing heterosexual structure of marriage, as opposed to creating an alternative, equal system. Gramsci (1971) similarly discussed the idea of willing consent with regards to hegemony and significantly to transformation, Alway (1995) has stated that the notion of self-regulation means that exposing ideologies may not be sufficient in order to transform ideologies. Whilst Alway (1995) discussed self-regulation as a feature of capitalist ideologies, certainly the work of Shannon (2016) and Smyth (2011) has explored self-regulation in the context of neo-liberal
ideologies. As addressed in Chapter 2, neo-liberal ideologies stress the self-regulation of sexual desire and practice (Shannon, 2016) as well as the self-regulation of performance in teaching (Smyth, 2011). The findings of Griffin et al., (2004) in which teachers described feeling safer addressing topics of tolerance as opposed to specifying LGBTIQ inequality can be considered an example of teachers self-regulating in response to social pressures created through neo-liberalism. With this in mind, Alway’s (1995) comments regarding ideology critique maintain their relevance by suggesting that whether in a climate of capitalist or neo-liberal oppression, the process of fostering awareness and motivation for change in people may be more complicated than originally envisioned by Althusser (1984). As Gramsci (1971) commented, people may in fact be too practised in their oppression and resist change, even if it is in their best interest. To this end, I have turned to the seminal liberatory philosophy of Paulo Freire (1968; 1998; 1999) as he has not only accounted for resistance to change, but has also suggested models which may potentially address the complexities of both individual and social transformation.

**Freire’s Philosophy of Education**

Within theories of social transformation, for this study, I engaged specifically with Freire’s philosophy of education. Freire’s (1968; 1998; 1999) philosophy of education has considered the limitations of ideology critique as well as the importance of education in transformation. For Freire, the aim of education must always be to transform the world in order to liberate oppressed members of society (Reed et al., 2015). In this construction, education does not simply inform people about inequalities, but rather it motivates people to work towards social change and social equality. Similarly, Trout (2008) has stated that Freire’s philosophy of education argues against a model of education that supports oppressive structures in society, having developed this perspective while conducting literacy programs for adult learners in Brazil. Reed et al., (2015) have commented on the importance of teaching indigenous people to read, stating that literacy for indigenous Brazilians constituted an important transformation in a nation wherein the power was held by the literate conquerors. Based on his observations, Freire (1968) developed theories which explored both oppressive and transformative models of education. This section addresses Freire’s (1968) "banking concept" (p.53) of education, as well as his models of praxis and of dialogue which he believed could transform injustice in society.
**Banking Concept**

Freire's (1968) understanding of oppressive education is clearly articulated through his banking concept. This concept involves knowledgeable adults providing gifts of knowledge to students who are ultimately perceived as knowing nothing, thus negating education as a process of inquiry (Freire, 1968). This style of teaching serves the interests of the oppressors, who are specifically against either the exploration or transformation of their social world, which inquiry could facilitate (Freire, 1968). Trout (2008) has argued that this process erodes the oppressed peoples’ sense of themselves as empowered human social members as they accept without question the “oppressive and dehumanizing reality that surrounds them” (p.67). From its foundations, Freire’s (1968) perspective on existing educational practices took into account the impact of oppression on the oppressed, considering the complexities of transformation as extending beyond ideology critique. Specifically, Freire (1968) considered the psychological impact of being considered socially different but also, of considering oneself to be socially different.

This conceptualisation of education certainly extends the discussion of LGBTIQ inequality in schools in Chapter 2, particularly in light of the findings of both Pearson et al., (2007) and Kosciw et al., (2013). Both studies found that LGBTIQ students reported experiencing feelings of low self-worth and hopelessness regarding their sexual identities, and both studies linked these feelings to the act of concealing one’s sexual identity as well as to the promotion of heterosexuality as the norm in schools. If the position of heterosexuality goes unquestioned, as suggested by Freire’s (1968) understanding of some education, then feelings of hopelessness may arise for oppressed LGBTIQ students who may struggle to see their own sexual identity as anything but abnormal and undesirable. This adds depth to our understanding that victimisation and bullying of LGBTIQ is actually indicative of greater social mechanisms of oppression.

Whilst Freire (1968) acknowledged the importance of understanding social positions, he also advocated for social change through pedagogical strategies which formed a new type of education. Freire’s (1968) concept of praxis captures the complexity with which individuals both subscribe to ideology and are potentially liberated from ideology, and Freire’s (1968) focus on dialogical strategies highlight the importance of the relationships between teachers and students in learning environments. The following section addresses both strategies, critiques and their relevance in the context of LGBTIQ inequality in schools.
Praxis

Freire’s (1968) notion of praxis served as the antithesis to the banking concept of education by encouraging both students and teachers to be both active and reflective participants in their own learning. Praxis expands upon ideology critique by considering the importance of the individual’s relationship with ideology, as opposed to the positioning of an entire social group (Small, 2005). Freire’s (1968) praxis provides a conceptual framework with which to deconstruct the nature and impact of ideological and hegemonic dominance, as well as exploring personal and social change and desired equitable futures. In this way, praxis extends beyond Althusser’s (1984) interpellation which accounted for the subjectification of individuals within ideology, by also considering the ways in which people can transform ideologies on individual and social levels. In his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) Freire stressed the concept of praxis as involving both reflection and action which further extended existing concepts by not only interpreting interpellation and promoting transformation, but by also accounting for why some transformative efforts don’t succeed. Regarding the two components, reflection was understood to be awareness of oppression and what is happening within ourselves and society, and action was understood in the context of what we, working as social advocates, can do to transform oppression (Freire, 1999). Both notions lie at the core of Freire’s (1968) praxis as he argued that transformation of ideology and liberation from oppression is not possible if either element has been neglected.

For Freire (1968), to focus on action is to become one-sidedly practical, missing the nature of ideology and one’s role within the system, and performing activism for activism’s sake. For Small (2005), action without a reflective component around the problems of the current social order is not sufficient to sustain motivation for social change; in other words, action alone cannot be liberatory. This concept provides an interesting frame of analysis regarding LGBTIQ programs, policies and practice and both Marsten’s (2015) and Robinson et al.,’s (2012) critique that these actions are often tokenistic. Through the lens of praxis, the critique that LGBTIQ equality measures are potentially tokenistic can be reframed as potentially lacking reflection. Reflection in this capacity involves situating the individuals, classroom and school within broader systems of masculinity and heteronormativity in combination with developing and implementing initiatives for inclusion, identification and support. This understanding of action and reflection is consistent with both Robinson et al., (2012) and Marsten’s (2015) assertions regarding the need to attend to broader social systems if equality and inclusion are going to be more than fleeting
goals. Indeed, this notion was pivotal to the way in which my study was designed, facilitated and analysed.

Despite the focus on connecting individual teachers to broader social systems, this type of reflection can be one sided and limited. Small (2005) has stated that to focus on reflection is to develop thinking which exists in isolation from practical life, often leading to abstract and out of touch ideas about social change which cannot be implemented in society. Freire (1968) stated that reflection without action becomes meaningless dialogue, inaccessible to many groups within society, and ultimately repressive of social change through a lack of observable social change. Apple (2016) has written about the absence of action in academia, issuing a challenge to critical scholars. Apple (2016) highlighted the susceptibility of academia to neo-liberal influences, listing hierarchies, disciplining techniques, the pursuit of credentials, rankings and performance criteria as examples of such influence. Apple (2016) also acknowledged the important role that intellectual pursuits play in social change, however has questioned the impact of these pursuits when conducted in isolation from social reality. For Apple (2016), critical scholars must be social activists, participating in social change and providing their expertise to society. Apple (2016) stated that critical analysis without action to change can lead to cynicism and despair, instead imploring scholars to live out their ideas for change and their ideas for equality. Apple’s (2016) comments reflect Freire’s (1968) concerns regarding a focus on reflection without the balance of action. Apple’s (2016) views also expand the notion of demonstrating the use of praxis in assessing whole groups, institutional practice and institutional policies, and not just individuals within the university system. Like reflection, this understanding of action was also pivotal in the construction of my study.

To this end, I contend that there may be a potentially significant relationship between literature of LGBTIQ student experiences in schools and critical notions of praxis. Based on the assertions of Freire (1968) and later theorists such as Apple (2016), it appears that praxis can potentially inform the development of policies, programs and practices which support the equality of LGBTIQ students and staff in educational settings by guiding reflection on the nature, function and impact of broader social systems of masculinities and heteronormativity. Praxis, specifically reflection, may also play a part in encouraging teachers and school leaders to consider their role in oppression, as well as their role in transforming their school environments to be fairer and more equal for LGBTIQ students which can be considered as fulfilling the action component. Regarding the research questions of my study, praxis may help evaluate teacher perceptions of sexual orientation inequality and heteronormativity, as well as frame changes to either beliefs or practices through the encouragement of more reflection, more action
or both. Despite the potentially liberatory nature of praxis, Freire’s (1968) transformative vision has also been the subject of critique amongst critical scholars.

Freire’s (1968) views on transformation through praxis have been the subject of some criticism, particularly for the universality of his educative theories (Beckett, 2013). Beckett (2013) has commented that Freire’s (1968) views lack attention to the specificity of people’s lives, viewing people as oppressed without really considering them to be people. Similarly Bowers (1993) has questioned Freire’s (1968) cultural sensitivity as concepts such as praxis have been seen as going against cultural traditions. Bowers (1993) interpreted Freire’s (1968) praxis as framing traditions as oppression, thereby displaying insensitivity to the cultural heritage of indigenous Brazilians. To this end, there is contention as to whether praxis liberates people from their oppression or distances them from their cultural heritage. Another significant criticism of Freire’s (1968) notion of praxis relates to his understanding of identity within oppression and transformation. Glass (2001) has questioned Freire’s (1968) construction of an oppressed-oppressor binary, instead suggesting that people can simultaneously be oppressed and oppress others. Glass (2001) refers specifically to the critical notion of subordination and domination, using the example of a woman, who may be oppressed because of her gender, but who can also be simultaneously dominant due to the fact that she is white. This critique is important in the context of LGBTIQ inequality, as it suggests that being LGBTIQ is just one of many social identities which may interact with mechanisms of oppression. Furthermore, it suggests that teachers working for transformation may also have varying identities in the context of social inequality, and that reflections should not be limited to one type of oppression. This is certainly consistent with research addressed in Chapter 3, with Finnessy (2016) finding that teachers are influenced by their own life experiences. In light of this critique, I have also turned to theories of thinking in social justice education, due to their helpfulness in exploring a more nuanced approach to transformational thinking. The following section addresses theories of critical engagement (Hooks, 2013), critical thinking (Brookfield, 2012) and critical literacy (North, 2009) in order to enhance Freire’s (1968) theory of transformational praxis.

**Becoming Critical**

In recent years, social justice education literature has enhanced critical understandings of oppression and transformation through a strong emphasis on the role of the teacher and responsibility of all social members to fight for social equality (Brookfield, 2012; Hooks, 2013; Hyttten, 2015; Tan, 2009). This section addresses the concepts of critical engagement, and critical thinking, demonstrating the value of social justice concepts when considered parallel to critical concepts of transformation.
Several researchers have explored and commented on the significance of critical engagement in social justice education (Hooks, 2013; Kumashiro, 2006; Tan, 2009). To be critically engaged is to be emotionally and cognitively available for the deconstruction and reconstruction of social systems and orders (Tan, 2009). In the context of sexual orientation inequality, to be critically engaged is to recognise the influence of masculinities and heteronormativity on the ways we think, feel and live out our daily lives (Kumashiro, 2006; Robinson, 2012). Walker & Taylor (2014) have stated that without an acknowledgement of our part in these broader social inequalities, critical thinking and subsequent change become difficult tasks.

Hooks (2013) has commented on the nature and importance of engaged pedagogy, basing this movement on the assumption that people learn best when there is an interactive relationship between a student and teacher. Whilst this is a well-researched area of educational philosophy and practice, the term engagement takes on particular meaning in the context of educating for social justice. Due to the impacts of social privilege and the inevitable variance in social awareness, critical engagement involves taking time to assess the emotional awareness of students (Hooks, 2013), as well as the social realities faced by students, families and communities (Tan, 2009). Both Hooks (2013) and Tan (2009) have also highlighted the importance of building communities and engaging with specific cultures in order to honour the valuable contribution that each student can make to the learning process. In this way, critical engagement as a concept accounts for Bowers' (2013) critique of Freire's (1968) praxis as culturally insensitive, as it grounds the analysis of our social worlds in our own cultural heritages.

In the context of social justice education for sexual orientation inequality, critical engagement might involves the acknowledgment of LGBTIQ themes, people and culture with the purpose of increasing visibility, understanding, compassion and acceptance from the school community, as these were all elements highlighted as needing improvement in Australian schools by the work of Mary & Hillier (2014) and Shannon (2016). By engaging critically through open and honest exploration of LGBTIQ contexts, teachers can establish not only safe classrooms, but rather nurturing classroom whereby students can feel genuinely accepted and cared for (Tan, 2009). Tan (2009) has described this environment as the foundation of self-empowerment for marginalised students, stating that real critical engagement, whereby individual experiences are linked to social privilege and social oppression, develops in students an awareness that their suffering may not be their own fault. In reference to the literature regarding the impact of internalised homophobia and the experiences of exclusion and low self-worth of LGBTIQ young people (Pearson et al., 2007), critical engagement can be seen as a vital part of personal and
collective empowerment in the fight for equality. Social justice educators such as Brookfield (2012) have also stressed the need to expand on critical engagement by thinking critically about social oppression and our own social worlds.

Despite varying definitions of critical thinking, across social justice literature it has involved seeing a range of culturally and socially determined perspectives and acting based on values (Brookfield, 2012; Hooks, 2013; Sanjakdar et al., 2013). Because of the role of engagement of emotion and the encouragement of social action, critical thinking can’t be analysed as a series of mental processes; it must be lived through conscious awareness and conscious behavior (Brookfield, 2012). North (2009) has highlighted similar differences in the context of pedagogy, differentiating between what she has labelled functional literacy and critical literacy. For North (2009), functional literacy is akin to analytical frameworks which serve to create citizens who sustain, rather than challenge the social order. In contrast, the development of critical literacy arms people with the knowledge to examine their own and others’ lives in relation to social and cultural contexts, allowing them to recognise oppressive aspects of society and to act in a more just manner (North, 2009). This orientation to values again extends Freire’s (1968) pedagogy by placing responsibility to change society on both the oppressed and oppressors alike, encouraging both reflective and active aspects of praxis, and suggesting that anyone is capable of engaging with these values and developing these skills.

Whilst praxis, critical engagement and critical thinking address an individual’s relationship with ideology, Freire's philosophy of education also considered the relationships between members of society through his conception of dialogue, and the following section will explore these relationships, and specifically, the importance of interactions between teachers and students.

**Dialogue**

As well as describing the individual’s relationship with ideology through praxis, Freire’s (1968) philosophy of education also highlights the importance of relationships between social members through dialogue. For Freire (1968), dialogue was not seen as an educational process, but rather it was the education. This construction goes against traditional banking models by recruiting both students and teachers as co-investigators of students’ reality, not a prescribed list of approved knowledge. For Freire (1968), knowledge needed to be created, not passed down, by enlisting students as key figures in their own liberation. Reed et al., (2015) have argued that Freire’s educational theory included a deep respect for the strengths and capabilities that all learners bring with them and that the first task of the
teacher involves discovering, recognising and uncovering these strengths and areas of expertise. This construction of education builds upon ideology critique by making the oppressed active participants in their own learning.

The basis of Freire’s (1968) transformative educational concepts lay in the relationship between teachers and students. For Freire (1968; 1998), transformation required a social reconstruction of knowledge, and in order to achieve this, he proposed a dialogical approach in which everyone participates as co-learners; that students learn from teachers and that teachers learn from students. A prominent example of this approach is Freire’s (1968) notion of problem posing, an educational strategy designed to challenge oppressive forces (Reed et al., 2015). Trout (2008) has stated that problem posing bridges the gap between teachers and students by framing reality as a process in which all people can participate. Problem posing establishes this framework by relying on knowledge from both students and teachers, disrupting banking notions of education by conceptualising knowledge as something to be created, not passed on. Through problem posing, both teachers and students problematise society as it is, becoming conscious of the problems “embedded and inherent in the ordinary” (Reed et al., 2015, p.56). Through a problem posing strategy, teachers ask students open ended questions, whereby they do not actually have preconceived ideas of the answers before the question is formulated (Freire, 1968). This frames both parties as co-researchers and co-learners as they discover new knowledge together, not simply reproduce knowledge which sustains oppressive structures. Reed et al., (2015) have also commented that the learners have the most important knowledge regarding how oppressions affect their day-to-day life, attending to the often insidious and unquestioned daily practices through which we maintain oppression and the hegemonic status of harmful ideologies.

This conception of problem posing could potentially have an interesting impact on the way sexual orientation is discussed in schools. Shannon (2016) highlighted the Australian Curriculum’s (2015) focus on risk, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy as key topics in sexuality education, and problem posing would be a potentially effective method by which to expand and enrich conversations within the classrooms. As problem posing means that the answers are unknown before the question is asked, then teachers and students alike could learn about varying sexual identities, preferences and practices by allowing students to talk about their relationship with sexuality and how sexuality impacts their daily lives. This would certainly go against current sexuality education which, as Shannon (2016) has researched, links sexuality with risk and with self-regulation. Such a framing of sexuality in schools can
be understood as neo-liberalism in action through education, however, the research of Hillier et al., (2010) did uncover some different ways that teachers have addressed sexuality in their classrooms. Though in the minority of student reports, there was some evidence that some teachers have adopted a more open classroom environment in which to discuss alternative sexual identities through the lens of legitimisation, not delegitimisation through risk and self-regulation. Whilst the specific pedagogies of the teachers were not researched by Hillier et al., (2010) this student feedback suggests that there may be various ways for teachers to challenge dominant neo-liberal discourses in sexuality education. Furthermore, this example speaks to the core of Freire’s (1968; 1998; 1999) philosophy of education which goes beyond a discussion of the importance of education to stress that transformation relies on a certain type of education. For Freire (1968), social education simultaneously prompts awareness and motivation for change, and whilst much of his work focusses on the student and teacher working as coresearchers, the role of the teacher remains a significant, yet debated, topic amongst critical scholars.

**Debating the Teacher**

For Freire (1968; 1998; 1999), transformative education was the work of transformative educators. Building upon early theorists such as Althusser (1984) and Marcuse (1964) who recognised the importance of institutions and power in oppression and transformation, Freire (1968; 1998) has highlighted the key role played by teachers in a range of educative contexts. In the same way as social justice ideals presented in Chapter 3, Freire’s (1968; 1998) teacher fights for equality whilst fostering a sense of criticality and activism in their students, however this framework has been criticised for its expectation of teachers to implicitly embrace this role. Whilst Marcuse (1964) had identified the importance of self-reflection in becoming an activist for change, theories of social justice education have expanded upon this notion by encouraging teachers to embrace their role as an advocate for social equality by reflecting on their own beliefs and origins. In this way, teachers can acknowledge their own interpellation and align to their ethics, morals and values as opposed to their socially constructed beliefs. This section explores the role of the teacher through both Marcuse’s (1964) and Freire’s (1968; 1998) visions, as well as addresses gaps in these critical ideas through the introduction of social justice education literature.

Whilst Althusser (1984) highlighted the role of institutions in social change, the work of Marcuse (1964) looked more specifically at the role of institutional agents in his search for a catalyst of change. Also from the Frankfurt School of critical theory, Marcuse formulated his ideas in the late 1960’s and early 1970s, a period defined by radical political movements such as the Civil Rights movement, the War in
Marcuse (1964) built on other theorists by exploring the role of students in social revolution, asserting that the student movement expands rebellion against the system as well as visions of a better society beyond economic and political terrains (Alway, 1995). Marcuse had witnessed the impact of student protest, and he declared that the job of cultural workers was to prepare students for revolution. Moreover, he highlighted the importance of individual reflection and self-transformation in the revolutionary process, stating that radical practice must involve a journey inwards (Alway, 1995). Freire (1968; 1998; 1999) expanded upon the work of Marcuse (1964) by exploring the role of teachers in great detail and positioning them at the centre of social change. Whilst Marcuse’s context led him to focus on the student, Freire’s work with students in Brazil led him to observe, focus and reflect upon importance of the teacher in the dialogical relationship as well as in the facilitation of problem posing in the classroom. Freire (1998) described the practice of education as something serious, highlighting the teacher’s participation in the development of children, adolescents and adults. Consistent with Althusser’s (1984) notions of schooling, Freire (1998) recognised the dual capability of teachers to either help students in their development or else set them back, and the section on ideology linked this concept with literature regarding the dual aspect of teachers either helping or harming LGBTIQ students in their classrooms (Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012).

Freire’s (1998) ideas around the role of the teacher have also been the source of some contention in the critical community, specifically regarding the rigidity of his expectations of teachers’ relationship with ideology; that they should operate outside of dominant ideologies. Freire (1999) in fact has stated that teachers who do not value the seriousness of their role should disqualify themselves as teachers, almost assuming that teachers have an awareness of their role in social transformation and in the context of praxis, where reflection or action may be lacking, this seems unfair. Beckett (2013) has argued the limitations of Freire’s (1968) ideas regarding teachers as liberators, questioning whether teachers are implicitly on the same side as the oppressed. Certainly research discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 found that teachers often display heteronormative behaviours (Magnus & Lundin, 2016; Vega et al., 2012) and in more extreme cases, homophobic behaviours (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Hillier et al., 2010), suggesting that teachers cannot be expected to simply exist outside of ideology. Furthermore, Beckett (2013) has stated that it is perhaps a simplistic construction, labelling teachers as liberators and students as oppressed, ignoring the possibility of oppressed teachers or that students can potentially fulfil the role of liberators.
Beckett’s (2013) critique expands Freire’s (1968) notions of social transformation, suggesting that teachers cannot necessarily be relied upon to act in the role of social liberator of their oppressed students. Rather, Beckett (2013) has argued that teachers themselves must take into account their own learned oppressions as well as students’ learned freedoms, both acknowledging student strengths and importantly, teacher weaknesses. This critique is consistent with Glass’ (2001) suggestion that oppressor-oppressed binaries do not account for the various social identities we may possess. Teachers may in fact act as liberators for LGBTIQ students, but themselves be oppressed due to their race, class, gender or disability. Whilst the notion of acknowledging teacher weakness attends to Freire’s (1968) ideas of reflection in transformative praxis, Beckett (2013) has deemed Freire’s (1968; 1998) expectations of teachers to simply be outside of ideology to be unreasonable.

Certainly, the notion of teachers being susceptible to ideological influences is consistent with literature investigating LGBTIQ inequality in schools. The work of Magnus & Lundin (2016) concluded that whilst many teachers may not display overt homophobic beliefs and behaviours, they may remain profoundly heteronormative in their views of the world. Furthermore, Vega et al., (2012) concluded that these heteronormative views of society manifested in various behaviours within the classroom, often without the acute awareness of the teacher. To this end, what is missing from Freire’s assertions regarding the seriousness of teaching is the allowance for teachers to be influenced by ideology as well as how teachers can model equitable ways of being in the world whilst still within the bounds of ideology. Whilst Freire (1968; 1998) focussed on the role of teachers in developing critical awareness in students, social justice educators such as Hytten (2015), Taylor (2015) and Lee (2011) have stressed the importance of teachers developing this awareness first through critical reflection.

**Teacher Reflection**

Social justice education concepts of teacher reflection can be useful in attending to the gaps in Freire's (1968) conception of the critical teacher. The term reflection is threaded throughout social justice literature, and bears a striking resemblance to Freire’s (1968) notion of reflection in both its definition and purpose. Both Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015) have developed concepts in order to encourage teacher reflection regarding inequality, their place in a hierarchical system of oppression as well as how to model equality to students. Of interest to my study, the concepts which explore the origins of teacher beliefs and their orientation to teacher ethics are particularly pertinent in order to explore the gap in Freire’s (168; 1998) model of teachers as liberatory educators, as both notions allow teachers time and space to become role models, instead of expecting them to simply be outside of ideology.
Origins

Whilst a great deal of literature explores the role of critical reflection for students and the most effective ways of teachers developing this skill, there is a growing body of thought and research highlighting the importance of teacher reflections regarding their own assumptions and worldviews (Arshard, 2012; Lee, 2011; Sleeter, 2009). Hytten (2015) has argued that the notion of reflective practice has been circled around teacher education and research to the point that it has been rendered rhetoric, however critical reflection extends beyond rhetoric by providing the teacher with a greater understanding of themselves as a cultural being, not simply as an educator (McDonald & Zeichner, 2012). Lee (2011) has gone as far to state that in order to become a teacher for social justice, teachers need to understand who they are and their views on the sources of inequities and privileges which often define their school environments.

McDonald & Zeichner (2012) have asserted that the process of critical reflection on the origins of beliefs, assumptions and views is a key aspect of preparing teachers to teach for social justice. Sleeter (2009) has advocated for professional coursework which provides a space for teacher candidates to explore their own backgrounds and experiences in order to identify assumptions and beliefs as well as the cultural contexts of their own development which may impact their understanding of schooling, young people and families. Arshard (2012) has made similar assertions, stating that teachers must reflect on the origins of their beliefs and assumptions through an examination of the influence of their family and home, religion as well as their own experiences of discrimination and being part of the ‘other’. These statements are reminiscent of the assertions of Brookfield (2012) regarding the cultivation of critical thinking in students, suggesting that critical reflective processes are one and the same. Sleeter (2009) has extended this line of thought to include experienced teachers, stating that whilst professional practice often makes these educators more experienced than teacher candidates, reflection without critical reflection can lead to problematic conclusions about the populations with whom they have worked; reflective practice may in fact perpetuate social beliefs which create a climate of inequality. Brookfield (2012) has defined this as the difference between analytical thinking and critical thinking, whereby problem solving strategies do not necessarily consider broader social consequences. In this way, reflective practice may fail to link what is happening in classrooms regarding social inequality with what could be happening in a fairer, more just classroom environment.

This discussion has extremely significant implications for the present study. The similarities in assertions regarding critical awareness for teachers suggests that the previous discussions regarding critical engagement and critical thinking through critical literacies are applicable not only for teacher
candidates, but for experienced teachers working in schools. Regarding the research questions, the notion of critical reflection on the origins of beliefs may help explore teacher perspectives regarding sexual orientation inequality on a more profound level, and may also be more catalytic in the context of changes to these beliefs, and subsequently, behaviour. Another benefit of using social justice education concepts in order to enhance Freire’s (1968) notion of the liberatory teacher is that educators such as Hytten (2015), whilst allowing for teachers to be influenced by ideology, have also provided tools which, through reflection, orient teachers to their ethics, values and morals.

Ethics

For Hytten (2015), teaching for equality requires ongoing reflection on ethics, values and morals as well as the daily practice of ethics in classrooms. In her challenge to social justice education, Hytten (2015) stated that much of the scholarship surrounding teaching for social justice focuses on the content of what is taught and the broad political issue of what the ultimate purposes of schooling should be, as opposed to how teachers should ethically uphold their visions and stances. For Hytten (2015), little attention has been paid to the day to day practices of individual teachers in the context of how they uphold visions of fairness and equality in the classroom. This line of argument is similar to Roberts’ (2013) conception of transformative education, focussing on the role of the teacher in promoting openness, fairness and justice within classrooms in the hopes that these behaviours will be enacted by students. In this way, Hytten (2015) has framed teachers as fundamentally moral agents who may require some conscious reflection in order to remain connected to their morality. This line of thought is consistent with the research into teacher education programs presented in Chapter 3, whereby teachers benefitted from spaces to actively think about the morality of their profession (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Kukner et al., 2016). However, as noted in Chapter 3, the work of Kitchen & Bellini (2012) was limited in its ability to provide adequate time for teachers to reflect about their own belief, origins and teacher values.

Hytten (2015) made the broad statement that few teachers reflect on their moral potency in classrooms, however this was based on observation over her teaching years and has received criticism from both Gunzenhauser (2015) and Taylor (2015) for a lack of sophistication in her argument. For Taylor (2015) in particular, the universalism of Hytten’s (2015) notions of values was of concern, and Taylor (2015) has argued that the identification of values should be role contingent; Taylor (2015) believed that the values of a teacher will differ from political leaders or the values of scientists. Despite this criticism, the idea of moral potency is of interest to my study in the context of teacher values and
spaces for reflection, as it aligns with Freire’s (1968) notion of praxis whilst allowing for teachers to go through a process of transformation without defined expectations that they should already be ready to liberate students.

Despite some differences in definitions, all three researchers agree on the usefulness of reflecting on classroom ethics and teacher values in order to ensure that both are consistent with broader social and political visions of justice in the world (Gunzenhauser, 2015; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015). Taylor (2015), Gunzenhauser (2015) and Hytten (2015) have all commented on the importance of humility and care in teacher practice, arguing that these values create spaces for discussion. In this way, these values align with Freire’s (1968) notions of dialogue, as in this framework, ethical teachers don’t presume to know the answers to social equality, and provide care to their students who may struggle to see beyond oppressive structures. Finally, a value which was discussed with consensus across the work of Taylor (2015), Gunzenhauser (2015) and Hytten (2015) was the notion of openness. Drawing back to earlier discussions around critical engagement, Hytten (2015), like Freire (1968), has argued that it is important to understand the social and cultural background of a student before attempting to develop critical thinking through critical literacy, and therefore an open mind is essential in order to gather this knowledge. This does not mean that the teacher has to agree with the student, but rather be open to hearing a justification or explanation as to why the student sees the world in that way. A student who has developed under the influence of masculine hierarchies may not see the connections between their behaviour and broader social orders and Toomey et al., (2012) has stated that a feature of heteronormativity is not recognising heteronormativity; this suggests resistance which must be addressed with an open mind.

Taylor (2015) has acknowledged some benefits in Hytten’s (2015) proposal that considering values will prompt reflection, however has stated that Hytten (2015) stopped short of presenting a principled argument for the use of this reflection in social justice education. Despite the lack of empirical evidence in Hytten’s (2015) work, the concepts are certainly interesting in relation to exploring the role of teachers in promoting equality for LGBTIQ students. Regarding the research questions, the concept of ethics and specifically, the notion of reflecting on ethics are potentially interesting perspectives to gather from teachers. Furthermore, in the context of ethics and origin stories contributing to transformation, these concepts provide an interesting framework with which to explore and evaluate changes within teachers who engage in such reflections.
By reading Freire’s (1968; 1998) conception of a teacher in combination with Beckett’s (2013) critique of this conception and by enhancing this critique with social justice education literature, it appears that there may be a gap in research regarding how teachers are impacted by ideology. Specifically in the research area of LGBTIQ inequality in schools, it appears that research may not have adequately explored how heteronormativity impacts teacher awareness of sexual orientation inequality as well as how this ideology impacts teacher motivation for accepting their role as an advocate for equality. In this way, the conceptual ideas presented in this chapter strengthen the research questions presented in Chapter 3, specifically the notion of collecting teacher perspectives and exploring changes in teacher perspectives and practice through an exploration of sexual orientation and gender inequality in school environments and beyond. The idea of exploring change in teacher practice is consistent with Freire’s (1998) conceptions regarding the role of the teacher in social equality, and by exploring perspectives, I can attend to critiques that teachers must take a journey inward before they can reasonably be expected to adopt their role of a social advocate. Furthermore, Freire’s (1968) notions of praxis and dialogue can also inform research in the area of sexual orientation inequality by providing a framework with which to assess and evaluate existing and potential programs, policies and practices. Praxis may shed light on why certain initiatives may be limited, or why certain teachers may be resistant to change by attending to both the reflective and active elements of social oppression and transformation. The concept of dialogue suggests that a researcher in this field would only be a co-researcher in the same position as the teachers whose perspectives would be gathered, however this idea will receive much greater attention in the following chapter regarding the methodology of my study.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced critical conceptions of social transformation. Through a discussion of prominent theorists such as Marcuse and Freire, I have addressed the importance of education in transformation, specifically the transformative strategies of Freire’s (1968) philosophy of education including praxis and dialogue. These critical conceptions of social transformation stress not only the relationships between the individual and ideology, but also the relationships between social members. Specifically, Freire's (1968; 1998; 1999) concepts of praxis and dialogue provide tools for change and emphasise the necessity for both active and reflective components of a change process. Regarding the discussion of LGBTIQ equality in schools from Chapter 3, these concepts have implications for the ways in which ideology, hegemony and power are discussed in the classroom, teacher education and beyond.
This chapter has also highlighted the importance of teachers in critical understandings of transformation, and in conjunction with social justice education literature, the need for teachers to reflect and become critical if they are to help students do the same. Furthermore, these concepts highlight the importance of group members working as co-researchers, converting traditional teacher-student roles in learning. Both the educational strategies and importance of teachers have had significant bearing on my methodology, which similarly emphasises co-research, action and reflection for teachers and researchers alike.
Chapter 6

Methodology

The primary aims of this study were to explore the perspectives of secondary school teachers regarding sexual orientation inequality, to explore the perspectives of teachers regarding their role in social change, to explore individual changes as well as to understand the supports necessary for the teachers to actually make changes to their beliefs and behaviours. As examined in Chapters 2 and 3, both the literature regarding LGBTIQ student experiences in schools as well as social justice education for equality have commented on the importance of teachers in both wellbeing of LGBTIQ students and the fostering of critical awareness for future generations to take up the challenge of equality for the future. Chapter 5 explored the role of teachers as critical change agents, highlighting their position within social institutions of oppression. Similarly critical frameworks highlighted the potential for teachers to simultaneously perpetuate ideological violence through inaction and adopt a role as a change agent for LGBTIQ equality. In this construction, teacher beliefs and behaviours are seen as pivotal (Freire, 1998), changeable (Freire, 1968) and varied (Magnus & Lundin, 2016), and therefore, I expected their perspectives and changes in beliefs and behaviours to be equally varied. Based on the identified gaps in the literature, more research around the role of teachers is needed. More specifically, further research is required to address gaps in understandings of teacher perspectives as well as understanding the supports required for teacher changes.

For my study, I have engaged in qualitative research as both Bell (2010) and Bogdan & Biklin (2007) have stressed the importance of qualitative methods in understanding individual’s perspectives of the world. Whilst often criticised for being unscientific, qualitative researchers have questioned whether a scientific approach can be used when dealing with human beings and in fact doubt whether social facts exist at all (Bell, 2010; Carr, 1994). Therefore, a qualitative approach attended the need for teacher perspectives in an overtly subjective, in-depth manner, whilst providing prompts and spaces for change. The first part of the chapter details the framework of action research, and specifically emancipatory action research which was utilised in this study. Within both collaborative and individual contexts, I introduce the methods which constituted the action research cycle as well as associated limitations and ethical concerns. I adopted action research as a methodology in order to satisfy the identified gaps regarding an understanding of teacher perspectives and supports for teacher change. Robinson (2013) has highlighted the suitability of action research for educational environments, arguing for the gathering
of teacher perspectives and a focus on improvement in both teaching and learning processes. Robinson (2013) argued that teachers’ involvement in action research situates them as key stakeholders, and significant to this research, as active participants in change. Whilst presented as separate concepts, the influence of praxis connects perspectives and change, whereby reflecting on perspectives leads to changing actions, and changing actions leads to further reflection on perspectives.

The second part explores the study’s rigour as well as significant study limitations, before introducing the participants of the research. Finally, I address the concept of finding meaning in the data through both thematic and narrative data analysis, as well as introduce a model for teacher advocacy which was developed through relevant literature, critical frameworks and the study data.

**Action Research**

In order to explore my research questions, I engaged in action research. Action research as a methodology emphasises change, as participants explore social problems with the intent of developing knowledge and action which improves the identified problem (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Robinson, 2013). Born out of critical theory, action research serves as a particularly effective methodology in the context of addressing issues of inequality through critical understandings of social oppression (Kemmis, 2001). Kemmis (2001) has argued that action research provides a space for social members to both problematise their social surroundings and to envision more equitable and just ways of interacting in a variety of social contexts. To this end, action research was an appropriate and valid method for investigating both the perspectives of teachers as well as changes in teacher behaviour and beliefs in the context of sexual orientation inequality and the effects for their teaching practice. In order to engage in action research, the teachers attended a one-off interview, as well as six one-hour workshops over a period of six months; further details of the methods used within and between the workshops will be presented throughout this section.

Whilst the content and dynamics within action research groups will alter from study to study, Chevalier & Buckles (2013) have stated that the process of action research is consistent. Action research operates by way of a research cycle involving planning, action, observation and reflection (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Robinson, 2013) and whilst this model may seem fixed and rigid, the stages in the cycle are conceived as overlapping constructs rather than discrete ones (Robinson, 2013). Table 6.1 summarises the four stages as well as the methods which fulfilled each stage of the action research cycle.
Table 6.1 Stages of action research cycle and associated methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning for Action</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>Guided Observation</td>
<td>Guided Observation</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysed Passage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Analysed Passage</td>
<td>Reflective Writing</td>
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<td>Semi-Structured Interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analysed Passage</td>
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</table>

The method of group discussion fulfilled both the planning and reflecting stages of the process, whilst the method of guided observation fulfilled the acting and observing stages. Furthermore, reflection was encouraged through reflective writing and planning and acting were further facilitated through the analysed passages. The following sections provide greater detail regarding each of these methods after I introduce the key features of action research, specifically the orientation to emancipation, the attention to praxis and the focus on collaboration.

**Emphasising Emancipation**

There are many forms of action research. Within the methodology of action research, for this study, I engaged more specifically in emancipatory action research, which is characterised by several unique features and limitations. Emancipatory action research is defined by always being values oriented, involving a social issue within an organisation or community and by its participants working as co-researchers in order to make permanent social changes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Emancipatory action research is a flexible process that changes and develops as those engaged change and develop, maintaining a focus of change as opposed to understanding (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Richter, 2016). With this focus in mind, the action research cycle also provides space to reflect, express and gather perspectives from group members.

Whilst I was interested in exploring the perspectives of teachers regarding LGBTIQ issues and social justice education, these perspectives were inextricably linked with change; that providing a space to express, listen and reflect on varied perspectives would influence the teachers to change. To this end, knowledge is seen as a verb as opposed to a noun which allows participants to become socially empowered through practical uses of new knowledge and understanding (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Richter, 2016). Furthermore, emancipatory action research aims to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in their everyday lives, and to use this knowledge to increase the well-being of humans.
(Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Wimpenny, 2013). This study aimed to change the beliefs of teachers, which in turn would improve their practice. In this way, the gaining of knowledge and reflection didn't remain in an abstract, cognitive form; it had the potential to make the participants more just and make their practice fairer, as they used their influence to improve the well-being situation of LGBTIQ students in their classrooms (Bell, 2010). Lykes & Mallona (2008) have stated that in this way, action research works as an emancipatory force by transforming people from autonomous individuals, to contextualised, historical agents-in-community who act for social betterment. To this end, emancipatory action research shares integral features with Freire's (1968) philosophy of education and more specifically, his notion of praxis.

**Action Research as Praxis**

Another important feature of action research is that it provides a space for both the reflective and active components of praxis. Whilst action research has been praised for facilitating a deeper understanding of social injustices, its primary criticism has revolved around the efficacy of these understandings in generating genuine social change (Hadfield, 2012). Hadfield (2012) has argued that without the provision of a detailed critical praxis that can be adopted, the identification of factors which perpetuate social injustice becomes a practical “cul-de-sac” (p572). As explored in Chapter 5, the concept of praxis is situated at the centre of social transformation (Freire, 1968; Small, 2005). The role of both reflecting and acting is significant in change strategies for societies, groups and individuals (Freire, 1968; 1999; Small, 2005), and thus was factored into the methodological design of this study.

Chevalier & Buckles (2013) have discussed the importance of praxis in qualitative research. In Chapter 5, I explored the absence of reflection in change as action for action’s sake, and similarly, the absence of theory from methodology has a profound impact on both the selection of methods and the results (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). In Chapter 5 I framed reflection without action as meaningless dialogue, and similarly Chevalier & Buckles (2013) have stressed the significance of research involving a practical application in order to move beyond the intellectual domain. In response to these critiques, Price & Mencke (2013) have argued that action research combines social reflectivity with social action in a dynamic way whereby theory informs practice, and practice informs theory. In this way, the nature of an action research cycle inevitably attends to praxis, which according to Freire’s (1968) philosophy, facilitates greater change in the fight for equality. Action research also attends to Freire’s (1968) other prominent theory regarding the importance of dialogue in education, by framing participants as co-researchers in the investigative process.
**Action Research as Co-research**

In action research, all group members are viewed as important co-researchers and co-creators of new social knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2006). This prominent feature which further defines action research from other change-based methodologies, has been seen as successfully combining expert knowledge with community experience (Gosin et al., 2003). Gosin et al., (2003) have argued that action research blends the strengths of academic experts and community participants, describing it as an “ideal model” (p. 366). This legitimisation of community participants’ views works in opposition to the individualism associated with neo-liberal ideologies, as asserted by social justice educators such as Hursh (2009) and Sleeter (2009); group members are encouraged to learn from each other as opposed to either independently or directly from the facilitator.

In this context, researchers have argued that action research is a process of doing research with people, not on people (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Ingram, 2014). Action research is fundamentally collaborative in nature, despite the necessity for participants and a facilitator. Whilst the facilitator’s role is to act as a guide and stimulate discussion when necessary, it is important to note that with regards to the problems posed, any solutions, interventions or reflections must be conducted by all participants (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Robinson, 2013). In this way, the facilitator acts as co-researcher, which, in a critical context, is particularly important due to the equality with which people in society are interpellated within ideologies. Due to the nature of oppressive forces, a researcher cannot stake a claim of objectivity with regards to social ideologies, as by definition, they impact and influence every member of society (Althusser, 1984). To this end, Ingram (2014) has argued that, to the fullest extent possible, the researcher must be on equal ground with the other participants in the study. Certainly, in my research, this involved me being an active participant and contributor in each of the stages, and particularly through the methods which helped make the group space a collaborative space.

**Collaborative Spaces**

Several researchers have commented on the transformative power of collaboration in action research practice (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Greenwood & Levin, 2006). In the context of developing critical awareness, collaboration opens up possibilities of exposure to alternate viewpoints, challenging of existing viewpoints and the creative process which flows from group dynamics (Ingram, 2014). In a critical context, Ingram (2014) has argued that collaboration works against neo-liberal ideologies which encourage individualism, stating that participants are able to get beyond their own individual
experiences and understand how systemic issues reinforce inequality. Ingram (2014) has affirmed the work of Hursh (2009) and Sleeter (2009), arguing that neo-liberalism encourages the internalisation of toxic social messages. To this end, being part of a group engaging with broader social issues allows for both collective and individual agency to withstand and challenge social pressures (Ingram, 2014).

In the context of an action research cycle, group discussion facilitated the planning stage, as co-researchers discussed various changes they wished to implement in their personal and professional environments. Furthermore, the use of group discussion as a method partially facilitated the reflection stage, as the teachers shared their own perspectives and experiences, prompting reflection from others. At the end of each discussion, the teachers were instructed to observe certain aspects of their professional and personal worlds which related to the discussions around inequality. These guided observations, which were consistent for each group member, were a major component of the observation stage of the action research cycle, prompting more targeted action and subsequent reflection regarding beliefs and behaviours around sexual orientation inequality. This section details the use of group discussion and guided observation in my study, as well as several limitations associated with collaboration in action research.

**Group Discussion**

In order to emphasise collaboration, whilst balancing reflection and action, I used the method of group discussion. Within each of the first five workshops, participants engaged in 45 minutes of group discussion, engaging in both the active and reflective components of praxis. The discussion groups primarily consisted of two elements: problem posing and collaborative problem solving. As explored in Chapter 5, problem posing is a technique designed to question and expose the status quo (Freire, 1968). Problem posing involves direct questioning wherein the answers haven’t already been solved, thereby making all involved genuine participants in the question’s exploration (Piery et al., 2011). This study also utilised scenarios as a form of problem posing, presenting the participants with scripted situations which asked them to question their beliefs and behaviours in various examples of heteronormative injustice. The participants were asked to reflect on how they believe they would feel and think, and what they believe they would do in each scenario. These scenarios will be presented, discussed and the responses analysed in subsequent data chapters.

Following the problem posing, the participants engaged in collaborative problem solving. This involved discussing their experiences, feelings and thoughts, as well as considering potential social alternatives,
personal changes and pedagogical changes (Freire, 1968; Price & Mencke, 2013). Research has found that the collaborative process enriches the depth of participant reflection, as hearing the experiences of others can open up new streams of thought and redefine which experiences the participants consider relevant (Hanson, 2013). This is vital within the context of critical theory, as ideologies and hegemonic practices typically go unnoticed by members of society (Althusser, 1984; Brookfield, 2005). In this way, the group discussion also attended to both reflection and action components of praxis, whilst also forming a prominent method in both the reflection and planning for action stages of the action research cycle.

Within the discussion, I posed the questions acting in the role of facilitator. The discussions were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Following each workshop, each teacher was emailed a transcription of their contribution to discussion and these transcriptions were approved by the teachers before being included in the data set.

**Guided Observations**

The observation component of the action research cycle occurred between workshops. At the end of Workshops 1-5, participants were given guided instructions with which to observe their professional and personal worlds; these instructions will be threaded throughout the data chapters and included in the appendices. These guided observations were designed to encourage reflection and enhance the discussion around heteronormative beliefs and behaviours, the pathways and barriers to change and any change strategies by encouraging critical reflection in the participants as they apply the concepts to their own school and home environments (Lykes & Mallona, 2008). This method explored all research questions and was significant due to the ongoing criticism that action research can too often get overwhelmed by discussions of social conditions without developing praxis for social change (Hadfield, 2012).

The purpose of the observation component of the research cycle was to encourage the teachers to act on the thinking generated in the discussions, thereby making it critical (Brookfield, 2012). As previously stated, the analysed passages provided individual contexts with the same purpose. The guided observations attended to both reflective and active elements of praxis, as well as the observation, reflective and active elements of the action research cycle. By observing one’s social world with a new lens provided by group discussion, both reflection and action were encouraged in order to either reconceptualise one’s surroundings or else providing motivation and initiative to act for change. Whilst
the guided nature of the observations assisted participants in applying information generated in the discussions, it also had the potential of limiting the focus of observation and therefore constraining any potential unforeseen data that teachers may have generated themselves.

Contentions in Collaboration

There are several issues associated with group discussion and collaboration in action research. With regards to ethical concerns, collaborative methods have the potential to undermine confidentiality (Carr, 1994; Ingram, 2014). The potential psychological risks arising from confidentiality issues were managed in two ways. Protocols for engagement in the focus groups were attached to the consent form, both of which are included in the appendices, and were further established with the group in the first workshop to ensure that the workshop discussions remained confidential amongst group members. The protocols were also flexible, able to be adapted depending on the needs of the group. The issue of school confidentiality was specifically addressed in the protocols, and subsequently at the beginning of each workshop. To protect confidentiality when publishing, anonymity was maximized through the use of participant pseudonyms. This information was plainly stated in the Plain Language Statement, which is also included in the appendices, and consent forms, so that any Principal or teacher who agreed to engage in the study was fully briefed on the issue.

The power differentials between researcher and participant in action research have been a source of contention within the research community. Ingram (2014) has stated that one cannot entirely remove the hierarchy that shapes research relationships, and suggested the use of explicit reflections throughout the research process in order to address concerns of potential bias. I will address this further when addressing the specific methods of the present study. Gosin et al., (2003) have argued that power should be shared rather than yielded over others, however acknowledged that some people may have more resources than others. This notion had particular implications for the present study as participants entered the research process with varying levels of engagement in LGBTIQ issues or teacher advocacy. In a theoretical sense, Gosin et al., (2003) have argued that researchers position themselves as ‘consultants to the community’, providing informational support and facilitating mobilisation of the community (p.365). Power is also managed by genuinely treating community members, in the case of the present study, as the experts on the needs and natures of their students. The teachers were treated as professionals and as change agents, with invaluable contributions to transformation through emancipation.
Group discussion as a method can also impact an individual’s ability to reflect in a critical manner (Hadfield, 2012). From a conceptual standpoint, the ideological agenda of the research can impact the education component, and by extension the data. Freire (1968) has stressed that liberation involves acts of cognition as opposed to the transfer of knowledge, and this is not possible without critical reflection; otherwise liberation is not liberation, but rather the imposition of a different ideology (Hadfield 2012; Lykes & Mallona, 2008). From a methodological perspective, the participants, and therefore the data, may have been impacted by the majority principle, whereby members of a group agreed and conformed to the opinions of the majority of group members (Brookfield, 2005). This impact can undermine the data provided by participants as well as impacts the preservation of democratic validity, whereby each group member has an equal voice (Anderson & Herr, 1999). As I will address in subsequent data chapters, the teachers demonstrated increasing comfort with challenging each other’s perspectives. To this end, I don’t believe the majority principle impacted this study, and the limitations of collaboration were further countered through an equal focus on the individuals in the group.

**Individual Contexts**

Whilst the nature of action research is collaborative, each individual experiences their own journey (Ingram, 2014). Ingram (2014) has highlighted the importance of negotiating individual journeys during the research process and to this end, I also included methods which collected data in the form of individual responses. The combination of collaborative and individual methods allowed the participants to explore aspects of themselves which they preferred to remain private as well as aspects which they were willing to share publicly. Furthermore, the contrast of data generated from the collaborative and individual contexts allowed me to notice and analyse any similarities and discrepancies between teacher reports of perspective and change throughout the research process. The individual methods used in this study were a semi-structured interview, analysed transcript passages, a researcher journal and written reflections. The following section outlines the nature of these methods as well as their place within praxis and the action research cycle.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

Prior to the commencement of the present study, participants were each asked to attend a one on one semi-structured interview with the researcher. A semi-structured interview functions in a similar way to conventional interview, whereby the interviewer asks the participant a series of responses which are recorded. The semi-structured interview used questions as guidelines, which are included in the
appendices, allowing the interviewer to deviate from the set questions depending on the responses from the participants. Therefore, semi-structured interviews can give a voice to participants, allowing them to reflect on their perspective in their own terms (Newton, 2010). Gomm (2004) has stated that conducting a semi-structured interview is a fact-finding process, working in the same manner as the reconnaissance phase from action research; through this method, facts are viewed as social constructs, and this can produce a richness and complexity of data consistent with the social concepts of critical theory. Due to the flexibility in questioning that isn’t found in traditional interviews, semi-structured interviews allowed an engaged researcher to assist a participant in discovering relevance in perceptions they may have previously seen as being irrelevant, or felt inhibited discussing (Newton, 2010).

Each teacher was interviewed for approximately 30 minutes, and this interview served both methodological and conceptual purposes. From a data collection standpoint, it was important to establish a baseline of data for each participant with which to compare during the action research process. This comparative data improved what Anderson & Herr (1999) have referred to as catalytic validity, which they have stated means that changes in participants have occurred as a result of methods, not for other reasons. If the teachers changed significantly from their interviews across the research process, the catalytic validity of the research itself is improved, as it suggests that the various methods were responsible for influencing this change. As theorists have commented that each individual’s readiness to commit to a transformative process always differ (Hadfield, 2012; Lykes & Mallona, 2008), it was therefore necessary to establish the beliefs and readiness of each participant before commencing the action research process.

In this study, the teachers were asked questions relating to their experience with LGBTIQ students, homophobia, wellbeing initiatives and their views on sexual orientation inequality. Whilst the relationship between interviewer and interviewee can enhance the richness of data, the interviewer effect can also result in respondents divulging or withholding information based on their perception of how it will be received (Denscombe, 2007). Furthermore, interviewees may respond to demand characteristics, only providing information that the interviewee believes the situation requires (Gomm, 2004). Both of these effects can reduce the richness and complexity of data gathered from participants, and it was critical for the interviewer to be clear and upfront about the purpose and nature of questioning. All participants were aware of both the purpose and nature of questioning in my study.
**Analysed Passages**

Following each workshop and subsequent transcription of data, participants were also provided with passages of their transcriptions that I had both analysed and annotated within relevant theory. The passages were designed to provide some key, tailored insights in order to influence specific changes within specific teachers, and providing an annotated transcript in its entirety was considered to be potentially overwhelming, given the concepts being discussed and the time limitations of teachers. Research suggests that participant vulnerability can be increased in a process for critical reflection if it is interpreted by the participants as criticism, and that grounding their responses in transformative theories minimises this effect (Hanson, 2013). Althusser (1984) has also stressed that an important part of the transformation process is to name specific ideologies as ideologies. The analysed passages seemed a more effective vehicle for this type of education than the group discussions as participants were not limited by workshop time constraints and the more complex theory did not stifle group discussion. The analysed passages also attended to Gosin et al.‘s (2003) assertions that action research should combine expert academic knowledge with community experience. The analysed passages gave teachers access to conceptual models and literature regarding their role in social change that they otherwise may not have had access to, by directly exploring and explaining how their comments and perspectives can be understood through the lens of critical theory.

The response to Hadfield’s (2012) assertions regarding the imbalance of participant readiness for change, the analysed passages allowed for targeted reflection and observation. I was able to select passages from each transcript which I believed would facilitate change for each participant in a more specialised way than the group discussion allowed. Furthermore, the analysed passages allowed for private communication between participant and researcher, and several teachers responded to their passages via email, seeking clarification or commenting on their relevance of the theory in their professional and private worlds. The analysed passages will be woven throughout the data chapters.

**Reflective Writing**

Whilst collaborative reflection for the reflection stage of the action research cycle was facilitated through group discussion, individual reflection was facilitated through reflective writing. Research has demonstrated the efficacy of writing as a method of critical reflection (Hanson, 2013) and in order to encourage individual critical reflection, two reflective writing worksheets were designed. Working privately and in silence, the participants completed the first reflective writing worksheet in the first 15
minutes of Workshops 2-5 and completed the other reflective writing worksheet in the first 30 minutes of the final workshop. All reflective writing worksheets were collected by the researcher and included in the data set. The questions on the worksheet asked participants to reflect on the topics of discussion from the previous session with the purpose of developing critical thinking skills that will allow the participants to reflect on their practice in the future.

The reflective writing was designed so that participants could document any changes they had noticed in their own thinking, feelings or behaviours. A possible limitation of this method is the small amount of time allocated to private critical reflection (Hanson, 2013). Whilst the participants only had between 15 and 30 minutes to complete the writing, the researchers were available via phone or email to answer any questions, to provide feedback and to continue any discussions of interest to the participants, although none of the participants sought out any additional contact regarding their reflections. The reflective writing fulfilled the reflection component of praxis, however the relationship was not linear; reflections informed actions and actions informed reflections.

**Researcher Journal**

Throughout the research process, I kept a journal at various intervals and following the focus groups. The role of the facilitator in action research is often criticised, with Brown & Jones (2001) stating that the idea that researchers can both observe and be engaged in social reality is more complex than action research has acknowledged. Ingram (2014) acknowledged the improbability that one can remove the hierarchy of power from this kind of research, however it is possible to minimise these power differentials. It was therefore necessary for me to engage in critical reflection, identifying my own ideological and hegemonic influences that emerged during the process in a journal. This journal also served the purpose of demonstrating my own changes throughout the process, as I learned from the other participants and the group process encouraged my own reflections and my own observations. To this end, the researcher journal demonstrated the extent to which this action research cycle operated as collaborative co-research. Furthermore, the journal facilitated my own reflection stage of the action research cycle, and excerpts from this journal have been included throughout the subsequent data chapters.

This section has explored the significant features of emancipatory action research as well as detailed the methods utilised in this study. I have outlined the appropriateness of emancipatory action research in exploring teacher perspectives and change regarding sexual orientation inequality in schools due to its
focus on emancipation, its attention to praxis and its collaborative nature. Furthermore, I have explored the importance of methods which also attend to the individual in the research process, acknowledging the significance of individual relationships with society and individual journeys in a process of change. The following section provides more information about the specific individuals involved in my study.

The Teachers as Co-Researchers

The importance of teachers has been highlighted across the literature, critical theory and specific to my research, the gaps in the literature. The quality of action research is directly affected by the number of participants (Anderson & Herr, 1999) and for my study, I recruited six teacher co-researchers in order to form the action research group. The teachers were recruited from six different government schools within metropolitan Melbourne Australia; government schools are funded by the State Government, in this case Victoria, are mostly free to attend and are not affiliated with any specific religions. The decision to recruit teachers from government schools was made in response to the challenges associated with the Ethics Application requirements of Independent schools and Catholic schools, which contain automatic exclusions for projects relating to sexual orientation. The decision to source teachers from different schools was made in the context of maximising confidentiality and to provide comparisons between schools.

The initial focus with regards to variation of individual teachers was a range of cultural backgrounds, orientations and gender, however following a comprehensive review of literature and critical frameworks, this focus changed. Due to the issues of gender and LGBTIQ inequality in schools and wider society, I felt that focusing on a person’s gender or sexual orientation would be an example of perpetuating differences and inequalities, despite the good intentions of the research. Furthermore, responding to the concept of ideological interpellation impacting all members of society, I reasoned that every person will have a unique relationship with ideology, and therefore I did not want to control the perspectives regarding these aspects of identity. To this end, the primary focus became variance in the years of experience of the teachers. Sleeter (2009) has advocated for a focus on preservice and graduate teachers in the context of social justice education, however Arshard (2012) has argued that experienced teachers can also unintentionally have developed analytical, as opposed to critical, ways of evaluating their classroom which may perpetuate ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity. The variation of the study group in the present research certainly demonstrated the differences between analysis and criticality, whereby years of experience didn’t play a determining factor in social justice engagement.
Table 6.2 provides a summary of the teachers involved in various stages of the research process, as well as the sources of data that were gathered from each teacher using the methods detailed in the previous section. The table demonstrates that four of the teachers completed the entire process, that two withdrew before the final two sessions and that two withdrew between the interviews and the workshops. The table also demonstrates the variance in years of experience, with some relatively new teachers interacting with teachers who have been in classrooms from ten to 25 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Research Completion</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felix</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Withdrew after interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Withdrew after interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Completed research process</td>
<td>Interview, 6 focus group dialogues, 5 annotated passages, 5 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Completed research process</td>
<td>Interview, 6 focus group dialogues, 5 annotated passages, 5 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Completed research process</td>
<td>Interview, 6 focus group dialogues, 5 annotated passages, 5 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>Completed research process</td>
<td>Interview, 6 focus group dialogues, 5 annotated passages, 5 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Missed final 2 sessions</td>
<td>Interview, 4 focus group dialogues, 3 annotated passages, 3 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Missed final 2 sessions</td>
<td>Interview, 4 focus group dialogues, 3 annotated passages, 3 reflective writing pieces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Participant names, years of experience, stage of research completion and data collected.
Validity of Sample Size

Qualitative studies typically utilize small sample sizes, due to the in-depth nature of data and analysis (Carr, 1994; Mason, 2010). Despite the richness of data generated, the small sample size has been criticized as it affects the generalisability of the research to the extent that the outcomes may only be meaningful to the participants themselves (Hsieh, 2004; Mason, 2010). Despite these limitations, a small sample size does not necessarily downplay the value of the research as particular participants are selected due to the particularity under investigation by the researcher (Carr, 1994; Hsieh, 2004; Mason, 2010), and the sample in such cases would be considered well defined (Carr, 1994).

In order to conduct my research, I selected the number of six in order to maximise democratic validity, wherein each participant has an equal voice and presence in discussion (Anderson & Herr, 1999). This validity facilitated the exploration of research questions as a small number of participants generated more in-depth and detailed data. As previously stated, action research also relies on the cooperation and relationships between members, and both Bell (2001) and Greenwood & Levin (2006) have argued that this is more easily achieved in a smaller group.

Action Research: A Question of Rigour

Many traditional understandings of rigour centre on a study’s ability to measure or quantify results; in action research rigour is achieved when the most appropriate methodologies are applied to data collection and analysis (Branigan, 2002). The methods selected in this study were grounded in both conceptual transformative theories as well as practical methodological considerations in order to fully explore the research questions.

Whilst traditional rigour often implies the independence of the observer, this does not always give enough value to the richness of qualitative descriptions (Swepson, 2000). The action research researcher will always be subjectively and dependently involved in the process, and rigour in action research can be improved through the involvement of participants as interpreters and co-researchers as it allows them to challenge the assumptions of the researcher (Branigan, 2002). Specific to this study, rigour was also improved through the ongoing reflection of the researcher in the form of the researcher journal.

Researchers have argued that the cyclical and action orientation nature of action research is, in and of itself, conducive to rigour (Branigan, 2002; Dick, 1999). This platform of rigour was improved upon with
the use of multiple methods, as information has been deemed to be more solid it is collected at more than one point in time in a number of different ways (Branigan, 2002). This study engaged in a variety of different methods across seven different set points in time as well as unlimited opportunities for contact and further data collection in between those points in time; several participants made contact via email to clarify aspects of the process, their transcriptions and their analysed passages. Despite the rigour of the study, there were several limitations to consider.

**Limitations**

Qualitative research, and more specifically action research, is associated with various limitations. Action research has been criticised for researcher subjectivity (Hsieh, 2004), an absence of praxis and variable levels of participant engagement (Hadfield, 2012). My subjectivity was effectively moderated through regular supervision and the notion of praxis was embedded into all aspects of the research. As explored in the data chapters, differing levels of engagement seemed to enhance the data as the teachers educated each other with patience and trust. The limitations which may have impacted the data were the small sample size, the length of the study, the time commitment and the potentially limited focus of heteronormativity as an example of oppression.

**Sample Size**

The most significant limitation of this study was the sample size. Whilst this size was necessary in order to maintain democratic validity (Anderson & Herr, 1999), the small nature of the study has reduced the generalisability of the findings. Mason (2010) has argued that whilst most qualitative studies utilise a minimum of 15 participants, the guiding principle of sample size should be saturation. I certainly do not claim to have achieved saturation, as this type of research is constrained and not open-ended in the way that saturation usually requires (Mason, 2010). However, I was able to cut a lot of data, choosing to focus on individual teacher stories which best illustrated the concepts I was addressing. In these examples, an increase in data or sample size may not have led to an increase in information.

Whilst the data may not be generalisable, it may still resonate with many teachers and beyond. The perspectives shared throughout the research process have captured a range of critical issues as well as expanded the discussion around advocacy. To this end, readers may still be able to learn from the stories of their peers.
Study Length

Another limitation of the study was the length of six months. In Chapter 3, I critiqued studies which engaged in one-off focus groups, surveys and interviews on the grounds that advocacy and transformative pedagogies take more time than these methods allow. Whilst six months was enough time to witness some change in the participants, in the context of critical transformative pedagogies, it is still limited. The concept of praxis was introduced with the rationale that reflection and action are necessary in order to not only create change, but to create lasting change. Unfortunately, the length of this study prevented me from documenting the changes in a more longitudinal fashion and I would be interested in adding a longitudinal component to an action research group investigating critical transformative pedagogies. This would allow me to investigate the longevity of changes which take place in the initial action research cycles. I believe this to be extremely important in truly seeing the benefit in pedagogical praxis and to further observe the differences between change and transformation.

Time Commitment

Whilst the above section explored the length of the study as being too short, the amount of time I required from my participants was significant to teachers dealing with an already crowded curriculum. In fact two of the withdrawals from the study cited the time commitment as the reason for their exit, although one teacher had health issues as well as regular teaching commitments.

Because of the time requirements, I selected teachers from inner city Melbourne schools who would be able to travel to Melbourne University with relative ease. This may have impacted the generalisability of the study findings, however I believe that there was enough variation within the group to represent significant groups and significant perspectives within social structures. Certainly this variation was reflected in the data set which was analysed for meaning.

Finding Meaning

The data generated underwent qualitative thematic analysis, based on the four-step framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction; data display, identifying themes and verifying conclusions. In the first stage both the verbal and written statements of each participant were coded according to each of the research questions. This involved searching for key issues, key words and phrases, similarities, differences and recurring ideas (Robinson, 2013). During the data display stage
(Stage 2), the initial themes generated from coding in Stage 1 were further analysed for the purpose of identifying patterns and interrelationships in the data, which facilitated Stage 3 and the emergence of high-order themes more specified than the themes generated in Stage 1 (Robinson, 2013). Stage 4 involved assessing the “confirmability” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11) of the analysed data by comparing it to existing theory. The data was viewed as ‘confirmable’ if it was credible, warranted, defensible and able to withstand alternative explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The work of Ingram (2014) has provided two relevant and relatable challenges to this type of data analysis. The first involves how to navigate seeking connections across the participant stories without erasing the complexity of their individual experiences. In order to maintain complexity and explore themes, the data was also analysed and presented in the context of narrative analysis. Hairston & Strickland (2011) have argued that narrative analysis captures multiple voices simultaneously by exploring past and present experiences of injustice and diversity in the lives of teachers. According to Hairston & Strickland (2011), by focussing not only on the articulated perspectives of teachers, but also the stories of their lives, researchers can better interpret and analyse experiences and change on both individual and group levels. This line of argument was based upon assertions that one shouldn’t address issues in a singular fashion, or in isolation to our life narrative as a whole (Hairston & Strickland, 2011).

In the context of my study, this approach connected perspectives and discussion around sexual orientation inequality to broader experiences in the participants’ lives as well as the origins of their beliefs and behaviours. Regarding presentation of data, throughout the data chapters I highlight certain teachers at certain points of the analysis in order to demonstrate in depth, their own particular challenge or change. This presentation attends to Ingram’s (2014) challenge for researchers to prioritise individual complexity within group research, as given the limitations of the project length, this presentation has allowed for each teacher’s perspectives and change stories to be analysed in greater detail than if I attempted to discuss each participant within each theme.

The other difficulty which I experienced in analysing the data was best described by Ingram (2014) as a “desire to get it right and develop an analytic framework” (p. 310) to make sense of my work. With this critique in mind, I drew on prominent themes from literature regarding social justice education and LGBTIQ inequality in schools, as well as critical frameworks in my data analysis. What emerged from a synthesis of the data, the literature and the conceptual framework was a general model for teacher advocacy, Figure 6.1 below, wherein each higher order theme was in fact a stage in a process of teacher’s accepting their advocacy for inequality.
Figure 6.1 A model for teacher advocacy.

Figure 6.1 demonstrates the prominent themes in this study, and the subsequent data chapters have been structured to reflect this prominence. The engagement and commitment stages of becoming an advocate represent discrete processes which, though discrete in their criteria, may occur simultaneously. The barriers and the overcoming of barriers seemingly occurred throughout both engagement and commitment stages, and as such will be discussed throughout the chapters on engagement and commitment. The development of the model was designed to help me make sense of a variety of perspectives, changes and supports which featured at various stages of the action research process. Furthermore, the model helped me make connections between the themes and to assess the overall catalytic validity of the study, as beliefs and behaviours could be contextualised as processes within a particular stage. In this way, the stages were connected to the methods involved in facilitating the study, wherein the methods allowed for the participants to engage in each stage. Finally, this model was a helpful way to connect each participant with each other, making clear the differences and similarities in their narratives as well as their development and change within advocacy for sexual orientation inequality in schools. Whilst this process has been a collective journey, the model for advocacy emphasises the importance of the individual teacher in improving sexual orientation equality in schools.
Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the methodology of action research as well as the associated methods which attended to both the collective and individual journeys of participants in my project. The methods within emancipatory action research, specifically group discussion, guided observations, reflective writing, analysed passages and a researcher journal have each established a stage in the action research process, attended to praxis of reflection and action and created space for problem posing, dialogue and narrative inquiry. Based on the high order themes generated from the literature, critical frameworks and the data, I have proposed a model for teachers accepting their advocacy for sexual orientation inequality.

The following chapters explore the engagement stage of advocacy as both connecting to LGBTIQ inequality in Chapter 7 and engaging with the role of the teacher in Chapter 8. Chapters 9 and 10 explore the commitment stages, specifically committing to advocacy for LGBTIQ equality in schools by managing existing violence in Chapter 9, and committing through modelling equality in Chapter 10. The other stages, namely barriers to change and overcoming barriers to change, are explored throughout each of these contexts as the barriers presented themselves as barriers to engagement or barriers to commitment. Each of the following four chapters also focuses on both teacher perspectives and teacher change, as I have stated in this chapter, the two are inextricably linked.
Chapter 7

Engaging with Inequality

Even as I was busy being defiant, it hurt to be reminded that I wasn’t meeting expectations.

(Rachel, Workshop 1)

A large feature of the research process involved the teachers engaging with advocacy through their connections with LGBTIQ inequality in society. This chapter addresses the engagement narratives of all six teachers, exploring their beliefs and perspectives on gender and sexual orientation, as well as the changes in these beliefs facilitated by the action research process. The above quote refers to Rachel’s reflections on her own experiences with navigating social climates, highlighting the role of identity, sameness and difference. To this end, this chapter serves two purposes; to address the perspectives of the teachers regarding LGBTIQ in equality in schools through a discussion of their beliefs and behaviours
and to demonstrate the impact of an action research process on changing these beliefs and behaviours and improving engagement. The first part focusses on the importance of experience in forming beliefs, comparing teacher perspectives regarding the importance of life stories, theory, politics and sameness with the origins of their beliefs and ways of viewing sexual orientation in society. The second part explores the changes in teachers as they strengthened their connection to LGBTIQ inequality through exposure to perspectives and theory, through emotional engagement and through reflections within the group. Whilst the perspectives and changes were expressed simultaneously, in this chapter I will discuss the two separately in order to capture the early engagement in the process of advocacy for LGBTIQ equality.

Based on literature, specifically the work of Cosier (2009), Smyth (2009) and Walker & Taylor (2014), engagement can be understood as the reconnection of the individual to society, countering the social disconnection caused by the perpetuation of ideologies. Earlier chapters have explored the harmful and isolating impact of masculinity, heteronormativity and neo-liberalism, each which are seen to manifest in school environments. Due to this disconnection and isolation, authors have theorised that social advocates for equality must counteract this individualism by reconnecting themselves with broader systems of social power (Robinson et al., 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012), and connection in this context, can be considered as the hallmark of engagement.

What became clear from the data was the significance of teacher perspectives, as well as the variance with which teachers approached the research. The mechanisms by which change was inspired were similarly varied, and this chapter concludes by suggesting the importance of exposure, of emotional connections and of praxis in engaging participants to the extent that they consider their role as teachers, the focus of the following chapter.

**Connecting through Experiences**

One of the most prominent themes relating to engagement was the importance of experience. What became clear throughout the process was that engagement with inequality for LGBTIQ students was not a uniform process, and that various experiences defined various ways in which the teachers conceptualised, prioritised and philosophised sexual orientation oppression in society. The teachers connected to LGBTIQ inequality through experiences in their life stories, through experiences with politics and through experiences with theory. Experience in this context served as both a barrier to advocacy as well as a facilitator for personal change.
Origin Stories

For Jack and Jessica, experience was discussed through their origin stories, either fostering a connection to broader systems of oppression or else a distancing from their awareness of oppression. The following two pieces of data provide a snapshot of the both the teachers’ perspectives which have been influenced by their own experience;

Jack: A male is just like that. A male is a hunter, is an aggressive person, is someone who goes out and wants to get things, make things happen and see things. We can be reasonable, but at the end of the day if I have to make the final decision about something I will. If there's going to be any doubt. Do you know what I mean?

Jessica: In terms of growing up female and the world telling you that you are potentially at risk of sexual assault, rape, violence, men. Going out with my friends as a teenager. I think girls are constantly taught protective behaviours which builds in that idea that ‘if it does happen to me it was my fault because I didn’t protect myself well enough’.

Based on their varying experiences, Jack and Jessica have demonstrated perspectives which show both sides of the same ideology whereby a man’s perceived aggression can be both helpful and harmful. In a critical context, experience can be seen as what Althusser (1984) described as one’s relationship with ideology; the ways in which heteronorms and masculinity are enacted within the milieu of our daily lives (Brookfield, 2005; Gross, 2011). Whilst presented as a binary, the following narratives explore Althusser’s (1984) notion of interpellation and how Jack and Jessica related to gender beliefs, as well as Gramsci's (1971) notion of counterhegemony and how Jack and Jessica lived out these beliefs in their day to day lives. This section focusses on Jack’s experiences and how they have kept him disconnected from engaging in LGBTQ advocacy, and Jessica’s experiences which have connected her to issues of gender inequality and gender violence.

For Jack, reflecting upon his life experience allowed him to maintain a disconnection from teacher advocacy for LGBTQ students. During the research process, Jack was offered spaces in which to reflect upon his own experiences of masculinity and femininity in the first two workshops, in his observations between the first two workshops, as well as through his reflective writing at the beginning of Workshop 2. This early reflection seemingly affirmed his existing beliefs within ideological structures of oppression through gender roles; for Jack, gender roles were natural and enacted in natural ways. In contrast,
Jessica’s perspectives served to convey the notion of masculinity as socially constructed, and socially changeable.

‘Natural’ and ‘Unnatural’ Masculinity

Jack demonstrated his interpellation within hierarchies of masculinity through his discussion in the group sessions, where he framed femininity and masculinity as natural. Both Althusser (1984) and Worth (2015) have stated that successful ideologies will feel like commonsense to people and in the first workshop during the group discussion, I posed the problem of what it is to be male and to be female to the group. When asked to elaborate on his gender beliefs through an exploration of what it is to be female, the following interaction occurred;

Matt: Are you saying that females have a less assertive role?

Jack: In a natural sense. I believe they do in a natural sense.

This response displays both the hegemonic status of masculinity as well as the subordinate framing of femininity within masculine constructs, as Jack has placed men above women regarding their assertiveness. Furthermore, the simple technique of questioning allowed Jack to convey his beliefs that this hierarchy was natural. Jack elaborated on this view, acknowledging that “there are females out there who become aggressive and yell and scream and carry on and smoke and drink”, reflecting that to him, “that’s not a female”. These statements are consistent with Benjamin’s (2012) and Connell’s (2009) notions of emphasised femininity, and position Jack firmly within ideological constructs of gender norms; “a female has to look pretty, show elegance, be polite, be tactful and show patience”. Jack’s observations are consistent with Schipper’s (2004) assertions regarding the need for femininity to embrace passivity in order to ensure the dominance of the active man. Jack continued this display of traditional hegemonic gender beliefs through his descriptions of what it means to be a male.

The very first question posed to the group involved the nature of what it is to be a male. Jack responded with the following assertion;

Strength, male equals strength equals assertiveness, equals the ability to make decisions, equals the ability to become aggressive when required. And there are variations of male. There are strong males, tough males, what some people would call weak males.
These comments aligned with literature regarding masculinities, specifically Mills' (2012) and Brookfield's (2012) categories by which masculinity is measured. The notions of strength and aggressiveness have been well documented across the literature, and in the context of school environments, research has suggested that these notions are particularly encouraged and enacted through physical education (Larsson et al., 2011; Mills, 2012). Jack has highlighted the hierarchical nature of masculinity, comparing strong males with weak males, which Benjamin (2012) has argued, is a foundation for a climate of homophobia. Due to the supportive nature of the group, Jack was provided with the space to discuss his views and he concluded his thoughts by opening up a gender comparison, stating that “in the general sense I think the male has to be a little more assertive in some situations”.

In direct contrast, Jessica's experience seemingly connected her observations of gender violence to broader themes of gender oppression. Jessica demonstrated the impact of her connection through experience in her discussions regarding sexual assault;

We grow up being told ‘you shouldn’t wear short skirts’, don’t get too drunk if you’re walking down the street late at night, carry the keys between your fingers, cross the road if there’s a man walking behind you’, constantly policing our own behaviour and monitoring our own behaviour as girls or as women in order to try and prevent something that we absolutely cannot prevent from happening.

Jessica has exposed the self-regulatory process of Althusser’s (1984) interpellation and Freire’s (1968) dehumanization, whereby people monitor themselves regarding social expectations. For women who have internalised masculine ideology, they may feel guilt and shame regarding their assault, as this subtle but powerful internalisation is characterised by emotional and psychological consequences (Freire, 1968). These comments further affirm Robinson’s (2012) conceptions of masculinity as demonstrable through sexual harassment, linking this performance of masculinity with climates for gender violence, heteronormativity and homophobia. In contrast, Jessica challenged this social hierarchy, stating that it is never a woman’s fault. Jessica’s beliefs are decidedly counterhegemonic to both structures of gender, and neo-liberal ideals which, as Shannon (2016) has stated, prioritise risk analysis as superior to critical thought. Simply put, Jessica has extended the individualisation of risk incidents to broader social systems of gender inequality by stating that women are not to blame for their place in a masculine hierarchy; this is evidence of engagement through connection.
As well as expressing beliefs, the group process also allowed Jack to demonstrate hegemonic compliance through his discussions of enacting masculinity in his daily life. In response to questions regarding his gendered behaviour, Jack reflected on his own masculinity and how he believed he demonstrates this to the world through being in control and in charge:

If there’s a situation I will control it. If someone is going to make a situation and undermine me or belittle me then I will control it. I will take over and show some control in the matter.

This statement reveals a deeper internalisation of masculine ideology, as Gross (2011) and Freire (1968) have discussed the feelings of belittlement and being undermined which demonstrate reactivity to ideology, in this case the masculine order, being challenged. These responses also demonstrate Benjamin’s (2012) assertions regarding the competitive nature of masculinity and led me to ponder more specifically, why Jack valued this ideology so intensely. Finding myself both frustrated and fascinated by his strong attachment to traditional hegemonic masculine constructs, I questioned how that they may be interwoven with his upbringing. Interestingly, for both Jessica and Jack, as well as expressing vastly differing beliefs, they also described vastly different social origins.

**Contextualising Perspectives in Experience**

Whilst Jack’s interpellation can be understood through a lack of experience with alternative gender roles in his upbringing, Jessica’s more challenging views can similarly be understood in the context of her life story. Again, exposure emerged as a key theme regarding experience and this section explores her connection through exposure to gender violence, exposure to gender equality and exposure to like-mindedness in the group.

For Jessica, this exposure seemingly made underlying ideologies visible, motivated her to challenge gender roles as well as to question inequality for LGBTIQ Australians. In order to explore Jessica’s beliefs and behaviours which connected and engaged her in teacher advocacy for LGBTIQ students, I will provide her accounts regarding the origins of her gender beliefs;

I grew up in a small country town, and the family violence was rife. As a child I would overhear men congratulating each other about what had happened in the house the night before and this really violent, aggressive, controlling, abusive sort of stuff going on.

Jessica’s account of her childhood addressed Robinson’s (2012) assertions that masculinity and the subordination of women are perpetuated through violence (Robinson, 2012). Freire (1968) has argued
that exposure to violence of this kind can become internalised by the oppressed, and they become perpetrators of their own oppression, however Jessica’s exposure seemingly had the opposite effect; she became vocal about gender equality. I will address Jessica’s views regarding gender in the following section, but I will first present a potential argument for why Jessica was protected from this internalisation. When detailing her story, Jessica explained that gender violence was not a feature of her home life, and that she only experienced it vicariously through her friendships with children from violent homes. Reflecting on her own home life, Jessica stated the following;

I guess I would include my Mum, as she was someone who was a very strong, positive influence on me. Who was a feminist, who I think probably helped me deconstruct and unpack, not explicitly gender, but being a feminist really encouraged me, and my dad definitely as well, really encouraged me and my sister to be just as confident and just as competent and just a stable as the next person. And the fact that we were girls was something to be celebrated and that we weren’t lesser than the boys around us.

In a critical sense, Jessica’s exposure to positive beliefs about being female by her Mum, Dad and siblings is in and of itself a counterhegemonic act (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011), as encouraging young girls to be anything that they want to be challenges dominant gender ideology which prioritises masculinity at the expense of femininity. This idea further challenges dominant notions of masculinity by establishing femininity as a separate entity, as well as through the encouragement of equality (Paechter, 2006). This counterhegemonic home life may be one of the defining characteristics which differentiated Jessica’s story from Jack’s; that she was exposed to ways of being which challenged the norms around her, whilst he was exposed to the ways of being which affirmed them. To this end, Jessica may have been protected from gender ideology which was evidently so harmful to so many in her community.

In the exploration of beliefs and behaviours, Mezirow (2009) has highlighted origin stories as powerful tools of deconstruction, vital in gathering and interpreting individual narratives within a group process. For Jack, hierarchies of masculinity seemingly defined his upbringing;

All the males have acted like males, or how I see males. And all the females have been like females. To me, it’s very straightforward.

This “straightforward” perspective points to Althusser’s (1984) concept of interpellation, or Freire’s (1968) concept of dehumanization, whereby a person comes to think of themselves in relation to
ideology. Interpellation within masculine ideology may have narrowed Jack’s focus throughout his life, indicating that he has really only looked for examples which conform to his notions of masculinity, and people who have not conformed have been rendered invisible. This idea is also reported throughout literature regarding the invisibility of LGBTIQ themes in school environments, with Robinson (2012) having argued that this too, is an act of violence, and perpetuates disconnection from society through the belief that society is organised the way it is for a good reason (Brookfield, 2005; Worth, 2015).

In the context of critical literacy and critical awareness, this statement is very revealing. One of the prominent techniques I utilised was the fostering of Jack’s awareness through varying experiences, and according to Jack, his relationship with gender and masculinity throughout his life hadn’t varied. If this was the case, then it is little surprise that he would be so disconnected from advocacy which relies on the ability to see social norms as constructions, and not naturally occurring phenomena (Hooks, 2013; Robinson et al., 2012). This type of reasoning has been described as analytical, as opposed to critical, as explored in Chapter 5 (Brookfield, 2012). Through this framework, Jack has observed his surroundings and made conclusions based on observation alone, without thought to broader social systems or with little regard for experiences which contradicted his views. To this end, the action research, specifically the workshops, provided him with an opportunity to be exposed to other views. The intersection of experience, exposure and attention also presented itself through Jack’s relationship with sexual orientation ideology, which I will explore through the theme of exposure in the following section.

**Exposure**

The above section has explored a lack of exposure in the context of disconnection; in contrast, exposure to alternative, counterhegemonic views and enactments are celebrated methods of developing critical awareness (Gross, 2011; Tan, 2009). Before addressing the intersections between exposure, sexual orientation and gender through Jack’s story I will first address his views regarding the LGBTIQ community. In his initial interview, Jack said the following regarding LGBTIQ people;

> To be completely honest, my brain doesn’t say ‘you are right because you have an attraction towards the same-sex, or you are wrong’. I don’t personally think it’s right or wrong in terms of a moral sense. That’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with you being how you are as a person.

On the surface these comments appear to support the equality of LGBTIQ people, which seemingly challenges Benjamin’s (2012) and Connell’s (2009) assertions that masculinity relies on heteronormativity to maintain its status. Jack has demonstrated that he embodies masculine
characteristics, yet states that he is supportive of people being who they are; this is an apparent disconnect. In order to fully explore the nuances of this context, I will draw on two more pieces of data. The first relates to the role of exposure as a potential answer to Jack’s seemingly supportive position regarding sexual orientation. Jack discussed a friendship he had earlier in his life;

I had a friend and I met the guy in 1995 and we were friends at uni. In 1995, the year I got married, he decided to tell me ‘I’m gay and I was afraid to tell you’ and I said ‘shut up, I knew all along that you were gay and I don’t care’.

Jack used this friendship as an example of his positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ people, and social justice education theories regarding the development of awareness through exposure may, in part, account for the disconnect between masculinity and heteronormativity (Dantley & Tillman, 2016; North, 2009). Through a lens of social justice education, it may be suggested that Jack had been exposed to alternative sexual identities but not alternative gender models, however, in the context of the following piece of data, I believe this analysis to be too simplistic. Before discussing his friend, Jack made the following statement;

I’m not going to degrade you or put you down or defriend because you now decide to tell me that you are attracted to males. I don’t care.

During the interview, what stuck out at me was Jack’s interpretation of an LGBTIQ person as a gay male. Using exposure as a method of engagement, perhaps Jack had only interacted with gay males, and therefore that was his realm of understanding regarding diversity. However, drawing upon theories of masculinity, specifically the hierarchy of masculinity, then perhaps Jack had tolerated the diversity of sexual orientation assuming it is consistent with other aspects of masculinity (Benjamin, 2012). Van Beusekom et al., (2016) have argued that whilst homophobia is used against LGBTIQ people, it is moderated depending on how far the individual deviates from the norm. Accepting this interpretation, it would suggest that whilst Jack may not have displayed overtly homophobic behaviour, his narrative may still have had undercurrents of heteronormativity and specific currents of masculinity. This is consistent with the findings of Finnessy (2016), Magnus & Lundin (2016) and Richard (2015) who similarly found a disconnect between teachers’ desire to not be homophobic and ongoing issues of heteronormative beliefs. Indeed, Jack had demonstrated that he saw different levels of male in men;

If you have someone who looks really thin and, no offense to anyone out there or in here, a sissy or weakling.
In this way, Jack’s acceptance of alternative sexual identities may be linked to the degree with which he attributes masculine qualities to a person; that you can be SSA, provided you are strong. Another interpretation of this data might point to the grey areas between dichotomies of ideology; that a person isn’t simply interpellated or liberated. This line of thought affirms Hadfield’s (2012) suggestion that people enter action research in various stages of engagement, and that part of the research journey involves navigating these differences. I will continue this discussion in the following section which addresses engagement and connection to LGBTIQ equality through politics and through social theory. The stories of Sarah and Rachel likewise describe the area between interpellation and transformation.

**Challenging Masculinity: Connecting through Politics and Social Theory**

Both Sara and Rachel expressed perspectives which challenged gender roles and LGBTIQ inequality through the lens of politics and relevant social theories. For Sarah, LGBTIQ equality was first and foremost a political issue. In Chapter 1, I discussed the culture of outrage and the growing national debate regarding marriage equality and LGBTIQ rights in the political arena and therefore it is no surprise that for some people, the political arena forms the foundation of their engagement with equality. For Rachel, her exposure to theories of gender and sexual orientation influenced her perspective as she, like Jessica, framed beliefs as socially created and again, socially changeable. This section explores this type of engagement through Sarah and Rachel, unpacking politics and theory as pertinent, if incomplete, ways to engage with advocacy.

For Sarah, LGBTIQ equality was a paramount issue, and in the first workshop, she demonstrated this through her impassioned opinion regarding LGBTIQ legal rights;

> I’m amazed that we still, we love to think of our country as progressive and really open-minded but with the way the government, the way we treat same-sex marriage, the rights that gay people have are still just that one step behind.

Sarah has identified an avenue of power whereby everyday ideological change is seen as relying upon large scale changes in policy and law. Certainly Althusser (1984) has commented on the connections between structural inequality and institutional power, and the ways in which this inequality is lived out in our daily lives. Sarah recognised that LGBTIQ people “have to put up with a lot more intolerance than heterosexual people do”, and when asked to expand her views, Sarah discussed the importance of inclusion through marriage as a statement of equality;
To think that marriage is still an issue in this country. It’s embarrassing.

For Rachel, experience with relevant theory allowed her to look beyond ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity. Rachel discussed masculinity as “ideas around strength or dominance or physicality”, however rather than affirming Jack’s perspective, called these out as socially constructed “notions”. Through Althusser’s (1984) construction of ideology, interpellation and a person's relationship with oppressive beliefs, Rachel could be considered as existing outside of masculine ideology. Rachel elaborated on this idea, stating that the construct operates “in terms of the systems in place, socially and culturally, which support maleness and masculinity through human dynamics and power structures”. Rachel reflected on the notion of “archetypes”, situating them firmly within history and reinforcing the social nature of their production.

And it’s not necessarily the accurate one but when you look at archetypes I think there’s a lot of history in terms of social constructs around what that means.

In this way, Rachel demonstrated a strong grasp of sociological theories of oppression, as well as an established ability to think critically about gender, as she was able to link gender beliefs with a gender hierarchy and social power.

Rachel’s assertions were very significant to the group discussion. She initially seemed to respond to Jack's notion of masculinity and femininity, questioning the natural and commonsense platforms upon which he expressed his opinions. Rachel in fact went on to explore male social constructs as “limiting in terms of what it asks of people who either identify as male or are born with those physical identifiers”. Rachel explored this impact by discussing the “limiting identity issues” that are created through ideological aspirations. Rachel was also able to reflect on “limiting or challenging” experiences for people who don’t see themselves as fitting in;

Rachel: I think it can be quite limiting or challenging for people who don’t see themselves as fitting in to that.

Jack: Well that was deep. Wow.

Rachel referred to the limits imposed by physical identifiers of masculinity, a statement strongly connected to Benjamin (2012), Paechter (2006) and Mills' (2012) theories around masculine hierarchies and the limitations of having to fit in. These statements also connected to Freire's (1968) statements regarding the impact of not fitting in, whereby there are physical, psychological, social or emotional
consequences for those who do not subscribe to ideologically determined ways of being. Rachel has also demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of masculinity by commenting on the limitations for those who do fit in, alluding to constant self-regulation required to maintain oneself within a hegemonically determined identity.

When I reflected upon the session, I remember being quite shocked at Rachel’s level of awareness and theoretical engagement, and I thought that perhaps immersing her in specifically critical frameworks could provide a common language with which to explore the session topics. In the analysed passage for that month, I introduced the concepts of ideology and hegemony in the context of Althusser’s (1984) and Gramsci’s (1971) work, encouraging her to connect these notions of oppression to her own experience. Furthermore, in the following session I asked Rachel to describe her gender role models, in the hopes of developing an emotional engagement with inequality and oppression, as opposed to a theoretical engagement, which she had seemingly already established. Based on her family, Rachel's role models seemed to be firmly grouped into male and female:

I had very matriarchal, strong women. A lot of strong women in my family. Who had absolutely disappointing, self-involved males from Grandfathers, fathers, not bad people. The women in my family were also a piece of work, they weren’t all the nicest women, but there was a real sense of strength and to make stuff happen and take care of the home.

From this description, it is clear that Rachel could connect her theories regarding the limitations of masculinity with her experience of males. Furthermore, Rachel could identify strength in her female role models, which as explored with Jessica, is counterhegemonic in action. Like Jessica, it is possible that experiencing such female strength through her female role models prepared Rachel to be more open to connecting to issues of inequality, as her family system already demonstrated variances from the norm, in line with Tan’s (2009) discussion around the significance of exposure, and Richard (2015) and Magnus & Lundin’s (2016) findings regarding the influence of gender and sexual orientation exposure on teachers. What was clear from both Rachel and Sarah’s perspectives was that they believed genders and sexual orientations should be equal in society. The following section details the perspectives of Christopher, whose perception of equality was more akin to sameness than diversity.

**Connecting through Sameness**

The sessions demonstrated that Christopher had engaged in advocacy through the promotion of what he believed to be equality, but more closely resembled sameness which Riggs & Due (2013) have stated
can be quite limiting. When asked about his beliefs regarding LGBTIQ people, Christopher made the following statement;

I believe that they exist, I believe that they are great people just like anyone, I believe they can be annoying just like anyone.

Whilst I believed that these beliefs come from a place of wanting equality, the focus on sameness, as explored in the literature, can undermine equality through minimising visibility of LGBTIQ specific issues and themes. Riggs & Due (2013) stated that valuing sameness focusses on homogeny and not diversity, perpetuating the idea that there is a right way to be. This works in contrast with social justice notions of celebrating diversity and Freire’s (1968) idea that different groups should be equal in society. Likewise, Shannon (2016) explored neo-liberal agendas through the promotion of sameness in health curricula whereby LGBTIQ people are portrayed as being the same as heterosexual people, and it is on these grounds that inclusivity is promoted. Both Mary & Hillier (2012) and Shannon (2016) have viewed this as an erasure of LGBTIQ identities and a reinforcement of the heterosexual ideal; that LGBTIQ people also wish to live as heterosexual people. In this way, sameness may unintentionally promote homogeny and stifle the celebration of diversity. Christopher went on to state that sexual orientation isn’t the only aspect of self that defines people, and that he doesn’t consider it interesting whether someone is LGBTIQ or not;

It’s not the only thing that defines same-sex attracted people, people who are same-sex attracted. By and large I think that it isn’t interesting whether someone is or not.

Again, these statements are potentially liberatory of heteronormative ideology, as they look to a world beyond ideologies, however simultaneously, without critical understanding of the dynamics of social power and social hierarchies, as stated above, this type of thinking can undermine acts of liberation by undermining identification, celebration and the counterhegemonic notion of diversity (Riggs & Due, 2013).

In order to go deeper in my analysis, I drew on Christopher’s historic beliefs, asking him if he had always felt that way about LGBTIQ people. He responded with the following narrative;

Oh no. When I went through school, I went through a very religious, strictly rule-enforced private school, until year 11 and 12, when I went to a public gigantic co-ed school. And that was really awesome. Because I met all these people who didn’t really fit the mould.
On the surface, these statements affirm Christopher’s desire for diversity, but on a deeper level, these celebrations of diversity are not apparent in his current views. I compared these views of LGBTIQ with his beliefs regarding masculinity, and interestingly, he was more prepared to discuss what constitutes an Australian male;

Being an Australian man means being good at sports, and if not then being good at something or really smart.

Christopher’s observation has touched on the implications of not subscribing to masculine ideals, in this case, the ideal of playing sports. Christopher’s observation suggested that if a man doesn’t play sports, it makes him less of a man, unless he can compensate for this using his brain or talents to demonstrate his social worth. Christopher acknowledged gender differences stating that an Australian man “would step up to be a leader” if it was between him and a girl, and be “the man”. Like Jack, Christopher was able to describe demonstrations of masculinity through behaviour, including not “sharing feelings”, “being stoic” and “earning more money”, however, unlike Jack and like Rachel, Christopher framed these ideas as social stereotypes and thereby indicated that he had a degree of awareness regarding the nature of these characteristics in relation to broader social dynamics of masculinity. The following section expands this exploration through a personal story that Christopher shared with the group.

In the second workshop, I had asked the group whether they had any particular experiences with masculinity that they wished to share, and Christopher recounted the following story;

These two guys came up onto the platform and they were out of their minds. Punching the walls and yelling, and I felt completely powerless and that stupid red button for emergencies was where they were and where the only exit was. At that point, I remember consciously thinking ‘look more strong’ and I put my hood on, and I didn’t get my phone out, and I just tried to look manly.

Christopher’s reaction is unsurprising given the literature which has suggested that masculinity is maintained through violence (Mills, 2012; Ramirez, 2015; Robinson, 2012), and also in light of Jack’s statements about needing to control a situation and be powerful. My interpretation of Christopher’s story was that he had encountered an enactment of hierarchical masculinity, whereby he altered his behaviour in order to be perceived as higher up on the masculine ladder. Christopher's reaction also speaks to Giddens' (1991) assertions regarding the influence of risk on our social identities, and how we may suppress or highlight certain aspects in order to avoid negative consequences. Whilst this section
has explored both connections through experience and connections through theory, Amy’s engagement story combined both aspects as she grew as an advocate through the research process.

**Connecting Experience and Theory**

Amy found her connection to advocacy for sexual orientation inequality through both experience and theory. Researchers such as Gosin et al., (2003) have commented that action research is an ideal model for social change as it facilitates connections between both experience and theory, and Amy’s initial journey in the process served as a perfect case study of this combination. Based on the literature, specifically the work of Lykes & Mallona (2008) Amy could best be described as a potential advocate. She acknowledged that she hadn’t reflected on the topics before, and that she was unfamiliar with the theories being used. Despite this level of engagement going into the research project, Amy flourished through a connection of her own experience and theory, which Gosin et al., (2003) have stated is the essence of action research, and Hooks (2013) has described as the essence of critical awareness. Amy discussed her views, her origins and made connections with critical theory and ideas of social justice research. These early reflections established a willingness and sophistication with which she addressed her teaching role, and these changes, as well as barriers and challenges will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

**Connecting Through Experience**

Amy’s narrative can almost be explored in a linear fashion, as from the semi-structured interview through to the focus groups, she grew in both awareness and critical skill, becoming engaged with LGBTIQ inequality through both emotional and theoretical connections. In her semi-structured interview, Amy summarised her views regarding LGBTIQ people as the following;

> I’m fully supportive of anyone and everyone, however they identify and whoever they choose to be with. I have loads of friends who are same-sex or heterosexual. If you’re happy then fantastic.

Curious regarding her supportive position, I asked Amy if she had always felt that way. Amy began to reflect on her own schooling and her own sexual experimentation from the age of 15. For Amy, school was a supportive environment, however she acknowledged that “you’d always have the ones who were like ‘oh my god’”. Amy’s schooling experience appeared to be rather different to the many challenges faced by LGBTIQ young people in Australian schools as documented by Hillier et al., (2010), and
Saltmarsh (2012). Amy alluded to some degree of violence occurring during her schooling, but stated that this wasn’t an issue due to her supportive family; as a result of these comments, in the first focus group I asked Amy to explore her gender role models.

Amy told the group about her Dad, stating that he was “very artistic”, “not into sports and things” and she was “brought up with a very different idea of what it was to be a man”. She stated that whilst he was a good provider, there was “never this whole ‘I’m a big strong man and I look after my wife’ or anything” and that “it was very level”. Amy reflected on her own treatment as compared with her brothers’, and stated that her dad “taught his daughters to be as competent as the boys with anything and everything”. Amy acknowledged that in society, “it’s not always like that”, but that it was in her own experience.

In the same way as Jessica, it is possible that both the support of difference and role modelling of difference in her home environment protected Amy from more severe forms of violence at school. This line of thought follows the social justice education concept of exposure (Tan, 2009), or the critical concept of counterhegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011), by which Amy’s experience exposed her to diversity which is a counterhegemonic act in and of itself. Certainly, based on Amy’s reflections, her early experimentation with sexual diversity did not have the impact on either her attachment or identity as reported by both Pearson et al., (2007) and Heck et al., (2014). This is consistent with Amy’s assertions that she hadn’t reflected on the topic of LGBTIQ inequality despite her connection to the community, because she wasn’t exposed to the negative impacts of social hierarchies which Tan (2009) has argued often prompt this kind of reflection. Interestingly, neither did she perpetuate social hierarchies of difference; she was just different. These experiences with diversity and difference may have made Amy more open to the concepts of LGBTIQ inequality and social justice education. Because she wasn’t particularly invested in either challenging or perpetuating social hierarchies of masculinity, she wasn’t resistant to change nor was she overwhelmed by her role in change, as both Cosier (2009) and Viray & Nash (2014) have argued is often the case for advocates in schools and beyond. Because of this unique position, my focus was to introduce Amy to theoretical perspectives and to prompt further reflection regarding the connection between these theories and her own experiences.

**Connecting Through Theory**

When analysing Amy’s transcripts, I began with fundamental notions of ideology, hegemony and masculinity. Whilst introducing these concepts to Jack, I framed them in the context of his beliefs and
behaviours, reframing what he already thought to be true, however as Amy hadn’t described any particularly strong beliefs either way, I presented them more as detached dynamics which occurred around her. For example;

Ideology is the system of beliefs which guide our thinking, behaviour and interactions with each other. Hegemony describes the ways in which we enact ideology on a daily basis (Amy’s analysed passage, Workshop 1).

I encouraged her to reflect on any instances she could think of where ideology and specifically, masculine or heteronormative ideology may have impacted a person and she discussed the impact of masculine hierarchies on a close friend. Amy stated that she has a friend whom “pretty much everyone that knows him knew that he was going to say he’s gay at some stage”, and she described the bullying he endured from “the alpha guys” at school. These concepts are consistent with Connell’s (2009) assertions regarding the hierarchical nature of masculinity and Benjamin’s (2012) ideas around the enactment of heteronormativity, however what troubled me was Amy’s evaluation that she didn’t believe that this bullying impacted her friend. Amy described her friend’s present attitude, commenting that “he’s very open and proud of that now”, highlighting the importance of personal challenges in the shaping of more accepting belief systems;

Growing up is hard enough, but challenges make you stronger.

In this statement, Amy has referred to the negative consequences associated with difference, specifically with heteronormative difference, however she seemingly attended more to the outcome than the process of acceptance. In the context of social justice education literature, this assessment could be viewed as what Brookfield (2012) described as analytical thinking, as it does not connect her friend’s experience to broader social dynamics of oppression. In a critical context, since Freire (1968) has purported that ideologies are internalised by the oppressed, much suffering occurs in silence, and with regards to LGBTIQ inequality, this notion is reflected in the literature regarding the internal experience of LGBTIQ young people in schools (Hillier et al., 2010; Msibi, 2014; Pearson et al., 2007). Whilst these comments were made in the early stages of the process, Amy began to expand her views and make connections regarding the violence of heteronormativity and the violence of masculinity, and these changes will be explored as part of the following section which focusses on change.

This part has introduced the significance of experience and connection in defining beliefs and behaviours around sexual orientation and gender. Through the narratives of all of the teachers, it was
clear that experience could either perpetuate ideologies and hegemonic enactment of masculinity and heteronormativity or else it could challenge ideologies and hegemonic acts; Jack's story demonstrated that these two binaries can occur simultaneously. A key theme which was addressed was that of exposure, and its role in critical awareness, demonstrating the importance of exposure to alternative viewpoints, experiences and ways of being. Furthermore, this section has highlighted the variation of teacher beliefs, behaviours and origins. In Chapter 3, I addressed several resources for teachers to access in order to engage in LGBTIQ inequality, and the findings described in this chapter suggest that perhaps programs would benefit from treating teachers as individuals with individual and varying life experiences which influence their ability to engage. To this end, the following part continues this discussion by exploring the significance of the action research process in facilitating changes for the teachers, specifically greater engagement in the inequality faced by LGBTIQ students in schools.

**Changing Connections**

Based on the data generated in the research, an important part of teacher advocacy was the acknowledgement of, and connection to, LGBTIQ inequality in schools. Throughout the research process, the connections between the teachers and LGBTIQ inequality began to change, deepen and strengthen. Several features of the group process facilitated change through exposure to alternative views, exposure to theory and emotional engagement through reflection. This section addresses the various changes, highlighting the importance of reflection and collaboration in connections with LGBTIQ inequality and engagement with advocacy. Furthermore, due to the variation in perspectives and the variation of change, the following section also highlights the significance of similarly varying techniques of engagement.

**Reconnection through Exposure**

Based on Jack's early expression of views, I reasoned that the early part of his research journey needed to centre on exposure to different views, acknowledging and validating Jack's existing perspectives on sexual orientation equality and encouraging a reconnection. Throughout the first three workshops, for Jack, change towards engagement in advocacy was encouraged through exposure. This primarily occurred through exposure to other views around gender and sexual orientations as social constructions through the group discussions. In these workshops, Jack was also exposed to direct challenging by group members and through the analysed passages, exposure to theory.
Whilst Jack was the first to respond to my question regarding the nature of masculinity and femininity, he was then exposed to several conflicting viewpoints from other group members, which I have explored in the first part of this chapter. By the end of the first session, Jack reflected on his mindset, stating that “things are getting twisted and muddled up”. Jack’s initial response to alternative viewpoints was one of confusion and resistance, which was not an unexpected reaction in light of Hytten’s (2015) assertions that resistance is a part of social justice education. Jack’s response also demonstrated the issues with ideology critique, as Alway (1995) has stated, people do not simply unlearn their oppression. Despite this resistance, the other teachers, whilst challenging Jack, maintained an ethical standpoint by listening and asking questions, as opposed to the less dialogical method of telling him what he should believe.

Amy challenged his notions of nature through the following interaction:

Amy: Is it not socially created?

Jack: More of a natural thing with females. I think their environment precipitates them into becoming combative or aggressive if required for their own sanity or safety, but I think naturally a female comes across to me as someone who is polite, well-mannered.

Amy: Are we not taught politeness through society? If we were both living without constraints would we know how to be polite?

What was interesting in this interaction was that Jack did not have a response to this question; rather he sat back and listened as the discussion continued. Amy’s questions can be considered counterhegemonic in that they challenge commonly held assumptions (Gramsci, 2971; Gross, 2011; Worth, 2015) as well as disruptive by challenging what Davies & McInnes referred to as circuits of recognition. More significantly to influencing change, they represented effective problem posing as the focus was on Jack's reflection, not his actual answer.

Throughout the first few sessions, in his reflective writing, Jack reported experiencing no change in his beliefs, however, his use of examples and language suggested some shifts. Jack recognised that his beliefs situated him on the outer of the group, “you can crucify me on this”, and he frequently used definitive language such as “has to”, “must”, “always” and even the word “definitely”. Jack acknowledged that his experiences with other group members and their beliefs were making him question the common sense aspects of his ideas around gender. To this end, the use of reflection in both the workshops and through reflective writing, the new knowledge created through dialogue which
challenged gender binaries as well as direct challenging from co-researchers supported changes in the ways Jack approached discussions in the group space. As the sessions went on, Jack began to use words such as “associate”, “perhaps” and “maybe” and the phrase “most of the time” when discussing his thoughts. Jack also, rather notably, began to offer more flexible examples to work with when problem-posing. Jack began by using extreme examples including terrorism, Spartan gladiatorial executions and religious fundamentalism to illustrate his beliefs that social change around heteronormative culture wasn’t possible. Responding to feedback from other group members and his own ideological shifts, Jack began to introduce more personal and relatable examples from his own life, including his own experiences with bullying, as well as his experiences working as a teacher and the difficulties he faces in the classroom. I will address these examples in greater details when looking at his engagement with the role of the teacher in the following chapter.

Whilst Jack was seemingly influenced by feedback and questions, the changes observed in Jessica throughout the process were defined by exposure to theory. Given Jessica’s level of engagement prior to commencing the group process, I encouraged Jessica to further participate and contribute by validating her ideas through theory. In her analysed passage, I introduced the concepts of ideology, the internalisation of ideology, responding to risk and hegemonic masculinity in order to contextualise her existing beliefs within broader sociological schools of thought.

In her reflective writing, Jessica acknowledged the benefits of having a space to voice her opinions, and her engagement with advocacy was strengthened through her increasingly sophisticated contribution in later sessions. In Workshop 2, Jessica displayed her increasing sophistication of social awareness through her deconstruction of hypocrisies within ideological constructs;

On the one hand I think girls and women are encouraged to be hyper feminine. Wearing clothing that is revealing and clearly identifies us as female...the flip side of that, and I think where it can get confusing, then something horrible can happen to you at the hands of somebody else and all of a sudden you get heavily penalised for doing all of those things that you got big ticks for doing before. I think it’s very challenging.

Jessica identified both the binaries and the nuances that are features of masculinity and femininity, extending the group conversation through a direct challenge to mentalities which link gender directly to risk prevention (Giddens, 1991; Shannon, 2016). Jessica continued this challenge, stating that “baby boys don’t have in built qualities of strength and assertiveness”, indirectly challenging Jack’s initial
notions of masculinity, and demonstrating her sophisticated connection to broader social structures by identifying the process of interpellation as occurring from infancy, a concept supported by Liestyna (2009). These ideas reflect her growing engagement with issues of inequality, which assisted her greatly in the exploration of teacher advocacy, the focus of the next chapter.

Exposure to the experiences of the teachers also impacted my own reflections. Sarah’s comments regarding the importance of marriage equality in Australia led me to reflect on the difference between marriage equality and inclusive policy at a school level. Through a critical lens, changes to the Marriage Act (2004) could be seen as a statement that all people are equal, whereas often, inclusive policy asks that people not be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation. Though similar, with regards to the perpetuation of heteronormativity, an amendment to the Marriage Act (2004) would be a statement that heterosexual relationships are no longer the social norm, whereas anti-discrimination policy maintains the divide between heterosexual and non-heterosexual identities. As explored in Chapter 3, inclusive policy is too open to interpretation, and can perpetuate difference whilst attempting to celebrate diversity (Robinson et al., 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). In this way, the group process was facilitating my own connections, as I had strengthened the links between broad systems of sexual orientation inequality and how this manifested in schools. To this end, my own awareness had increased as a result of hearing other teachers in the groups. The exposure discussed in this section was inextricably linked with significant changes in emotional connections for several teachers.

**Connecting Emotionally**

An important change observed in both Sarah and Rachel was their increasingly emotional connection to LGBTIQ inequality in schools. Whilst Sarah had explored her engagement with inequality through politics, when I sat down to analyse her initial two transcripts, I realised that I had become preoccupied with thoughts around marriage equality, and not with Sarah’s emotional connection to her comments, which Hooks (2013) and Viray & Nash (2014) have seen as vitally important to engagement with advocacy. Whilst I had initially analysed her perception of equality in the context of critical ideology and hegemony and the role of law and policy, I made a note in my journal to gather more information regarding Sarah’s background and why she sees LGBTIQ equality as such a significant issue for Australia. The following session, I asked Sarah where she believed her views on sexual orientation to have originated, and she reminisced on her own school experience;
I came from a high school where it was ok to tease gay people. The funniest thing to call someone was a homosexual.

Looking back as an adult, Sarah stated that she “felt guilty to have been one of those people”, and has distinct memories of misusing the word ‘gay’. These reflections are significant through the lens of empathy, an emotional tool which fosters engagement and can assist in the overcoming of barriers to change. For Sarah, her guilt served as motivation for difference, sentiments which have been echoed through the work of both Kim (2013), investigating compassion in advocacy and Mintz (2013) who focussed on the associated issues with pity. For Sarah, these reflections continued throughout the early stages of the process, and her emotional connection will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter exploring the role of the teacher.

Whilst Rachel had demonstrated theoretical and intellectual engagement with the relationship between ideology, society and individuals, like Sarah, she had yet to emotionally connect herself to LGBTIQ inequality. It is in this connection through reflection that she demonstrated her most significant change in the context of engagement with social advocacy. Following the first session, I had commented in the analysed transcript passage sent to Rachel that she appeared to situate herself as existing outside of society, by using language which distinguished herself from others, such as “they think this” or “people say this”. I introduced ideology as an all permeating force, stating that everybody has been subject to heteronormativity and masculinity throughout their lives;

Ideology impacts all members of society, and it is not as simple as an oppressor and oppressed binary. (Rachel’s analysed passage, Workshop 1).

The following session involved reflection on personal changes regarding sexual orientation beliefs, and the nature of the group environment allowed Rachel to hear and reflect on the experiences of others. In this group, Rachel acknowledged that she had engaged in homophobic comments as a teenager, stating;

I look back on myself and think ‘oh that’s pretty embarrassing’.

This reflection, whilst connecting Rachel to the society she had deconstructed through theory (Sanjakdar et al., 2015), also established the foundation for overcoming her biggest barrier; anger towards people she deemed homophobic. This barrier will be explored in much greater detail in Chapter 10, however these early reflections increased the compassion Rachel needed to begin negotiating classrooms of disengaged students, which Hytten (2015) has stated should be accepted by engaged teachers as an
inevitability. Furthermore, following this connection Rachel appeared to take a less confrontational stance with Jack, instead listening and asking questions in order to find out more information about the nature and origins of his beliefs. This active listening again lay the foundations for overcoming the barrier of self-righteousness (Hytten, 2015), as she became more comfortable with gathering information as opposed to disciplining or correcting behaviour, and these changes will be explored in the context of commitment in Chapter 10.

Rachel’s engagement demonstrated the strength of group discussions (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2008), as she listened to people’s various experiences with homophobia, both as perpetrators and victims. As explored earlier in this chapter, Amy and Christopher discussed their high school experiences, which led Rachel to reflect on her own, noting how much she has changed since then. Again, this change demonstrates the strength of action research in providing a space for a depth of reflection that Chevalier & Buckles (2013) have acknowledged may not be possible in a survey or interview. As the data demonstrated, this depth may be required in order to reconnect to society and to engage in advocacy. Similar depth was observed in Rachel’s connections to LGBTIQ inequality through a critical lens.

**Connecting Critically**

For Rachel, Christopher and Amy, significant changes in their criticality facilitated greater engagement with LGBTIQ inequality. Due in large part to the targeted reflections occurring through dialogue and problem posing, changes in Rachel’s beliefs and behaviours were evident in her growing awareness and an increasingly sophisticated way of addressing issues of inequality. Rachel began to personalise her reflections, discussing conversations that had taken place amongst her friends, in which there is a differentiation between masculine and feminine, and male and female;

The masculine and feminine is more archetypal, and there is the idea that we are all in possession of both elements at different points.

In this statement, Rachel envisioned a different social situation in which individuals could acknowledge both aspects of their identity without fear of social consequences. This type of thinking is fundamental to critical theory, which Brookfield (2005) has stated relies upon the ability to see how the world could be without ideology. Rachel conceded that one side may be more prominent, whether it is a nurturing feminine side, but that the quality of nurture is now less attached to the person’s biological gender. Rachel stated that within her, “there’s masculine and feminine, if you think about the concept in terms
of qualities instead of gender”. To this end, the most significant contribution of the action research process to Rachel’s journey was the further development of her critical thinking, allowing her to look between binaries in a contextualised, empathic and engaged manner. Rachel’s critical thinking was primarily supported by her reflections, both during the group discussions within workshops, the reflective writing in workshops and through her observations between workshops. Rachel was also supported by the dialogue occurring within the group, as she had the opportunity to challenge the more traditionally hegemonic views of Jack, as well as share the experiences of the more counterhegemonic upbringing of Jessica. In the context of engagement, connection and criticality, Rachel began to ask more questions of the group, where she, like most members, had spent the earlier part of the sessions answering my questions. This growing confidence and awareness was an asset to the group, but more significantly to this study, also demonstrated Rachel’s use of the space for enhancing her own criticality (Brookfield, 2012; Freire, 1968; 1998). By engaging in dialogue with co-researchers and by reflecting individually, Rachel moved beyond the deconstruction of binaries to asking questions of human behaviour. An example of Rachel’s engagement with Freire’s (1968) problem posing can be found in the following question Rachel asked of the group;

Why don’t we just respond to people as human?

Rachel reflected on gender beliefs around chivalry, commenting that her experience of some men is that they feel “rejected” because they can’t “even hold a door open for a woman anymore”. Rachel expressed her desire to take more universal qualities such as kindness and compassion and de-gender the whole experience;

Should we just be courteous to one another?

Rachel mused that it would be nice to hold a door open for a person because you can see that they are holding a lot of books, not because you are a man and they are a woman. These comments are significant in both critical and social justice lenses, as literature from both viewpoints states that society cannot simply be deconstructed, but must be reconstructed in a fairer, more equal way (Adams, 2007; Brookfield, 2005; McDonald & Zeichner, 2012). Rachel demonstrated an ability to look past ideology and envision a world where masculinity didn’t impact the way in which we treat each other, thereby extending Gramsci’s (1971) counterhegemonic thinking by infusing the challenging of social norms with values. Rachel’s change also spoke to the limitations of Althusser’s (1984) ideology, and Freire’s (1968)
assertions regarding the importance of a space for praxis and dialogue; Rachel was able to move beyond deconstruction to actually envisioning a better society.

Rachel’s ideas regarding equality were consistent with her perspectives regarding the LGBTIQ community, commenting that “people are entitled to love who they love”, and when discussing young people, highlighted her belief that people are entitled to “curiosity to an emergent sense of identity”. To this end, Rachel had demonstrated strong connections with ideologies impacting LGBTIQ equality, and was seemingly engaged in teacher advocacy. Both Christopher and Amy likewise demonstrated increased criticality, however questioned themselves as opposed to the group. The following section explores Christopher’s growing use of reflective questioning and the significance of reflective spaces in Amy's engagement with LGBTIQ inequality in schools.

Reflective Questioning

Whilst the skill of questioning was evident throughout the process for most of the teachers, Christopher particularly focussed on his own questioning throughout his reflections. Christopher began to look at the space between binaries, particularly the binaries “of orientation and gender”, and as well as exploring binaries, stated that he had started questioning himself. In his reflective writing, Christopher wrote that he had noticed changes in the way he interacted with himself;

Why do I agree with that? Why not?

In the context of Freire’s (1968) praxis, these questions enabled Christopher to reflect on what Worth (2015) described as the taken-for-granted beliefs and behaviours which constitute hegemony. In his second piece of reflective writing at the beginning of the third session, Christopher began to report noticing gender constructions in advertising whilst walking through shopping centres and watching television advertisements. In his guided observation from the previous workshop, I had asked to Christopher to try and notice gender constructions in his day to day to life, and after observing an advertisement, he made the following comment;

This is the family, and this is the man cooking the BBQ, and now we cut to the woman who’s doing the dishes and she’s happy because her kids are playing.

This observation addresses the absence of LGBTIQ family structures and highlights gender roles within hierarchies of masculinity, through the representation of a nuclear family at the expense of alternatives. In a critical context, Christopher had identified the perpetuation of ideology through the media, as
described by Althusser (1984), and he went on to describe this prominent ISA as “reinforcing those old fashioned archetypes”. Whilst initially focused on sameness, Christopher was now focused on questioning power and assumptions, both of which contributed to his growing awareness and growing critical literacy. Whilst this was a seemingly small change at this stage, it established a style of thinking and questioning which was an asset to Christopher in the later stages of the project. Reflection was also a seemingly defining experience for Amy, who strengthened her engagement through the group process. The following section explores the connection of experience and theory through Amy who moved from a passive bystander of social oppression to an engaged teacher of equality.

**Reflective Spaces**

A significant support for Amy’s change was her immersion in the reflective spaces of the group process. Amy, though often quiet in sessions, listened to the viewpoints, challenges and personal stories of other group members, encouraging a reflective style and process that she was able to maintain through the study;

> One of the biggest benefits was hearing the views and opinions of the other members and the feedback provided as a transcript.

Amy described her increasing awareness, stating that group discussions “kept going around” in her head, leading her to engage in further discussions with people in her personal life. As Amy had not been exposed to discussion around social ideologies and their interactions with school environments, she began to reflect upon and explore the nature and impact of heteronormativity and gender normativity in her own life. In the context of Freire's (1968) ideas around transformation and dialogue, this can be interpreted as a form of engagement in change as she had observed that ideology doesn’t just influence discrete social categories, but rather pervades all aspects of society (Althusser, 1984; Brookfield, 2005).

Amy acknowledged that she benefitted from the group structure of the research project, and became more comfortable asking questions of group members when she either didn’t understand a concept, or wanted a participant to elaborate on a point they were making. Due to the enthusiasm and willingness with which she approached the topic, Amy was able to navigate between her professional and personal views, contributing personal stories regarding the origins of her beliefs and her own involvement in heteronormative structures in her youth. Amy discussed her own use of the phrase “that’s so gay”, reflecting on her naivety regarding its impact;
Even though I never deliberately used it as derogatory statement towards homosexuals I am now aware of the negative impact this can have on others.

This reflective skill, as demonstrated above, constituted one of Amy’s most significant changes during the research process. Amy had become more aware of social dynamics and her role in the perpetuation of masculine hierarchies through language which she had previously viewed as neutral and harmless. These changes could also be demonstrated her growing confidence in challenging group members. I have explored the impact of these challenges on Jack’s exposure to alternative viewpoints, whereby Amy posed the question “are we not taught politeness through society?”, following this with another challenging question, “if we were living without constraints, would we know how to be polite?”. In the context of Amy’s growing connection, these questions served to deconstruct social beliefs, moving her from a more passive social member to a more active role as a social critic. This change had significant implications for her engagement and commitment to social advocacy through her role as a teacher, which will be the focus of Chapter 8 and Chapter 10 respectively.

This section has introduced the various changes in engagement to LGBTIQ inequality that were supported by the research. Based on teacher perspectives presented in the first half of the chapter, there were equally varied approaches to improving critical thinking, emotional connections and the acknowledgement of LGBTIQ inequality in schools. By the end of the initial sessions, whilst the teachers had each demonstrated change, they remained varied in their perspectives and engagement before addressing the role of the teacher. Before introducing the role of the teacher as the key topic of the following chapter, I will first briefly contextualise the findings of this chapter within social justice education, critical theory and action research discourses.

**Connecting the Frameworks**

This chapter has explored six engagement stories regarding individual connections to social hierarchies of masculinity and heteronormativity which create a climate of inequality for LGBTIQ people. This section will briefly address these stories through the lenses of social justice education, critical theory and action research.

Within a broader theme of experience, one of the prominent subthemes across the teacher stories was that of exposure. Exposure defined, in part, the extent to which the teachers viewed LGBTIQ inequality as part of a broader social dynamic as well as the impact of inequality on the LGBTIQ community. Literature regarding social justice education has discussed the importance of exposure in deconstructing
ideas of normalcy and oppression in schools and beyond (Hooks, 2013; Tan, 2009), and in a critical sense, exposure is often counterhegemonic as interpellated individuals begin to observe and potentially value the diversity in society (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011). Whilst the semi-structured interviews and written reflections were useful in the context of analysing the teachers’ exposure to diversity, the action research groups were a particularly helpful forum for increasing exposure, both through immersion in other peoples’ stories and viewpoints as well as direct challenging and dialogue. Another technique associated with the process was the contextualising of transcript passages within theory, which allowed me to focus on the individual needs within the group, an important remedy to criticism of action research due to the varying levels of engagement from group members (Hadfield, 2012); this chapter has demonstrated that varying levels can enhance group dialogue as opposed to constricting it. This technique also connected community experience with academic knowledge, treating the teachers as experts and giving them conceptual tools with which to grow into their role as critical learners, critical thinkers and critical educators (Gosin et al., 2003).

Another subtheme which emerged from this data was the importance of origins and role models for gender and LGBTIQ beliefs and behaviours. For a teacher like Jessica, the origin of her beliefs around the need for gender equality allowed me to adapt the critical contextualisation in order to validate, as opposed to challenge, her experience as well as connect her to broader frameworks of social deconstruction (Mezirow, 2009). For a teacher like Christopher, Sarah and Rachel, reflection on origins allowed them to connect emotionally to broader frameworks from which they had previously distanced themselves. From a social justice education standpoint, these reflections contextualise lived experience and encourage critical awareness through ongoing reflections (Hooks, 2013; Tan, 2009); this was certainly true of Amy and Jessica. Furthermore, these reflections connected the teachers to the society they are hoping to transform through advocacy, attending to Cosier’s (2009) criticism that teachers need to be aware of their own assumptions and beliefs before teaching others for equality. The action research groups were also particularly helpful in facilitating this reflection, both through the use of problem posing, but also through sharing of experiences. Through the reflective writing, it became clear that teachers either felt validated by the reflections of others or else prompted by the reflection of others to see their own histories through a new lens.

Finally, the teacher narratives and changes demonstrate an attention to critical praxis. Whilst problem posing can impact reflective capacities (Freire, 1968; 1998; Small, 2005), some teachers moved from a reflective space to an active space by challenging and posing problems to others. The use of analysed
passages also encouraged reflection, and the teachers acted by sharing their stories and allowing themselves to be vulnerable (Ashard, 2012). Due to this attention to praxis, the teachers were, to varying extents, more emotionally and cognitively available to progress in discussion topics around the role of the teacher, the school and of their fears and challenges. Whilst this process isn’t necessarily as linear or discrete as it is being presented, these engaged foundations are necessary for teacher advocacy to be critical (Ashard, 2012; Hytten, 2015).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the theme of engagement and personal connections with advocacy for sexual orientation equality as understood, experienced and enacted by the teachers. There was a variation in the ways in which teachers engaged with issues of inequality for LGBTIQ people, and there were varying levels of engagement both prior to commencing the study and after the initial sessions. This chapter has also demonstrated the impact of action research in the encouragement of change, and the various changes that each participant began to demonstrate allowed them to be more connected and therefore engaged, with social systems of power which facilitate a climate of oppression regarding masculinity and sexuality. Through reflections on their origins, the teachers demonstrated a willingness and ability to consider their role within the institution of the school. The following chapter continues the exploration of engagement, however through a specific exploration of the role of the teacher.
Chapter 8

Engaging as a Teacher

To think that there’s a really important role a teacher could have played and they didn’t. (Sarah, Workshop 2)

As well as engaging with inequality for LGBTIQ students, the teachers also engaged with their role as agents for change. As Sarah's quote above illustrates, it is important for teachers to connect to the role they play in social change. The previous chapter introduced the narratives of the teachers connecting with their role in advocacy as social members, and following on from these connections, this chapter explores their perspectives and changes regarding their role as teachers.
This chapter explores tensions, challenges, reflections and actions regarding varying teacher perceptions of their role in LGBTIQ equality. Through problem posing, group discussion, the analysis of group discussion transcripts and reflective writing, the teachers explored their perceptions and experienced changes in the way they viewed their role as advocates for equality. The chapter begins by addressing the question of whether teachers can really be neutral regarding social inequality, framing engagement with the teachers’ role in social change as the acceptance of a non-neutral, political and socially aware position. Following this, I argue that the management of existing violence towards LGBTIQ young people is a fundamental component of a teacher’s role, exploring themes of diversity, inclusivity and communication whilst validating and encouraging the teachers to connect their ideas around the importance of safety to broader ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity. Finally, I highlight the importance of the teachers modelling more equal futures as the simultaneous balance to the management of violence in teacher advocacy. The chapter addresses the role of engagement for students and the role of the teacher in promoting social awareness, before contextualising the discussions, reflections and changes as establishing a platform for the enactment of change, which will be the focus of the two subsequent chapters addressing commitment.

Teaching as a Neutral Act

One significant subtheme in the engagement data was the question of teaching as a socially neutral act. This concept lies at the essence of conflicts between neo-liberal and social justice education agendas (Hursh, 2009; Shannon, 2016; Smyth, 2011), and the role of teachers in social oppression has been similarly highlighted through critical frameworks (Althusser, 1984; Freire, 1998). The teacher perspectives, narratives and experiences within the research experiences presented in Chapter 7 have challenged the notion of a binary, suggesting a variance of engagement between these two conceptual standpoints, and similarly, the teachers demonstrated varied levels of engagement in the role of teacher as a neutral social actor. For Jack, teaching represented the delivery of academic knowledge, whilst for Jessica, Sarah and Rachel, teachers were seen to play an important social role in issues of inequality; these perspectives will be analysed throughout this part of the chapter.

In Chapter 3, I highlighted the impact of neo-liberalism on the perception of the ideal teacher, with Smyth (2011) having framed a teacher as an apolitical conduit of knowledge. Through neo-liberal ideals, oppressed students are seen as responsible for their own oppression, and therefore teachers are not viewed as playing a role in social change (Hursh, 2009). In the third workshop during group discussion, I used problem posing to ask the group about the role of the teacher in LGBTIQ inequality and in response
to this question, Jack espoused the virtues of neutrality. This section will explore Jack’s perception of neutrality as well as challenges by other participants in the context of school climates in relation to LGBTIQ equality. I also explore the various methods used in order to expand Jack’s notions of his role in the school and indeed, in social change, specifically the role of empathy; these methods seemingly had a catalytic impact on Jack’s understanding of his role as a change agent for LGBTIQ students.

The interactions between Jack and Christopher exposed some differences regarding the role of the teacher in the context of neutrality. In group discussion, Jack stated that the role of the teacher “should be to focus on learning and improving learning”. For Jack, the role of a school was not to promote a social agenda;

In my 25 years of teaching in Melbourne, I have never heard of a school that’s promoted same-sex attracted relationships or has done anything positive or good or healthy to promote the idea that it’s ok to be same-sex attracted.

Jack’s statements reveal a disconnect between his understanding of education, and specifically schooling, and his role as a teacher in supporting change for LGBTIQ equality. According to Hursh (2009), this is the essence of the neo-liberal agenda for education and Smyth (2011) and Shannon (2016) have argued that this agenda serves to keep teachers disconnected from their role in change; Jack was able to discuss his reluctance to change, stating that he doesn’t call beliefs “the norm” but rather “what has worked in the past”. Christopher contributed to the discussion by labelling Jack’s definition as “tradition”, however challenged Jack’s assertion by stating that tradition isn’t how a school should work. Christopher went on to state the following;

Tradition. And I think that’s not how our country works. If you extend that to a government or the way a whole society works, then nothing would ever change.

What is interesting is that Christopher was able to link the discussion of school institutions with the institution of government, recognising their role in social change. In this way, Christopher has acknowledged the power of institutional influence, consistent with Althusser’s (1984) writings where Althusser (1984) discusses the connections between the functioning of society and formal structures such as the Government. Christopher has also indicated that he believes social progress to be necessary for social wellbeing. In response to Christopher, Amy contributed to the discussion by affirming these ideas, stating that a reliance on tradition doesn’t just stifle change, but the specific type of change she referred to as “progress”;
It would stifle progress, if we stuck to traditions and norms forever.

Amy’s statement is rather counterhegemonic in the way that she does not assume that society is organised the way it is for good reason; she has assumed that society must continually evolve. In the context of group discussion, these challenges seemingly had little impact on Jack in the discussion, and he maintained that his job as a teacher is to pass on facts to his students. By this stage of the discussion, two very clear and very different perspectives had been shared regarding the role of the teacher; on one hand, Amy and Christopher stated that teachers play a role in social change, and on the other, Jack maintained that a teacher’s job was to focus on learning. This was the essence of the neo-liberal and social justice competition outlined in Chapter 3.

To this end, I attempted to contextualise Jack’s teaching experience by asking how he would go about dealing with an LGBTIQ student who appeared to be struggling against violence or the impact of violence in his classroom. Jack responded in the following way;

The teacher may report it to the welfare people, or the Principal, depending on what the event is. At that point, the teacher can say, ‘I’ve done my job. I’m out of the mix’. And that’s where it may stop.

This quote provided some significant insight into Jack’s relationship with risk, as he demonstrated a reluctance to involve himself and a desire to move the issue on to someone else. Certainly Giddens (1991) has written of ideology and risk, stating that people adjust their identity, behaviour and beliefs based on the perceived risks of not doing so. Whilst Jack has recognised the expertise of the welfare staff, he may also have also narrowed the potentially overlapping roles that people in various positions within a school environment can play. Jack’s relationship with risk is a focus of Chapter 9 as, to a large extent, he overcame his fears and committed to advocacy in his own way. However, before this, I was curious to investigate his school climate regarding the treatment of LGBTIQ students, as I was curious as to the level of connection between Jack’s perceptions of his role and school supports for LGBTIQ students.

**Connecting Climates**

Apple (2013), Brookfield, (2005; 2012) and Gross (2011) have argued that school climate can simultaneously act as either a significant barrier or liberatory force for teachers, both restricting their ability to impact change and simultaneously providing them with the support to do so. For Jack, there continued to be a connection between his beliefs and his school climate regarding the perceived role of
the teacher. Whilst describing his school, the first aspect which I observed was the lack of school policy regarding discrimination, bullying or the wellbeing for LGBTIQ students. With regards to the formal structures of his school, Jack stated;

We don’t really have a system to support students of that nature in a general sense.

Jack had observed the lack of formal policy relating to sexual orientation within his school, and he was able to link this with his observations that LGBTIQ students in his school have “been stigmatised and looked down upon”. Whilst in Chapter 7, I explored Jack’s difficulties engaging with LGBTIQ equality and broad themes of masculinity and heteronormativity, it appears that even if he could, based on literature regarding the importance of school support, he would be facing an uphill battle (Hillier et al., 2010; Porecca, 2010). Despite a lack of formal structures, Jack described several aspects of his school environment which he deemed to be positive for LGBTIQ education, namely staff education and some visibility of LGBTIQ themes. Jack stated that a school nurse had provided some information regarding the challenges of LGBTIQ students, however he did not refer to the inconsistency with which these programs were run and attended;

The promotion offered as to what is acceptable, sometimes it’s offered in some of the Sex Ed classes. In some years it’s not.

Jack also reported that he had seen a few posters around the school promoting LGBTIQ students to join external support groups if they were facing challenges, and this can be viewed as either the school acknowledging its limitations and providing alternatives or else the school passing responsibility for the wellbeing of LGBTIQ students; both interpretations certainly point to the spaces between the binaries of oppression and transformation. In this way, schools can be seen as attempting to improve equality for LGBTIQ students, but could perhaps be doing more, or doing some things differently.

Without directly acknowledging it, Jack had been discussing both education and visibility in relation to LGBTIQ themes in the school. Certainly the literature regarding attempts at LGBTIQ equality in schools have focussed on these strategies, and in a critical framework, visibility is seen to help foster what Gramsci (1971) called critical consciousness; this works in opposition to hegemony by making ideology transparent as ideology. In effect, visibility of LGBTIQ themes through education or posters has the potential to counter the masculine hegemonic denial and delegitimisation of alternative sexualities (Mary & Hillier, 2012; Vega et al., 2012). However, based on Jack’s comments, this kind of visibility may become tokenistic without the formal support of the school. Marsten (2015), Robinson et al., (2012)
and Saltmarsh (2012) have written of the dangers associated with campaigning for equality without linking homophobia to broader systems of masculine power. Furthermore, posters and external education do not challenge Jack's beliefs regarding the neutrality of teaching, and in fact may have helped Jack distance himself from his role by deflecting responsibility, thereby connecting the school climate with Jack's perceptions of his role. This notion will be further explored through the narratives of the other teachers throughout this chapter, as the school connections were important in understanding varying perspectives. Due to the fact that Jack hadn’t responded to the challenges by Christopher and Amy that his school environment seemingly perpetuated his idea of his role, I once again attempted to engage Jack in emotional connections and empathy in order to explore his role as a teacher advocate for LGBTIQ equality.

**Advocacy through Empathy**

Jack’s engagement with his role in LGBTIQ equality was encouraged through empathy. The role of empathy has been celebrated in social justice education as a technique of inspiring people to fight inequality by focussing on shared experience, shared emotions or shared values (Hytten, 2015; Segel et al., 2011; Taylor, 2015). Mintz (2013) argued that this empathy must be cognitive as well as emotional if it is to be more than pity, meaning a change in thoughts as well as an emotional experience. Through a critical lens, this type of empathy attends to Freire’s (1968) notion of praxis, suggesting that meaningful change relies on both reflection and action; a person has an emotional reaction but then decides to act for social change. As Jack had mentioned the influences of masculinity in his cultural heritage, I again attempted to engage him through reflections on his past and his upbringing. The aim of these reflections was to help Jack engage with his role as an advocate, by motivating him to help fight for LGBTIQ equality within his school.

I asked Jack if he had ever experienced derogatory language, and he responded that as a child, he was often called a “wog” and a “dago”;

> Lots of kids used to say ‘you’re not one of us’.

Jack struggled to reflect on his emotional experience, choosing to instead focus on his behavioural reactions which he described as “neutral”. Jack stated that people shouldn’t take things so personally, however acknowledged that people cope with derogatory language in different ways;
Some people will go through a depressive phase. Some people will commit suicide. Some people will let it go.

Despite some level of reflection, Jack had difficulty connecting on an emotional level to the point that he could empathise with other group members, and certainly wasn’t at the point where he could empathise with his LGBTIQ students. As Hytten (2015) has written that the role of the teacher working in educational institutions with inequality is to care for students, this limited engagement was potentially problematic. Jack’s avoidance of emotional reflection may have revealed more about his own interpellation within masculine hierarchies, which Brookfield (2012) has argued are in part, characterised by the avoidance or denial of emotions. Jack stated that it was important that young people “not get too emotional” and advocated for more resilience education to develop the “ability to reframe, rehabituate and re-educate” in order for young people to control their emotions. Shannon (2016) has linked this type of problem solving with neo-liberal emphases on risk, stating that neo-liberal agendas emphasise risk management and risk prevention in order to divert social attention from social inequality; the avoidance of risk is seen as a greater goal than the promotion of equality. The relationship between Jack and risk are once again visible, however this time, through the intersections between risk, emotions and masculinity.

I could sense my own frustrations increasing during this interaction, and had to reflect on my own position as a social justice educator. Responding to Hytten’s (2015) challenge to social justice educators, this meant being open to Jack’s perspective and treating him in a compassionate and ethical manner. Due to the strength of ideology in educational institutions, Hytten (2015) has written that resistance to equality must be anticipated, and the role of the educator is to moderate their own reaction to such resistance. Upon reflection, I decided to take a broader approach to my problem posing; instead of directly attempting to connect Jack with the suffering of LGBTIQ people, I asked him if he had ever felt excluded or isolated. Jack had openly acknowledged that he struggled to empathise with LGBTIQ students as he felt that he didn’t understand the nature of their inequality or their experience of isolation. This statement demonstrated a rigidity of thought, categorising experiences as being discrete to one social group, when Apple (2013) has written of the benefits of looking for spaces of connection and similarity which he referred to as "decentred unities" (p. 13). In order to expand his thinking, I asked Jack about his experiences of exclusion and his feelings of isolation in his own lifetime, as these were two prominent impacts of violence for LGBTIQ students at school as reported by Heck et al., (2014), Hillier et al., (2010) and Pearson et al., (2007). This style of problem posing also attended to
Glass’s (2001) critique of Freire’s (1968) notions of identity, as he has stated that people can be both oppressors and oppressed, depending on the aspect of themselves under analysis.

For Jack, this question around exclusion raised his ongoing issues with the popularity of Australian rules Football League (AFL) in the school environment;

Football. I can’t stand it. At work, they all love their football, they all have their teams.

Jack discussed the important role that Australian rules football had in forming social bonds between teachers at his school, stating that every Monday, discussion in the staffroom revolved around the game that was played over the weekend. Whilst the link between sexual orientation injustice and Jack’s experience may appear tenuous, Jack could empathise with the concept of being excluded for something that was out of his control. Furthermore, he could now identify with critical concepts regarding social hierarchies and the improvement of social status through the encouragement of difference and beliefs (Adams, 2007; Brookfield, 2005).

For Jack, his experience was one of feeling “left out”, observing the differences in staff interactions with each other and with him, upon which Amy was able to comment the following;

Amy: And now you’re the other.

Jack: I’m the outsider now all of a sudden. So when it comes to other things, I’m not part of the team. I don’t get integrated into certain committees at work because I can’t stand the football.

This quote demonstrated Jack’s emotional engagement with experiences of isolation and exclusion, affirming Ashard’s (2012) comments that reflection for teachers involves identifying with the other. Jack in fact followed this by suggesting that it would be easier to lie and say that he loves football. This urge is reminiscent of the many secretive and self-denying behaviours of LGBTIQ people as explored in the literature in Chapter 2 (Rasmussen, 2004; Hillier et al., 2010), and is also consistent with the exploration in Chapter 4 of Freire (1968) and Giddens’ (1991) critical ideas around safety in maintaining the status quo; that much suffering is internalised by those who live outside of ideology.

Whilst this process constitutes emotional engagement, Mintz’s (2013) concept of engagement only appeared when Jack was able to cognitively link his own experiences to those of LGBTIQ members of society. In an emancipatory action research process, this could be considered to be a catalytic moment
for Jack (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), as he placed himself in the position of an LGBTIQ student, and described how “terrified” they must be;

They feel like they’re going against the law.

In this context, Jack was able to engage in the issue in an empathic manner, however without the flexibility of this discussion content, Jack may never have formed an empathic engagement to his LGBTIQ students. If he had, for example, been reporting his feelings and thoughts through a survey or a rigid interview, he may not have had the chance to explore this aspect of himself; indeed, he may have continued to discuss the topic as an observer. My openness as a social justice educator was also an important factor, as I was able to contextualise his experiences within LGBTIQ violence, as opposed to dismissing AFL exclusion as irrelevant and this again speaks to the importance of Hytten’s (2015) proposed ethic of openness for social justice educators. As teachers have been seen by Fullan (1993) to be able to influence school climate, then open teachers may help create an open environment across the school.

Despite his response in the first reflective writing piece, Jack’s subsequent reflective writing demonstrated growth in the area of compassion. He wrote that he had been focussing on encouraging all students to treat each other with dignity and respect, regardless of “who or how they are”. This change shifted Jack from a neutral conduit of knowledge to an engaged teacher who attempted to model values and virtues (Gunzenhauser, 2015; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015). This section has addressed Jack’s engagement with his advocacy, and I will return to Jack in order to explore his commitment to values and virtues in Chapter 10.

This early section of the chapter has once again focused on Jack and his disconnection, however once again, he had presented as the most overtly disconnected. This is not to assert that he was the most disconnected, but rather the most open about sharing his opinions and beliefs on a variety of subjects. Jack’s disconnection from his role as a change agent seemingly manifested through his belief in neutrality as a characteristic of teaching. I have addressed critiques of neo-liberal impacts on perceptions of neutrality, and have demonstrated both the strengths and limitations of empathy. To this end, Jack moved from embracing neo-liberal ideals of the teacher to a more engaged, values-oriented social justice educator through the medium of empathy. Expanding on Hytten’s (2015) assertions regarding the need for teacher values, Jack’s story has demonstrated the immense space between neo-liberalism and social justice education as Jack was both emotionally disconnected and
willing to connect. The ongoing connections between the teachers and their school climates will be
interwoven with their own perceptions and change stories throughout the chapter, as there are
consistent links between willingness to change and school support. The other teachers were
immediately more accepting that teaching isn’t neutral, and the major themes of teacher roles in
managing existing violence as a facet of social advocacy will be explored below.

**Teaching as Managing Violence**

It’s about creating a classroom culture that is safe. (Rachel, Initial Interview)

Based on themes which emerged from discussion, passages and writing, several teachers perceived a
major part of their role as institutional agents as managing violence against LGBTIQ students. As
addressed in the above quote, for the teachers, safety emerged as a paramount and catalytic theme in
understanding their role, which is consistent with literature presenting safety as a key theme and as a
set of strategies in response to school-based violence (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010; Robinson, 2012; Vega et al.,
2012). This focus on safety has received criticism for its means-end and narrow interpretation of safety
initiatives which do not address underlying ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity (Robinson et
al., 2012; Saltmarsh, 2012). As explored in Chapters 2 and 3, Benjamin (2012) has argued that these
ideologies create the ideal climate for homophobia whilst Robinson (2012) has argued that these
ideologies rely on homophobic violence to ensure dominant status, and therefore long lasting change
must address the impact of belief systems on individual acts of bullying (Marsten, 2015; Robinson et al.,
2012). Due in part to the engagement process detailed in Chapter 7, most of the teachers had made
connections between their own views and broader social belief systems. This positioned them in a more
critical space with which to discuss safety in schools, and this was reflected in the connections some
teachers made between violence, safety, advocacy and ideology. This section explores teacher
perspectives and associated changes regarding safety through the sub themes of support and inclusivity.

**Support**

Based on the question, “what is the role of the teacher?”, all of the other teachers explored their role in
the context of supporting LGBTIQ students. Following on from my earlier interactions with Jack, I asked
the teachers to explore their perceptions as well as their school climates, not only to connect the
responses for data analysis, but also for teachers to listen, share and reflect on gaps and improvements
in their own school environments, which Robinson (2013) has argued lies at the core of educational
action research. Based on the discussion which was generated by problem-posing, as well as reflective
writing, the participants perceived support within the themes of care and of identification. Overall the perceptions of the teachers in this study were consistent with literature regarding LGBTIQ support, and I conclude the section with an exploration of whether identification can be considered the perpetuation of ‘othering’. This prompted more discussion regarding diversity, modelling a more equitable society, and the balance of changing the present and transforming the future.

**Support as Care**

For Sarah and Amy, teachers and advocates express their support through care. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the importance of care as a teacher virtue (Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015) and this is consistent with literature exploring violence towards LGBTIQ students in schools, whereby students reported feeling more attached and more comfortable with their identity with support from caring teachers (Baams et al., 2015; DeCamp et al., 2016; Heck et al., 2014; Hillier et al., 2010). Sarah reflected on her role in helping a transgender student feel more comfortable in her class, stating that the student’s own beliefs had led to his gender identity being “something he was ashamed of”. Sarah stated that the school not only played a large part in preventing further negative wellbeing outcomes for the student, but also that she felt that the school “needed to do that”. Sarah expressed her views regarding the importance of the school institutions in helping students form positive identities;

> It’s a level of support that might not be at home. I feel that we see these students so often that we’re a huge part of their life whether they like it or not.

Sarah detailed the role of supportive conversations, supportive education and supportive listening as active ways that she demonstrated care. Sarah believed that these, what can be considered counterhegemonic, acts of care allowed the student to feel more attached to the school, improving their sense of belonging and overall sense of comfort within themselves. These observations are consistent with Benjamin (2012), Connell (2009) and Mills’ (2012) ideas of masculine violence, which can be considered the opposite of support. Indeed, Pearson et al., (2007) and Heck et al., (2014) have commented that the feelings of difference evoked through LGBTIQ violence detach students from their school community, leading them to feel unsupported and isolated. From a critical perspective, specifically a Freirean context, support highlights the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the student (Freire, 1968; 1998; 1999). Again, the importance of connecting the individual to the school has been demonstrated not only through the student, by through Sarah’s supportive climate in which she felt comfortable having these conversations with the student.
Like Jack, there seemed to be a link between Sarah’s perspectives and the nature of her school environment. Sarah linked teacher perspectives of LGBTIQ people with school structures stating;

I think schools facilitate homophobic behaviours and some teachers are not as supportive as they should be.

Like Christopher, Sarah had made connections between the institution of the school and the beliefs of teachers regarding their role. Sarah had established that her school was supportive and encouraging of teachers providing care to LGBTIQ students, and this climate will be further addressed in Chapter 9 when exploring Sarah’s initiatives in her commitment to LGBTIQ equality. In Chapter 7, I introduced the importance of Sarah’s empathy with the LGBTIQ community as a motivation for her engagement with inequality politics. To this end, I asked Sarah to reflect on why these issues had such a personal connection, and she shared her interpretation of her brother’s experience as an LGBTIQ student in high school. Sarah stated that the casual use of homophobic language must have left her brother feeling uncomfortable and alienated, as he did not disclose his sexuality until finishing school. This silent struggle is reflected throughout the literature (Baams et al., 2015; DeCamp et al., 2016; Hillier et al., 2010; Rasmussen, 2004), and in part, compelled Sarah to prioritise care as a feature of teacher support. Regarding her emotional connection, Sarah commented the following;

One of the reasons that it’s really important to me, on a personal level, my brother’s gay and he didn’t feel supported at school. He was supported at home, but he spent so much time at school, to not feel he could be comfortable with this part of him would have taken the wind out of him in a lot of ways. That just kind of affects me.

This connection will again be addressed when exploring Sarah’s focus on homophobic language, and in the context of the work of both Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015), served to connect Sarah with her personal values and her values as a teacher. Whilst at this stage of the process the connection was not made explicit, these reflections provided the foundation for more overt discussion regarding teacher values which are a focus of Chapter 10. Furthermore, these reflections impacted co-researchers, and I will explore Amy’s growth in the following section.

Following the group discussion in which Sarah reflected upon her idea of care as support for LGBTIQ students, the group was guided to observe support in their own school environments. For Amy, these observations on her present school’s supportive environment prompted observations regarding her previous school’s unsupportive climate, with Amy concluding that teacher training was a prominent
feature of difference. Amy reflected on a specific school at which she had undergone her teaching placement, highlighting the absence of teacher training and how she perceived it to have affected the relationship between teachers and students regarding sexual orientation disclosure;

I feel that a few of them may not have felt comfortable sharing that with anybody at that school.

In this quote, Amy has referred to the comfortability of LGBTIQ students in the context of whether they perceive their teachers to be caring, affirming Hillier et al., (2010) and Vega et al.,’s (2012) statements regarding the importance of teacher support in LGBTIQ student attachment. For Amy, working as a first year graduate, this apparent lack of care was connected to a lack of training;

I don’t know if in every school its working well or if the teachers are trained appropriately.

Amy reflected on her own school environment, observing a diversity and encouragement of care that she did not find in her previous school at which she did her placement. Amy felt that her current school environment supported her in her own care, and she advocated that this could be improved if teachers were more aware of their role in care. Amy stated that training should develop the following in teachers;

Support, trust, always think of your students first, always think of their wellbeing, leave your prejudices at the door if you have any.

To this end, as explored in the first section of this chapter, Amy challenged Jack’s assertions that care is the role of the wellbeing staff. With regards to Freire’s (1968) notion of praxis, this challenge served as the action component, following reflection on the importance of care. In the context of training, other teachers explored their role in the context of supporting students through identification of LGBTIQ themes and homophobia in the school environment.

Support as Identification

For Sarah, Jessica and Rachel, teachers engaged in their role of support through the theme of identification. Sarah discussed identification in the context of the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at her school, highlighting its role in providing support through visibility, as Sarah believed her school’s GSA to be an identifiable and visible space of support for students;

It’s really student-run, everyone knows about it.
Sarah noted the low attendance of her school’s group, however didn’t perceive this to mean that the group was less important as a wellbeing endeavour. Sarah noted the varying sexual orientations represented in the group at her school, and expressed pride in the assimilation of the group into the regular school social program. For Sarah, the group resulted in increased visibility for LGBTIQ themes and students, identifying homophobia and the impact of violence on identity by attending to these impacts in a supportive manner;

I was really proud of that. That people were really proud that this was something that was a part of our school.

Sarah’s observations were consistent with the work of Stonefish & Lafreneire (2015) who focused on the positive impact of GSAs in the lives of LGBTIQ young people through support and through a space in which they can be themselves. In the analysing of Sarah’s transcript, I framed these groups within Gramsci’s (1971) ideas of counterhegemony;

For Gramsci, schools were a place where teachers could show students that there were other ways of existing other than the norm. (Sarah’s analysed passage, Session 3)

Through this contextualisation, I was able to encourage Sarah to observe other aspects of her school environment which could improve visibility; the impact of these observations will be addressed when exploring Sarah’s commitment to advocacy in schools in Chapter 9. The use of GSAs as a discussion topic was also reflected in the increasing awareness of Jack, who up until this point, had no idea of the group’s existence. To this end, whilst this section has addressed the role of identifying groups, the following section explores the role of identification in relation to teachers.

For Jessica, support of LGBTIQ students relied on teachers’ abilities to identify both the nature and impact of homophobia. Jessica discussed the “vital role” teachers play in supporting LGBTIQ students, and referenced statistics involving self-harm and suicide. Whilst this focus has been criticised in the literature for being too narrowly focused on means-end harm prevention (Marsten, 2015; Saltmarsh, 2012), Jessica followed this statement up with the following;

I think that young people are heavily policed, and adults as well, but that young people police each other’s masculinity and femininity and I think it’s really hard for young people to genuinely express themselves in the ways that they feel most comfortable in their skin in schools.
This quote demonstrated Jessica’s ability to connect the impact of homophobia with underlying ideologies of masculinity as well as the idea of homophobia as a form of policing. This attends to both literature around LGBTIQ inequality (Robinson et al., 2012) and critical frameworks (Althusser, 1984), whereby ideologies are labelled as ideologies and not treated as isolated events. This was a clear indication of Jessica’s connection with her job as teacher and her role as change agent; she could see the bigger picture.

Jessica also discussed the role of heteronormativity through language, again connecting the enactment of a belief system with its underpinning ideology. With regards to her school climate, Jessica observed the following:

There’s not a lot of conversation that goes on at the unit explicitly around same-sex attraction.

In this way, there may have been a disconnection between Jessica’s level of engagement and her school’s, although she did defend her coworkers and state that she believed her colleagues would handle a homophobic incident well. Jessica noted the disconnection between her colleagues’ perceptions of homophobia and heteronormativity, stating that there is a prevalence of heteronormative language in the staffroom. This is consistent with the discussion in Chapter 2, specifically Toomey et al.,’s (2012) assertions that a feature of heteronormativity is misrecognition of heteronormativity, and when asked what she believed would help improve the situation, like Amy, Jessica stated that the issue may be resolved through education and training. Again, these observations linked school climate and individual teachers, which shows the dynamic nature of Freire's (1999) perceptions of social power; that institutions can influence institutional agents and vice versa. Furthermore, this concept validates the efforts of supportive schools whilst encouraging the efforts of teachers in less supportive schools. Jessica’s observations have attended to the need for increased visibility through identification, however identification may also perpetuate ideologies around normal and abnormal ways of presenting identity, which I will address below through an exploration of Rachel’s support of a student.

An important philosophical question which arose from the discussion of supporting oppressed individuals was the question of how to support someone without turning them into what Amy earlier referred to as “the other”. To notice that someone is in need of support is to notice that they are different or abnormal, an observation that can lead to positive outcomes within that person’s experience, however serves to ultimately perpetuate ideology of difference (Dean, 2012; Engel et al.,
Rachel discussed a “gorgeous student” going through an identity journey and, based on Rachel’s “conversations and observations”, may or may not come out as gay. Rachel demonstrated positive and supportive thoughts and feelings regarding this student;

I wish for her, that in a couple of years, I just want her to encounter someone who is just going to support her, and love her, whether it’s a woman or a man.

Despite this positivity, Rachel had made assumptions regarding this student’s sexual orientation based on factors other than the student’s own testimony. Rachel was able to reflect on her own experience, questioning what “gay looks like in this situation” and stating that her observations aren’t based on the way the student is dressing. Rather, Rachel stated that she felt like she was “witnessing her (the student) just in the throes of discomfort around identity and attraction to the world” and that she wants the student “to find a hot older woman to guide her through it”.

Rachel had engaged compassionately with her student, however the question of abnormality and difference remained. Despite extensive reflection and the espousal of equality, Rachel ‘othered’ a student, albeit from a place of concern (Arshard, 2012). Whilst this displays no thought or action that could be deemed homophobic, the concern Rachel feels still fundamentally comes from a place of heteronormativity, and the work of Magnus & Lundin (2016) highlighted the importance of differentiating the two for preservice teachers. This creates, or rather exposes, a philosophical dilemma, wherein the conflicting roles of teachers are to both promote equality and sameness, and simultaneously to recognise difference. This dilemma exists in policy too, whereby Marsten (2015) and Dean (2012) have discussed the dangers of othering in social policy, with Dean (2012) stating that the framing of marginalised groups as victims strips them of their agency to improve their condition. I reflected that this dilemma would continue through the study, as even the topic itself others LGBTIQ students, and people in the wider community. To this end, I decided that whilst it is helpful to be mindful of this dilemma, it was not going to be resolved in this research process.

This section has introduced the participant perceptions of support as an integral feature of an engaged teacher managing violence towards LGBTIQ people in a school community. Support was presented through the themes of care and identification, with some participants expanding their awareness of what care is, how to identify challenges for LGBTIQ young people and the need to address teacher education. Despite the well-intentioned notion of identification, I also addressed the simultaneous effect of othering. Whilst the discussions haven’t extended the sum of literature in this area, they were
necessary as part of a larger process of engaging with violence and engaging with advocacy for LGBTIQ students. The following section continues this discussion by addressing the management of violence as inclusivity, perceptions which echo much literature regarding LGBTIQ inequality and violence in schools.

**Inclusivity**

Within the management of violence, a prominent theme addressed by several teachers was the role of inclusivity. The following section explores the management of violence and safety through inclusivity, and more specifically, through the subthemes of diversity, openness and visibility. Regarding the action research process, connecting to inclusivity allowed several teachers to engage with their role as a change agent for LGBTIQ inequality. In Chapter 3, I introduced several inclusive strategies designed to reduce violence against LGBTIQ students in schools, specifically inclusive policy and practice, which Marsten (2015) and Robinson et al., 2012) and Saltmarsh (2012) have critiqued for being too narrow in their focus on bullying or tokenistic inclusion. With this critique in mind, the teachers seemingly interpreted inclusivity as diversity, as openness and as visibility.

**Inclusivity as Diversity**

For Christopher, inclusivity centred on diversity and he described the diverse nature of his school climate as an important factor in managing violence towards LGBTIQ students. Christopher had previously described the low numbers of openly LGBTIQ people at his school, however he emphasised the overall diversity within the school community by stating the following;

> The school has all different kinds of religions and cultures.

Whilst this climate of diversity can impact critical awareness through what Tan (2009) has called exposure, authors such as Astin & Astin (2000) and Ceplak (2013) have noted that this kind of diversity can have the opposite effect by clashing ideologies against each other and emphasising difference. Christopher was able to acknowledge that conflict between social groups is still a significant issue in his school, reflecting on the dual capacity of diversity; that it can either open up new ideas about people or else affirm existing ways of thinking;

> And that’s largely a product of a really diverse school population, with conflict sometimes.
This shows change through a more nuanced analysis of the term diversity in relation to inclusivity than his connection between equality and sameness that was addressed in Chapter 7.

The significance and duality of diversity prompted Christopher to further reflect on school policy and its use of the term inclusive. Following the previous session, I had asked Christopher to read over his policy with his new understandings in mind, and he stated that effective social policy needs to promote and inspire action. From a critical perspective, this understanding attends to praxis whereby a term such as diversity is acted upon to mean inclusivity, otherwise it becomes what Freire (1968) referred to as idle chatter. Christopher was able to summarise the issues associated with this kind of inactive reflection;

You can’t just be like ‘here is your wellbeing policy. It’s done. Be well.

Christopher’s observations highlight the importance of praxis, as even if a policy has been developed in the context of critical reflection, critical engagement of the issues may not be satisfactory (Small, 2005). Following group discussion, Christopher further reflected through his writing regarding the nature of inclusive policy which inadvertently frames LGBTIQ people as “victims”. For Christopher, this became an issue for consideration as he stated that it may deny them a sense of identity independent from the challenges they face, a line of thought which echoed Dean’s (2012) statements regarding marginalised groups losing their sense of agency;

I’m more sensitive to not treating my students as victims.

Christopher wrote in his final reflection that he now considers support and inclusion in terms of student agency, in an effort to not patronise or undermine his LGBTIQ students. These new understandings of policy opened up a line of thinking for Christopher which allowed him to be more committed to change, which will be addressed in Chapter 9 though his active management of LGBTIQ violence. This section has discussed Christopher’s interpretation of inclusivity as diversity, and in a similar vein, Amy discussed inclusivity in the context of openness.

**Inclusivity as Openness**

Like Christopher, Amy addressed the concept of diversity as inclusivity, however framed diversity as a reflection of openness and more respectful ways of interacting. Reflecting on her own school environment Amy said the following;


At this school they do feel supported to be themselves, and that may be identifying as something that’s not what we know as heterosexual. I feel there is support there and I feel that they can come to us.

Amy has highlighted the importance of openness in managing masculine and heteronormative violence, stating that a teacher is there to include everyone. Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015) have written about the need for openness as a social justice educator, and Amy recognised her school’s attempts “to be a bit more open”, explaining staff culture as a desire to let students know that they can be themselves. Amy stressed the importance of developing an inclusive environment in which students can “present themselves in any way that they feel they need to”. Specific to sexual orientation, Amy described her school as being very open to students’ sexualities, but more open to the idea of students just “being individuals as well”.

Amy’s responses attended to the literature in which themes of attachment and identity defined the negative experiences of masculine violence against LGBTIQ individuals (Heck et al., 2014; Kocsis et al., 2013; Pearson et al., 2007). Amy’s beliefs regarding LGBTIQ inclusivity and her school’s climate of inclusivity can be viewed as decidedly counterhegemonic (Gramsci, 1971; Gross, 2011; Worth, 2015), acknowledging and valuing alternative sexualities to a traditional masculine hierarchy. Regarding her school, I asked Amy to explore her school policy in order to potentially make connections between inclusive policy and school climate, and to see whether her school climate supported her views. When reflecting, Amy stated that everyone was involved in the development of the policy, from leaders to teachers to students. Amy commented on the need to include the perspective of the participants of a social policy, not just dictate their roles, stating that people are more likely to “engage authentically” with a policy if they feel that they have been considered and included:

Every time we have discussions with staff and kids we’re like ‘this school is our community as well as beyond the gates’. It seems to have a nice impact on them and it should because it’s true. It’s very powerful for them.

Amy’s assertions are consistent with Hadfield’s (2012) criticism of action research resulting in the indoctrination of alternative ideologies, as opposed to liberation from existing ideologies. Through this framework, Taylor & Foldy (2008) have asserted that if a person feels like they have contributed to change, then they will feel less like change has been imposed upon them.
Reflecting upon Amy’s progress, I noticed a real shift with regards to her engagement in issues of LGBTIQ equality and teacher advocacy. She had begun to independently analyse her environment, and stated that the conversations from the group and the frameworks from the analysed passages “kept going around” her head. In my journal, I had reflected the following;

Amy hasn’t presented with the resistance of some of the others. She listens, she discusses, and she changes. (Research Journal, Session 3)

This change in engagement highlights Gosin et al.,’s (2003) notion regarding the power of action research in combining academic expertise and contextualising it within community experience; more importantly, the power of valuing both inputs equally. Whilst Amy had moved from passive observer to active listener in the early stages, she had once again shifted to the position of an active contributor. With regards to Amy’s assertions concerning policy, Rachel agreed and highlighted the importance of a school interpreting policy to make it live. Rachel stated that otherwise policies end up “buried in a school diary, on the website or forgotten in the entrance hall”;

They just had lots and lots of posters with their school beliefs on them. And no one looked at. They were just empty banners hanging down.

Whilst in their own right, these statements demonstrate Rachel’s increasing critical abilities, they also highlight both Amy’s contributions to the group as well as the impact of collaborative deconstruction and reconstruction of social institutions, as her school reflections prompted reflections for Rachel. This section has introduced the notion of openness as an inclusive feature of teachers who manage violence against LGBTIQ students. Rachel took a similar, albeit different approach to inclusivity, likening it to the counterhegemonic notion of visibility.

Inclusivity as Visibility

Rachel’s perception of inclusivity included the importance of visibility of LGBTIQ themes in the curriculum. Rachel began by contextualising her school environment, stating that the library possessed an inclusive collection, with many texts exploring LGBTIQ themes. However, Rachel’s exploration of the English curriculum exposed the hypervisibility of heterosexual relationships;

Same-sex characters are not honoured in the same way as heterosexual characters in English texts.
Rachel’s comments highlight Benjamin’s (2012) notions of the hegemonic domination of masculinity through the invisibility of alternative ways of being in relationships. Therefore, making LGBTIQ relationships visible, in a respectful “honoured” way, could be considered an act of what Gramsci (1971) referred to as counterhegemony. Furthermore, Rachel has challenged the idea that sexuality education only takes place in Physical and Health Education, an idea which can be considered an example of either Marcuse’s (1968) notion of means-end thinking, or the categorical nature of Shannon’s (2016) interpretation of neo-liberal ideology. By relegating a social issue to one specific subject, discussions around inequality can be distilled, diverted and categorised, whereby students may see LGBTIQ inequality as a health issue and not a broader social issue. In contrast, critical theorists such as Brookfield (2005) and Freire (1999) have framed all education as social education, and with this view in mind, when an English teacher teaches texts only about heterosexual couples, they are sending a message which serves to legitimise heteronormativity and delegitimise LGBTIQ relationships, whether they are intending to or not. In her analysed transcript passage, I contextualised Rachel’s ideas within hegemony and specifically, the idea of unintentional messages;

Critical theorists argue that hegemony is maintained by willing consent, and that people consent to their own oppression in part, due to the messages they receive regarding social normality. (Rachel’s analysed passage, Workshop 3)

With regards to LGBTIQ inequality literature, this notion is well-traversed terrain, with numerous commentators calling for the inclusion of LGBTIQ themes into the curriculum (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Shannon, 2016). Shannon (2016) has criticised tokenistic efforts to do so arguing that neo-liberal ideologies focus on alternative sexual identities in the context of risk and personal responsibility of sexual decisions, not on inclusivity. In this way, visibility serves to delegitimise and pathologise sexuality whilst stripping power from teachers by emphasising the personal nature of sexual discussion and its place outside of school (Shannon, 2016). As explored in Chapter 3, discussion of sexual orientation occurs primarily through Physical and Health Education (Australian Curriculum, 2015) and in her interview, Rachel stated that she saw room for expansion into other subject areas; indeed this was a large part of Rachel’s commitment to advocacy which will be explored in Chapter 10 through modelling.

This section has explored participant perceptions of safety, management and support through inclusivity of LGBTIQ themes and students, as well as changes in their beliefs and ways of approaching the topic. For several of the teachers, inclusivity was connected to diversity, to openness and to visibility, exploring
the notion of making schools safer through policy, curriculum and interactions, ideas which echoed literature regarding safety. In contrast to criticisms of inclusivity which label it as tokenistic and narrow, the participants were, for the most part, able to connect their ideas with ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity, demonstrating institutional engagement through critical engagement, as opposed to means-end approaches to tackling LGBTIQ violence.

**Teachers as Role-Models**

LGBTIQ equality in schools relies on teachers role modelling more equal and just ways of interacting with each other. Based on the teacher reflections and discussions, role-modelling does not work in opposition to managing existing violence against LGBTIQ people, but rather simultaneously, showing people more just, fair and equal ways of thinking and interacting. Based on the data generated by Christopher, Rachel and Amy, this chapter introduces this modelling through the ideas of engaging students in social justice for LGBTIQ inequality and of promoting awareness. A more nuanced exploration of modelling will be featured in subsequent chapters regarding commitment, as the teachers began to reflect upon their classroom as change spaces, and significant to this study, to actually enact their new knowledge. The following sections focus on the discussions and reflections of Rachel, Christopher and Amy, who considered the role of agendas, ethics and pedagogy in role-modelling, expanding the awareness of other group members and inspiring efforts to change.

**Engaging Students**

For Christopher and Rachel, the theme of engaging students had a significant impact on their own engagement with their role as teachers. Both teachers had perspectives regarding the notion of engaging students in social justice, a key aspect of modelling for more equitable futures (Hooks, 2013; North, 2009; Tan, 2009), exploring the tensions between social agendas and ethical teaching. I addressed the idea of an agenda earlier in the chapter when discussing neutrality, and the following discussion extends this by exploring agendas through engagement with students, as opposed to engagement with teachers, asking the question; once a teacher is an engaged social change agents, how do they engage students? I also introduced the notion of ethical teaching in Chapter 3 and in my interactions with Jack concerning his empathy, and again, this discussion will be extended in the context of demonstrating role modelling by ethically engaging students in social justice education.
**Ethical Agendas**

Within the discussion of engaging students in Session 3, Christopher and Rachel introduced the concept of ethics. When addressing potential challenges or barriers for engaged teachers, Christopher highlighted the concept of ethical agendas as significant;

There is a long historical perception of teachers pushing an agenda.

Christopher has highlighted the conflict between interpretations of teachers as dichotomously apolitical or political, and this is reflected in the literature regarding neo-liberal attacks on social justice education and social justice education researchers’ attacks on neo-liberalism (Hursh, 2009; Shannon, 2016; Smyth, 2011). Social justice educators agree that teachers should have social agendas in mind when they approach their practice and their reflections (Cosier, 2009; Hooks, 2013; Smyth, 2011), and in order to generate more reflection in Christopher, I asked him who he believed would be most concerned with LGBTIQ equality agendas.

Christopher commented that a teacher is never just teaching a student, and both he and Jack were able to articulate the network of people that would be impacted by curriculum changes, specifically the idea of a teacher being answerable to parents;

That’s definitely something I would be thinking about. The parents.

Christopher stated that in his experience, parents react more strongly to change than students, and Jack discussed the reactions of parents as a strong motivation for staying “within the bounds of what we see as normality”.

Whilst Jack’s response to fear was more prescient and will be addressed in the following chapter as a barrier to his commitment, Christopher maintained more of a balanced position. Christopher could see the benefits of social justice education and the potential challenges of declaring oneself a social justice educator, and the discussions around agendas were stimulating for the group, and particularly for Rachel for whom engagement had simultaneously been an area of growth and a barrier for her commitment to advocacy. For Rachel, the primary concern was not being stigmatised for pushing an agenda, but rather the disengagement of students from dialogue around oppression, social hierarchies and inequality. When discussing LGBTIQ equality, she asked the following question;

If I front-and-centre it, do I risk losing a quarter of my kids?
Rachel provided an example from her school in which a colleague used a photo of two men getting married as the representation of “Justice Week”. Rachel questioned whether defining justice through the lens of marriage equality would alienate members of the school community before the week had even begun, defeating the purpose of being an educative experience. Christopher shared similar thoughts with regards to alienation, discussing how a strong agenda-pushing approach may make you lose people. Christopher suggested that a more effective technique would be to find out what the students are already engaged in and what they’re suggesting, and then to expand these ideas into the exploration of other relationships;

What I would like to do is find an opportunity going off of what they are engaged in, what they’re suggesting, to then look at other relationships.

Rachel was able to make similar suggestions stating that she thought it would be more effective to invite students to think about justice as a broad perspective, before narrowing it down to issues around marriage equality;

I want to invite the kids into thinking about justice in a broad perspective and invite them into thinking about the idea of marriage and should marriage be for everybody.

From a critical perspective, this would contextualise the students’ experience before challenging them, attending to Hytten’s (2015) notion of ethical social justice education involving openness and care to all students. Gunzenhauser (2015) has argued that this potentially creates discomfort for marginalised students as they must endure the perpetuation of inequality and potentially damaging discussion while the teacher attempts to engage students from the dominant group, however Kumashiro (2009) argued that discomfort for the dominant group is an objective of social justice education; certainly this is reiterated through Gramsci’s (1971) conceptions of counterhegemony, where discomfort is seen as a disruption to the hegemonic order.

The discussion regarding engagement also led to my own reflections regarding my experiences in the group. As the teachers started the process with varying levels of engagement, I reflected on the amount of navigating, negotiating and attending required to allow people to feel heard despite their differences in beliefs. I reflected on my interactions with Jack, and how I managed my own frustrations, but more importantly, how well the group was managing their differences of opinion considering LGBTIQ inequality was a particularly personal social issue for Jessica and Sarah;
I was surprised at how they were able to hold their tongues, pause, and then respond to some rather provocative statements in a calm and measured manner. (Research Journal, Workshop 1)

Based upon these reflections, I made two observations of significance to my own engagement with the role of the teacher in social change. The first involved the similarities between my process as group facilitator and the experiences of the teachers in class in the context of social justice education. These similarities suggested to me that, whilst a great deal of research has involved the education of students (Hooks, 2013; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015; Tan, 2009), teachers do need the space, time and care of others in order to become self and socially critical. This is in line with McDonald & Zeichner’s (2012) assertions regarding the importance of criticality in preservice teacher training and Sleeter’s (2009) expansion of this assertion to include all teachers, regardless of their years of experience. The second observation involved the readiness of these teachers regarding social justice education, as their ability to probe Jack instead of chastise him, and to challenge him and listen to his challenges, suggested to me that on the whole, they were engaged and ready to commit to equality for LGBTIQ students through what Hytten (2015) described as ethical openness. Whilst this section has discussed the ways teachers interact with students, the data generated also indicated that Amy and Rachel saw being a teacher as playing a more active role through the promotion of awareness.

**Promoting Awareness**

For Rachel and Amy, teachers model equality through the promotion of social awareness for their students. Brookfield, (2012), Hooks (2013) and Tan (2009) have all highlighted the importance of promoting awareness as a key component of advocacy and in Chapter 3, I discussed the role of the social justice educator as fostering critical thinking through critical engagement and awareness; indeed in Chapter 7 I chronicled the facilitation of critical engagement within the research group. For Rachel and Amy, the discussions regarding concepts of awareness in students led to the prioritisation of this feature in their own teaching. The following section details the discussions around the promotion of awareness and introduces the notion of commitment, the focus of the next two chapters.

For Rachel, the idea of modelling through the promotion of awareness involved the promotion of respect in disagreement. Rachel made the following comment;

> If a student is learning in a safe environment, and a teacher is modelling how to disagree with someone and still honour them, then the likelihood is that the student is going home and extending that model to their friends and families and to people they will meet in the future.
Whilst through a critical framework, this may constitute a degree of tolerance regarding oppressive beliefs which Marcuse (1975) viewed as repressive, it appears that Rachel has conceived of her students’ engagement as a process. This study has certainly adopted that approach, whereby certain ideas, expansions in thinking and reflective capabilities must be encouraged during a process of becoming critical, as opposed to expectations that students will just be critical. This line of thought follows the work of Arshad (2012) and McDonald & Zeichner (2012), who argued that teachers must undergo a process of change, and not be expected to be critically aware or simply to remain analytical at best. This line of thought certainly undermines the statements in policies such as MEETYA (2008), which define analytical thinking as the prioritised way of viewing education and doesn’t refer to the idea that the teachers undergo their own journey.

Rachel’s idea of a process also suggested that she has influence in that process, much like I did in this study. I asked the group how ideas could translate to a classroom, and Rachel discussed the notion of absences in literature, and how these can be powerful tools of recognition by asking students to notice who is not in a text. Rachel provided examples of the way she would challenge students;

I’m not telling you what to believe, I’m just opening up the possibility that there are other beliefs.

Rachel has demonstrated both openness and ethics as she has not judged the students for their beliefs, and is open to the resistance she may encounter in challenging them. Rachel explicitly stated her perspective on this teacher action;

I think that’s part of your role as a teacher, not to be didactic, but to be somebody who’s able to facilitate diversity of opinion.

This approach may help foster criticality as they draw from the experience of the students and encourage diversity without demanding it (Hooks, 2013; Hytten, 2015). In this way, a question involving absences of relationships is ethical social justice education (Hytten, 2015), counterhegemonic (Gross, 2011) and encourages the expansion of thinking beyond assumptions (Brookfield, 2012) and beyond hyper visible masculinity and heterosexuality (Benjamin, 2012). Despite these propositions, Rachel noticed some difficulties with students who she found to resist this type of engagement, and these will be discussed in the context of Rachel’s commitment to modelling more equitable ways of interacting with each other in Chapter 10.
Following from Rachel’s notion of absence, Amy furthered the discussion, describing an English classroom as the ideal platform from which to “challenge life as it is and to look at life differently”. Amy discussed the promotion of awareness as an exploration of who is missing from a text, or if presented with a heterosexual couple, to put on a different lens and consider whether and why it would be challenging or confrontational. North (2009) has argued that this type of pedagogy fosters critical awareness by prompting students to reconsider their social environments, and exposing taken-for-granted social normality.

Both Rachel and Amy had demonstrated critical engagement and awareness with issues of LGBTIQ inequality, in their roles as individuals in society and as teachers. Both were able to identify inequality and the associated violence against LGBTIQ people in schools and beyond, connect experiences of violence with broader hierarchies of masculinity and heteronormativity, conceive their role as a teacher as significant to social change and begin to think about how they could carry out this change in their classrooms; the next step for both teachers was to enact this change.

This section has introduced the significance of role-modelling in teacher advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality. I addressed the concept of engagement, relating the participant discussion regarding engaging their students to my own thoughts about engaging the teachers. Overall, Christopher and Rachel acknowledged the importance of agendas and of ethical engagement. These are both ideas that were of significance to Christopher and Rachel in their commitment actions within their schools. The section also addressed the promotion of awareness, briefly exploring the intersections between literature, relationships and visibility as pedagogical strategies for promoting equality through critical thinking. These ideas were significant to both Amy and Rachel, and had an impact on the ways in which other participants enacted change in their own classrooms; this discussion will be the focus of Chapter 10.

Conclusion

For the participants, engaging with their role as a teacher in LGBTIQ equality involved the recognition of LGBTIQ violence, connections with broader social systems and motivation to influence change as a social advocate. For the group, there were varying levels of engagement going in to the research process and varying levels of change within the process, however group discussion challenging neutrality, connecting safety to ideology and introducing the notion of role-modelling demonstrated overall, a deeper engagement with teacher roles as change agents for LGBTIQ inequality.
Once again, the significance of praxis in research guided problem posing, group discussions, the analysis of transcript passages and reflective writing. This allowed for new understandings through reflection, new ways of thinking through discussion and ultimately, new ways of perceiving the classroom as a space for change. The perceptions and change addressed in this chapter established a strong foundation for change and the enactment of new understandings through commitment. The following two chapters explore this commitment to social advocacy and social change for LGBTIQ inequality through the teachers’ management of violence in Chapter 9, and through their modelling more equitable, just and fair ways of being in Chapter 10.
Chapter 9

Commitment through Managing Violence

Even if I was terrified, I'd still bring it up. I'd have to. (Amy, Workshop 3)

Whilst connecting with sexual orientation inequality is an important part of teacher advocacy, ultimately teachers need to commit to advocacy through action. To this end, following on from engaging with LGBTIQ inequality, the second overall theme which emerged from the data was the concept of commitment. Based on the perspectives and changes of the teachers, commitment to LGBTIQ equality can be viewed as the enactment of new reflections, new knowledge and new strategies which emerged from the action research process. Whilst the previous two chapters focussed on reconnecting the teachers to their roles as social members and their roles as teachers of change, referring to Amy’s quote
above, ultimately, commitment to advocacy involves action. Therefore, teacher advocacy for LGBTIQ equality can be seen as encompassing both connection and enactment, and based on the data, the teachers have framed commitment to LGBTIQ equality in schools as both managing existing violence and modelling for the future;

Rachel: I suppose my experiences have been in the context of trying to create a safe environment, engaging in conversations if they’re comfortable talking about relationships and just taking an interest.

This quote from Rachel demonstrates her attempts to manage violence through safety and to model pluralism through discussions around relationships. Occurring simultaneously, both management and modelling can be seen as commitment to LGBTIQ equality as they involve the teachers acting for equality in schools. This chapter addresses the aspect of committing through the management of existing violence in schools, and I will explore the concept of committing through role modelling in Chapter 10.

Within the management of existing violence, two important themes emerged. For the teachers, a prominent perspective and example of change in the school environment was the action of challenging others. By working through hypothetical scenarios, the teachers considered how and if they would challenge colleagues and leaders on issues relating to LGBTIQ violence in their schools, and this exploration is addressed in the first section. Continuing from the discussion of commitment through managing violence and challenging others was the theme of openness, which I detail in the second section. In the context of commitment, several teachers discussed the importance of demonstrating openness as an action for managing LGBTIQ violence. This theme has been discussed as both a value (Hytten, 2015) and an ideal teacher disposition (Taylor, 2015), and through Amy’s change story, I explore how the group process, her school climate and her own willingness allowed her to be more open to connections, open to advocacy and open to herself as a change agent. Whilst in many ways Amy’s story is also akin to modelling, Amy used her openness to manage violence in her classroom and wider school environment, and serves to demonstrate the often overlapping nature of these two aspects of commitment.

Whilst openness seemingly supported teacher commitment through managing LGBTIQ violence, a prominent barrier which emerged in the data was the notion of fear. Through Jack’s story, with contributions from Rachel and Amy, I establish the ways in which fear was engaged, discussed and
eventually overcome regarding his role in managing violence in his school community. Several sections allude to teacher reflections on values and the impact that this has had on their commitment, and I conclude by establishing this as the main focus of the following chapter in which I explore teacher modelling for the future as a simultaneously key component of commitment to social advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality.

**Challenging Others**

For the teachers, committing to LGBTIQ equality through the management of violence involved challenging people in their school community. In the third session, I presented a scenario to the group for discussion, prompting reflection around the role of the teacher, both in their interactions with other members of school and with examples of heteronormativity;

Scenario 1: You’re in a staffroom, and a teacher comments on a student’s fashion choice, saying that their clothes make them look gay.

As the scenarios prompted discussion regarding the role of other teachers, it was no surprise that the subtheme which emerged from the theme of challenging others focussed on challenging colleagues. The pedagogical strategy of scenarios was informed by critical literacies of Tan’s (2009) concept of exposure and Hooks’ (2013) concept of experience within the context of managing LGBTIQ violence through improving visibility and inclusivity. Furthermore, the scenarios gave the teachers an opportunity to practice their commitment in a safe space before attempting to enact change in their schools. This section will explore the teacher responses to this scenario as well as the changes associated with this part of the action research process in the context of reflection and planning for action. Overall, it was clear that most of the teachers viewed the challenging of people in their school environment as a key act of a committed LGBTIQ advocate.

**Challenging Colleagues**

The teachers explored their commitment to advocacy for LGBTIQ students through challenging their colleagues. The following data refers to responses to Scenario 1 which involved the teacher making heteronormative remarks, and Christopher discussed the scenario through the lens of awareness. Christopher stated that regardless of whether comments are vicious or “throwaway”, he’d like to challenge his fellow teachers;
But regardless of the fact, if it’s just a throwaway comment because they’re not really thinking, or if it’s meant to be vicious because they don’t like that student, regardless, just thinking in my context, what I’d like to do is pull them up on it.

Christopher’s initial response was one of action, and I asked Christopher to elaborate on why he felt so strongly about the scenario. Christopher referred to numerous staff meetings that he has attended;

We’ve had staff meetings about how we use language, and specifically this example because it comes up a lot in our school, and it’s persistent and bullying and potentially dangerous.

Christopher acknowledged that his school had attempted to address LGBTIQ violence, but also that teachers continued to make heteronormative comments despite school action. In the context of Freire’s (1968) praxis, this may be due to a lack of reflection, and Christopher was able to demonstrate growing commitment by recognising his role in challenging persistent behaviours such as derogatory language. Mills (2012) and Warwick & Aggleton (2013) have connected seemingly harmless comments such as looking gay and referring to negative experiences as gay to more severe acts of homophobic violence, framing the behaviours as a continuum as opposed to discrete categories. This attends to Marsten (2015) and Robinson et al.,’s (2012) criticisms of anti-bullying programs which focus on isolated incidents instead of viewing homophobia as symptomatic of broader masculine ideologies.

Christopher stated that he would correct a colleague by referring to school policy and questioning the teacher’s commitment to their students;

So I would say to them ‘so you’re using this kind of language and we’re supposed to be setting examples. What flies in your classroom? This is part of our school policy and our commitment to our students and I find it disrespectful’. That’s what I would like to do.

Christopher has framed the role of the teacher and the role of policy as aspects of schools which manage existing LGBTIQ violence. Furthermore, Christopher’s school policy was very clear regarding the role of teachers in supporting students and identifying homophobia, which may have contributed to his conviction at this stage. Christopher had also touched on the theme of committing through modelling by referring to teachers “setting examples”, and this will be continued in the following chapter. Following on from the discussion in his final reflective writing, Christopher stated that he had been noticing discrepancies within the staffroom;

Certain teachers still use homophobic language even though they are claiming to be cracking down on it in the classroom.
This comment demonstrated the impact of the observation stage of action research, as Christopher was able to apply his new knowledge relating to language, heteronormativity and ideology in order to analyse his own school environment. Furthermore, Christopher’s ability to notice such discrepancies spoke to his growing awareness and growing commitment to enacting this awareness. Christopher was not alone in his perspectives, as Rachel also reacted in a similarly strong and passionate manner.

Upon hearing the scenario, Rachel immediately started discussing the idea of authority and the interactions between authority and peer relationships. Rachel commented the following:

> You can tell a kid that language isn’t acceptable and there’s that power differential and with colleagues, maybe they are up at being told.

Rachel has observed a common issue in social justice education regarding resistance, as Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015) have both commented that people being challenged on their oppressive behaviours may become angry, hostile and reserved. Rachel has also identified the role of power in school interactions, stating that challenging a colleague is different to challenging a student and from a critical lens, Freire (1968) and Giddens (1991) have argued that the social risks associated with standing up for one’s beliefs lead many to stay silent. For Rachel, whilst fear and feeling a lack of authority in interactions with her colleagues were factors, she stated that “you still need to call people on it”. Rachel’s perspective speaks to a certain openness in her commitment to LGBTIQ equality, as she has considered the reactions of others and decided that she still needed to act.

This section has addressed the concept of challenging others as an important feature of teacher advocacy. By working through hypothetical scenarios, the teachers were able to engage in reflection and planning for action as they prepared to commit to LGBTIQ equality in schools by managing heteronormative violence with leaders and with colleagues. Rachel, Christopher and Amy demonstrated a strong engagement with heteronormative ideology and its impact on a school community, and each asserted that they would challenge those around them to be more thoughtful and more open. To this end, the concept of openness may support commitment to LGBTIQ equality and through Amy’s story, the following section explores openness, both as a theme and a support for advocacy.
Openness

For Amy, the management of existing ideological violence was supported by openness. To varying degrees, all of the discussions, reflections, observations were helping the teachers move to a place of greater openness and this was demonstrated throughout the research process through an openness in thinking, openness in communication and openness regarding the practice of change. These aspects changed the way Amy managed existing masculine and heteronormative violence in her classroom. Through her engagement, Amy had been demonstrating her willingness to learn and grow into her role as a social advocate for LGBTIQ inequality, and this willingness extended into openness through her various enactments of new knowledge, new understandings and new views on the world. Through an openness to connection, an openness to advocacy and indeed an openness to self, Amy committed to her role as a change agent in the classroom and beyond and this section explores these changes whilst considering the support of her school as an important factor in her advocacy.

Openness to Connection

Whilst Amy had acknowledged that she hadn't previously connected to LGBTIQ equality as a social issue, she demonstrated an openness which prepared her for her commitment through action as a change agent. Amy had previously addressed her own experiences during secondary school through which she was not exposed to the typical violence reported by researchers such as Dragowski et al., (2015), Van Beusekom et al., (2016) and Hillier et al., (2010), however she was able to connect with the violent experiences of her students and consider the impact of such violence on their lives. Amy called the impact “detrimental”, highlighting the fact that LGBTIQ young people spend a lot of their time in an environment where “they can't feel that they are being true to themselves or being themselves”. Amy recognised this impact as hindering development;

If they can't develop that young it may be harder to do that when they grow older.

Amy’s observations are consistent with the work of Pearson et al., (2007) who have commented on the trauma of school violence affecting LGBTIQ people into adulthood. Whilst the focus on impact has been criticised by Robinson et al., (2012), Marsten (2015) and Dean (2012) for denying agency to LGBTIQ students, her connection and subsequent engagement opened her up to ways in which she could commit to change. Amy acknowledged that her approach to teaching had not involved social justice education and made the following comment;
Before embarking on this research participation I would have had the attitude that it wasn’t such a big deal to have such things, or more specifically that it didn’t impact on me personally.

Amy’s comments potentially demonstrated the influences of what Rodriguez & Magill (2016), Smyth (2011) and Hursh (2009) have framed as neo-liberal hegemonic dominance, through the focus on going along and on individualism. The idea that you must directly be impacted to be a change agent is indicative of the kind of categorical thinking associated with analytical thinking, whereby inequality is viewed as the individual’s responsibility and people become increasingly disconnected from the broader social climates in which their beliefs have been moulded (Brookfield, 2012; Hursh, 2009). Amy’s reflections demonstrated her engagement, both as an individual as well as her role in social change through education, and the following section explores her commitment through the enactment of this engagement through her openness.

Openness to Advocacy

Amy’s commitment was demonstrated through changes to her language, her involvement at school and through her pedagogical changes in her classroom. In later sessions, Amy’s language changed from her growing awareness;

I am now more active, more open and more empowered.

This statement was made in her final reflective writing in response to a question asking for Amy to notice any changes in her perspective or behaviour. For Amy, this use of language reflected her increasing commitment to managing violence in her school, and she was able to further demonstrate her commitment through her involvement in the IDAHoT (International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia) celebrations within her school. Amy stated that she had become an “active participant” in the preparations, describing her pride associated with “fighting for social change”. Saltmarsh (2012) and Gross (2011) have discussed the importance of visibility and identification, arguably the purpose of days such as IDAHoT, and in this way, Amy has directly influenced her school environment through her commitment to advocacy in her role as teacher. Again, Robinson et al., (2012) and Saltmarsh (2012) have criticised a focus on the enactment of homophobia as opposed to underlying ideologies stating that the source of the problem is rarely addressed, however Amy also connected with ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity within her classroom.

In her second last reflective writing, Amy commented on her changes within the research process;
I’m determined to put my discussions around strategies, communication and interactions with others into practice.

In order to do this, Amy utilised the observation component of the action research process to contextualise these discussions within her own environment. Working as an English teacher, Amy was passionate about the role of literature in opening up discussions about society. Amy had already discussed her ideas around using the curriculum and the literature to ask questions not only about who is present in the texts, but also who is missing from social representations in text. Amy extended this pedagogical technique by “putting up more posters in the classroom on supporting diversity”. Again, posters featuring diverse populations can be interpreted as increasing the visibility of marginalised groups for whom Freire (1968) stated that invisibility so often leads to suffering in silence. In the final reflective writing piece, Amy maintained her commitment;

My goal is to improve the wellbeing of students with knowledge and awareness.

Amy referred to her greater knowledge regarding LGBTIQ inequality and awareness of strategies to improve this. As well as increasing visibility, following the discussions around challenging members of the school environment, Amy began to increasingly prioritise her attention to language within the classroom. Amy stated that she was now more comfortable challenging derogatory language, citing an example in which a student called another a student a “fag” during class;

I used this situation to discuss as a class the implications of using this language and the effects it can have. I found this useful rather than speaking alone to the one student.

The use of language in ideological dominance was a topic of particular interest to Amy, and she demonstrated both an increasing awareness of language in the school environment, consistent with the findings of Hillier et al., (2010), Msibi (2014) and Dragowski et al., (2015), as well as an increasingly active role in the challenging of harmful language. When combined with her increasing prioritisation of student wellbeing, Amy focussed on language which either supported or hindered wellbeing for LGBTIQ students.

For Amy, this incident became a learning opportunity as opposed to a disciplinary opportunity. This was a demonstration of Freire’s (1968) critical praxis, as through reflection Amy was able to connect the singular classroom incident to wider mechanisms of oppression and then act to intervene through education. In social justice education, Hytten (2015) has questioned the ethics with which social justice
educators handle resistance from students, and the use of the derogatory homophobic term could be interpreted as resistance to change. Hytten (2015) called for openness regarding teacher responses to students who intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate harmful ideologies in the classroom. Whilst Gunzenhauser (2015) agreed with Hytten’s (2015) notion of ethics as virtues, he disagreed that teachers should expose already marginalised students to further violence through open discussion of homophobic themes. Amy seemingly walked the middle path in this debate, using openness in the context of framing language as homophobia, homophobia as heteronormativity and heteronormativity as a social issue. To this end, based on Amy’s reflection in the discussion, she did not shame the student, but rather validated the student’s casual use of language as both an individual responsibility, and as part of a broader social issue of inequality. In this way, the classroom discussion focussed on the harmful impact of heteronormativity, not on the harmful impact of one student, and Amy maintained that the classroom climate had remained constructive and shameless. Amy’s openness accepted that the one student using derogatory language was not the problem, but also set limits with regards to how students should interact with each other, and how they should increase their awareness of social inequality and the latter will be continued in discussion in the following chapter regarding Amy’s modelling of equality. In this way, Amy’s narrative has extended the thoughts of Hytten (2015), taking her theoretical model and enacting it in a very real and meaningful way for her classroom.

Despite the efficacy with which Amy managed violence in her classroom, I reflected on the absence of anger and frustration in her story. Based on the work of Viray & Nash (2014), I had anticipated some anger and frustration from the teachers throughout the process. Viray & Nash (2014) described this phenomenon as “madvocacy” (p. 21), stating that it is all too common in social justice work and that this reaction requires mediation through compassion. Amy, however, seemingly acted compassionately from the outset of her commitment, and I suggest two reasons as to why this may have been possible. Firstly, Amy’s relative inexperience may have helped her bypass the anger of social awareness, as she was simultaneously learning about her role in social change. This may have helped her avoid the disillusionment Viray & Nash (2014) have reported to be so common amongst social justice educators. This interpretation lends credence to the assertions of Cosier (2009), who has emphasised the need for teacher training at a preservice teacher level. To this end, the type of education which simultaneously analyses society in the context of equality and fairness whilst providing strategies for change help navigate the frustrations and anger which Viray & Nash (2014) have deemed inevitable; this is the essence of real empowerment (Brookfield, 2005). Viray & Nash (2014) also asserted that navigating
anger become a crucial component of social justice educator and activist training, and this will be further discussed when exploring anger and virtues in the following chapter.

**School Support**

Another factor to consider is the role of school support in supporting commitment to LGBTIQ equality for teachers. Upon reflection, I decided to further analyse the policy of Amy’s school in the context of managing violence to highlight the possible connection between Amy’s openness and her school climate. Amy had already stated that she believed policy needed to be inclusive of a variety of voices, and she further reflected the importance of school policy in managing violence for LGBTIQ students;

Knowing that there’s support. Showing that this organisation supports people within this policy and we’re proud to say that. Having some kind of voice to say ‘we stand by you. Even if other people don’t, we do’.

These statements continued to demonstrate Amy’s commitment as she discussed support as an active process, linking the institution of the school with the needs of the individual student. Examining the wellbeing policy more closely, Amy’s school specifically outlines that bullying and harassment are linked to broader social structures and that it is everyone’s role to manage this violence. Amy’s school policy provides a simple list of ‘don’ts’ including ‘don’t discriminate’ and ‘don’t touch other people unnecessarily’ as well as a list of ‘do’s’ which outlines helpful communication strategies. In this way, the policy encourages the management of violence in both reflective and active ways, as well as balancing correction of undesirable behaviours with the promotion of desirable ways of interacting. Through this model, teachers are actively encouraged to value social awareness and to teach this to their students. This policy exists in stark contrast to the more generic, potentially tokenistic policy of Jack’s school where issues of inequality were seemingly diverted to the Equal Opportunity Officer, and a socially connected policy could potentially have helped Amy felt more secure in her actions and commitment to her role as a change agent. Porecca (2010) and Mary & Hillier (2012) have commented that effective policy helps teachers feel more comfortable with intervening in homophobia, and Amy’s story enhances this assertion through the contribution of simultaneously connecting violence to broader social structures and promoting awareness of social dynamics. These connections may have nurtured Amy’s confidence, and this growing confidence was certainly supported in the group discussions, the analysed passages and the reflective writing as Amy had a space to both reflect and demonstrate on her new knowledge and changing perspectives.
Openness to Self

For Amy, ultimately her commitment to her role as an LGBTIQ equality advocate relied on her openness to herself through her growing confidence. Amy made the following statement in her writing;

I’m feeling confident as a first year graduate teacher to know I have some understanding of issues around heteronormativity and that I can provide support to my students, co-workers and school environment.

Although Amy had become an active participant in the group process and had begun to enact these changes in her classroom, she frequently referred to the fact that it was her first year of teaching in a way that almost diminished her capacity to influence others. Amy had explored this when discussing her response to the scenario regarding challenging a colleague, however despite her inexperience, she maintained that she would still challenge them on their heteronormativity. In her final reflective writing, Amy stated that she had been her most significant barrier to change, stating that her level of confidence regarding her ability to commit to her role as a change agent was her most difficult challenge. Amy’s reflections are interesting in response to Freire’s (1998) challenge to teachers to simply overcome their fears, and Hytten’s (2015) and Taylor’s (2015) research which assumed commitment from social justice educators, however neglected to explore the emotional barriers from within.

Whilst she still referred to herself as a first year graduate, as explored, she discussed how growing awareness around heteronormativity as well as her role in managing violence gave her the confidence to act. This demonstrated the strength of Althusser’s (1984) assertions regarding the labelling of ideologies, as teachers may feel more confident once they have become able to deconstruct society on this level. For a teacher who hadn’t connected ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity with day-to-day enactments of gender hierarchies and homophobia, then the social landscape may appear overwhelming; certainly, this experience was reported by teachers in the work of Finnessy (2016), Malins (2016) and Meyer et al., (2016). For Amy, however, being able to view individual acts as connected to a larger system whilst simultaneously connecting individual teachers to their role in changing that system, may have allowed her to feel more comfortable and supported in her actions against heteronormative violence. Furthermore, and finally, this confidence was linked with Amy’s openness to embrace it.
This section has explored the role of openness in committing to the management of violence against LGBTIQ students in school environments. Through the change story of Amy, I demonstrated the importance of being open to connections, being open to advocacy and being open to oneself as an influential, confident change agent. For Amy, the group process, including reflections, discussions and the contextualisation of her experience within theory, grew her confidence as she first empathised with LGBTIQ experience, acted upon homophobic language, took part in a diversity celebration and increased visibility of sexual diversity in her classroom. I also suggested that Amy’s changes may have been influenced by her inexperience, as she was simultaneously learning to challenge social order and with an understanding of her role, and the supportive school climate in which she worked. Amy had enacted her new understandings of the world within her school environment, both through reflective and active means, demonstrating her commitment to advocacy through openness, working in contrast to teachers who make decisions based in climates of fear. Whilst in this thesis, I present management and modelling as discrete aspects of commitment to LGBTIQ equality, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, in a real setting, they often overlap. Amy’s management of violence in her classroom involved a great deal of modelling with regards to her values of compassion, respect and understanding, however I have explored her experience in this chapter as her stated objective was to address violence in the school environment; the discussion around values will be continued in Chapter 10 which is specifically focussed on modelling. Conversely, for Jack, these conversations proved to be confrontational, as he expressed a rigidity and defensiveness regarding his decisions not to challenge students, colleagues or leaders. The following section addresses Jack’s initial reluctance and growing alignment with his values by addressing the theme of fear.

Fear

One of the most significant themes regarding teacher commitment to advocacy was fear. Fear permeated discussions around LGBTIQ violence, school environments and most significant to the process of commitment, discussions regarding the enactment of critical awareness. Throughout the literature and critical discourse, fear has been consistently discussed as a barrier to advocacy, and ultimately to social change (Finnessy, 2016; Freire, 1968; 1998; Malins, 2015). Fear manifested in the group in several ways, presenting as a barrier for Jack through the inhibition of action, and simultaneously prompting reflection on the importance of action and commitment to LGBTIQ equality in schools.
In the third workshop, along with scenarios involving the challenging of leaders and the challenging of colleagues, the teachers were presented with a scenario which asked them to reflect on their actions around challenging students. By presenting three scenarios, each involving students, leaders or colleagues, the teachers were able to reflect on their commitment to LGBTIQ equality by considering actions in their interactions with three significant influences in school environments; this was also part of the planning for action stage of the action research cycle. The first scenario presented to the group involved a teacher presenting texts with LGBTIQ themes and relationships to their class for study;

Students make literature suggestions for the English curriculum, and all of the suggestions contain only male-female relationships.

Whilst helpful in modelling initiatives such as the Classroom Project regarding the infusion of LGBTIQ themes beyond Health Education, the use of the scenario provided me with a much greater understanding of Jack’s relationship with fear. When the group was asked if they would challenge the students to consider LGBTIQ relationships, he was the only teacher to out-and-out refuse such a pedagogical suggestion, even a hypothetical one;

I don’t think I’d do that. I don’t think I’d have the guts to do that. The insanity to do that. To spoil what is a perfectly happy class. Why would I?

Jack’s use of the term “insanity” demonstrated his strong relationship with fear, reinforced by his transparency regarding not having “the guts” to introduce change. Despite his progress regarding engagement with issues of LGBTIQ inequality, once presented with an opportunity to act, fear seemed to have overridden his empathy and emotional connections to inequality, LGBTIQ violence and experiences of isolation and exclusion that he had made in the first two sessions. Furthermore, fear and a strong avoidance of conflict appeared to have overridden his engagement with his role as a teacher, whereby he had begun to see himself as a social figure, as opposed to a neutral conduit of knowledge. Jack’s response was an interesting enactment of hegemonic masculinity, highlighting the relationship between masculinity and fear. In this way, as there are varying degrees of subscription to masculine ideology, there are varying degrees to which people will feel comfortable deviating from masculine ideology (Benjamin, 2012). In discussions and reflections where masculinity was being analysed in a safe space, Jack had been able to expand his mind beyond the constraint of the ideology. However, once he no longer felt safe, the disruption of the masculine order seemed insurmountable to him;
Which teacher out there is going to introduce a novel which is about a male-male relationship? Can you imagine?

Jack’s other comment regarding his “happy class” may have demonstrated Gramsci’s (1971) conception of hegemony, whereby he assumed that his class was happier when maintaining the status quo. This was an interesting comment in light of Jack’s previous empathic engagement, in which he had observed that LGBTIQ students must “feel like they’re going against the law”, suggesting that perhaps Jack, whilst engaged, may not have been committed to enacting his engagement in his class. Through a lens of social justice education literature, the notion of a “happy class” may also have demonstrated the powerful influence of neo-liberalism, whereby teachers prioritise analytical thinking over critical engagement, and whereby risk management is prioritised as intellectualism (Shannon, 2016; Smyth, 2011). In this way, by minimising the risk of upsetting or disrupting a class, the teacher is seen as doing their job properly. Furthermore, the academic, rather than social, curriculum is prioritised, and students are only expected to be able to perform textual analysis, without extending these skills to their own experiences of social oppression (North, 2009). Neo-liberal ideals appeared to be a comfortable alternative for teachers like Jack who would rather not confront their discomfort or label themselves as advocate for fear of repercussions. Again, in my reflective journal I questioned whether Jack’s school climate played a role in supporting this barrier;

Does his school allow his fear to thrive? He doesn’t seem to be challenged by the environment in the same way that many of the others are. (Researcher Journal, Workshop 4)

As I had already established Jack’s role as a teacher within an institution which did not openly define LGBTIQ violence as an issue through policy, in light of his responses to the scenario, it seemed important to explore wellbeing policy of Jack’s school in greater detail. Regarding Jack’s school policy, there were two aspects of significance beyond the lack of specification of LGBTIQ students and staff. The first significant feature was the explicit focus on risk minimisation, listing this as a goal of the policy. Marsten (2015) and Robinson et al., (2012) have all criticised the narrow focus of risk minimisation and individual acts of violence, as it does not attend to the underlying ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity which are seen as creating the climate for homophobic violence. Risk minimisation is also indicative of neo-liberal influences, which as stated above, privilege risk assessment and analytical thinking over critical analysis and critical thinking. If Jack hadn’t reported observing violence at his school, then it would make sense that this climate of attending to individual acts and minimising risk would lead to him to believe that heteronormativity and masculinity didn’t impact his students, however, as addressed in
the previous chapter, he acknowledged that this violence occurred in the school environment. Instead, as he has observed the issue and has connected the violence to broader themes, this policy may have enabled Jack to avoid confronting the issue.

Furthermore, the second significant factor of Jack’s school’s wellbeing policy is the statement regarding the appointment of an Equal Opportunities Officer, whose job was to disseminate literature and attend to issues of diversity and inclusivity. Whilst this is seemingly a positive step towards equality, as I discussed in Chapter 8, it has also provided Jack with another way of avoiding his fear of change and avoiding confrontation. Jack demonstrated that he had previously been comfortable categorically referring students to wellbeing officers instead of managing violence himself. Whilst he had made progress regarding his engagement with his role as a teacher, it appears that his fear response may have overwhelmed his newer and less comfortable sense of obligation; based on his school policy, I would also suggest that his school climate allows him this retreat to the comfortable and known. Again, this analysis links teachers and schools, not in a means-end or causal manner, but rather by demonstrating the dynamics of power addressed by Fullan (1993), in which teacher and school can potentially facilitate change in one another, and in which teacher and school can potentially inhibit change in one another.

The transparency of Jack’s fear response prompted reflections from other group members who up until that point, had only considered their role as social actors, without attention to personal risk. When asked how fear would play a part in their commitment to LGBTIQ equality, several teachers commented on the fear of association. Rachel stated that her perception of advocacy risk is that she’d be “pulled into that same whirlpool of victim” as the person she would be advocating for;

You get scooped in to that negativity and social isolation.

Rachel has observed the fear of association which potentially could limit the engagement or commitment of potential advocates. Amy made similar assertions, stating that there are potentially negative social consequences associated with advocating for LGBTIQ equality;

Being prepared to maybe lose your position in society, or even with the group of people around you.

Amy’s statement highlighted the social risks of advocacy, and opened up the dialogue for discussions regarding the specific risks for teachers. Amy’s statement connected to Christopher’s thoughts regarding the influence of the community, specifically the parents, on curriculum decisions, highlighting the
parents as potential barriers to change. This observation is consistent with Shannon’s (2016) notions of neo-liberal impacts on risk and the relegation of sexual education to the home environment. For Shannon (2016), this impact inhibited critical awareness of LGBTIQ inequality as well as attempts to provide educative spaces regarding sexual difference and the nature and impact of sexual ideologies. Furthermore, the work of Shannon (2016) also criticised the relegation of sexual education to the domains of Physical and Health Education in Australia, concerns echoed by Jessica, Rachel and Amy who each explored the role of other subjects, specifically English, in social education regarding relationships.

Freire (1968) wrote that fears must be acknowledged if they are to appear surmountable, however in his later work regarding the role of teachers, he was more authoritative regarding the need to overcome fear of advocacy and fear of change agency (1998). Whilst Freire’s (1998) assertions may attend to the role of risk management in school-based equality measures and the role of fear in diminishing teacher motivation for change, he does not provide strategies or suggestions for how teachers should overcome their fears. To this end, I turned to theories of critical literacy, as informed by North (2009), which offer a range of creative pedagogical strategies in which to engage students in social justice education and critical engagement and enactment in their environments. Specifically, I used the scenarios of inequality and homophobia in order to explore the barriers for my group of teachers, but also to present opportunities for the teachers to explore their commitment in a hypothetical sense by planning for action, before attempting to enact their new understandings in the classroom and wider school environment. The following section addresses Jack’s engagement with his fear as well as his progress in overcoming this significant barrier to commitment.

**Engaging Fear**

Jack’s responses to the scenario regarding the introduction of an LGBTIQ themed text also led me to reflect on my earlier analysis of his interpolation within masculine ideology. Whilst Jack had maintained that he had not had exposure to diverse gender and sexuality role models, his statements regarding the need for a happy class and his alignment with comfortability suggested that perhaps his beliefs were, in part, shaped by fear as well as a lack of exposure. Whilst this is most likely true of a lot of interpellated individuals, it became significant when Jack’s fear began to interfere with his commitment to LGBTIQ advocacy. Jack couldn’t see the purpose of disrupting the students’ normality;

They can connect. This is tradition, this is what they see as normality. Why would I want to come along and say ‘boys and girls, let’s do something different’?
Again, this reluctance to actually act demonstrated a remarkable fear of confrontation, of change and of his role in equality. I asked Jack where he believed this fear to have developed, and he said that he has always had discomfort with “differences of opinion” and that this discomfort was a justification for not “opening up the worm can”. These statements demonstrated that whilst Jack may have engaged with his role in LGBTIQ equality in schools, his fear ran at such a deep level as to overwhelm his commitment to act upon his engagement.

Jack expressed similar fear when reflecting on challenging his school leader. This response was in relation to the second scenario which described a Principal asking a colleague to conceal their LGBTIQ identity from other colleagues and student. When asked how he would respond, Jack had a strong reaction to this question, and the following interaction occurred;

Matt: How would you respond? Would you support your colleague and challenge your leader?

Jack: Keep my mouth shut, that’s what I’d do. If you have enough pressure, you may well end up changing your own value system.

This statement again demonstrated a strong reaction to fear, in this case a fear of change. Jack has demonstrated the self-regulatory power of Gramsci’s (1971) conceptions of hegemonic dominance, and Smyth’s (2011) descriptions of the neo-liberal apolitical teacher. In this situation, Jack has chosen silence over action in order to maintain the status quo. For Jack, fear overwhelmed his sense of advocacy and he went on to state that the Principal probably acted for the “greater good”. This again demonstrates the willingness that hegemonically active consent is dependent upon (Gross, 2011), as well as reinforced Jack’s intimate relationship with fear and conflict. This consent dramatically impacted Jack’s commitment to managing violence through challenging his leaders, however despite the strength of his assertions, across the research process, Jack began to demonstrate increasing commitment through the overcoming of some of his fear.

**Overcoming Fear**

The exposure to alternative points of view, the validation and contextualisation of fear within theory or even just the space to reflect and think seemingly had a catalytic impact on Jack. In response to the scenario regarding the introduction of an LGBTIQ themed novel into a classroom, both Amy and Rachel articulated counterhegemonic sentiments regarding how they would act in this situation;

Rachel: I might challenge them to think about, just to notice it.
Amy: I’d definitely get them to justify why they’ve chosen those books anyway.

Given their level of engagement, both with LGBTIQ inequality and their roles as teachers of equality, these responses were not surprising or unexpected. However, what was surprising was the way in which Jack listened to these comments, remaining relatively silent during this part of the discussion instead of challenging these alternative points of view. Following this session, through the analysed passage, I contextualised Jack’s fears within Freire’s (1968; 1998) thoughts regarding the role of the teacher;

Freire acknowledged that fighting for change is associated with a great deal of fear, but that fear isn’t the end of the line. It is a part of the process, not the end of the process. (Jack’s analysed passage, Workshop 4).

I was sure to validate Jack’s fears as opposed to challenging them, as my intention was to help him realise that he can think and act beyond fear. To this end, my comments were ethical as I was open to Jack’s challenges, and I did not shame him for his resistance to change.

When Jack reappeared in Session 5, following the discussion on risk in Session 4, he presented as particularly interested in his school’s lack of policy to support LGBTIQ students, having never really considered the importance of policy before the group sessions;

At my school, the concept of policy is not reiterated or reflected upon. Jack stated that he has begun to observe the minimal role that wellbeing policy plays in the running of his school, through his conversations with teachers and his Principal. By the end of session 5, Jack was consistently discussing his encouragement of students to treat and interact with everyone “with dignity and respect and not factor in who or how they are”, and he believed that these values should be formalised in a policy;

I believe that clearer policy is required at a school level.

This statement demonstrated Jack’s commitment to managing violence as he had accepted his role in change, and acknowledged the supports required from school for teachers to embrace and enact this role. In the final session, Jack continued to demonstrate this commitment through direct challenges to his colleagues and school leaders. Jack stated that he had brought the gap in wellbeing policy to his Principal’s attention, demonstrating both reflection and action, and an enactment of his awareness regarding the importance of visibility and safety for his LGBTIQ students;
Well to sum it up nicely, my staff, when I queried them about the policy and this sort of stuff, care factor is zero, interest level is zero.

This action occurred in stark contrast to his previous assertions regarding the power of the Principal. Whilst Jack had earlier stated that the school was organised the way it was for a good reason, a clear example of hegemonically influenced thinking, Jack was able to demonstrate counterhegemonic thought, indicating that he had either become more critical through awareness of LGBTIQ inequality, or else he had become more critical by making decisions based on values and not fear. Jack was able to share his frustrations with the group, as he stated that his school leadership team was not interested in wellbeing policy, and was more concerned with collecting data and receiving funding;

They’re all concerned with their own agendas. Especially the people at the top. They’re concerned with building another professional development team to look at how we can drive the school culture, drive the curriculum. They’re big on ‘let’s collect data’, ‘let’s get what’s free’.

These descriptions potentially demonstrated the impact of neo-liberal ideology on Jack’s school, as Jack has observed a focus on what Apple (2013) regarded as measurability, as schools aim to demonstrate their institutional efficacy. Despite these influences, Jack’s frustration with the system demonstrated his commitment to change by attempting to manage violence with policy.

As well as his commitment to policy, Jack’s final reflective writing piece also provided some insight into his more committed role of advocate with his students. Jack stated in his writing;

I am more alert, aware and more sensitive to students.

Jack referenced his “awareness” several times throughout the later reflections, a significant term in his context as it is precisely what he was struggling with when he began the project. Jack had openly stated that he struggled with ideas around gender and sexual orientation deviating from the norm as he had only really ever experienced, or at a minimum registered, the people around him living their lives within belief systems. These reflections demonstrated significant changes in Jack, as he began the program with the idea that alertness, awareness and sensitivity were features of the wellbeing team, not of a mathematics teacher; in this way, the action research process played a significant role in supporting these changes.

The group process supported Jack’s changes through exposure to alternative perspectives, validation of fears and encouragement to change. I have discussed the notion of validation and encouragement, and
Jack’s reflective writing served as evidence of his growing comfort with challenging his existing views. Jack had struggled with barriers regarding masculinity and emotionality, whereby, as Brookfield (2012) has stated, stoicism was privileged over emotional expression. The reflective writing allowed Jack to communicate his progress without making himself vulnerable to the group, and in his final reflective piece, he commented the following;

I have realised that I have become more empathetic and understanding towards minority groups and individuals.

This statement reflects the observed changes in Jack throughout the process, and lends weight to the idea that his barrier was more about releasing his fear than just being exposed to diverse populations, though the latter certainly played a part. To this end, action research, a change methodology, supported these changes by providing Jack with a space to reflect and act in ways he may not have otherwise done. Through his writing, Jack highlighted the importance of his attendance at the sessions, stating that hearing what his peers had to say prompted his own reflection on aspects of his world that had gone previously unquestioned. When asked to detail what he believed to have supported changes in his beliefs and behaviours, Jack commented the following;

These groups. The discussions, questions and stories from people in these groups.

In this regard, the space to explore different views in a nurturing environment had a catalytic impact on both the reflective and active aspects of his social agency, an impact which has been similarly reflected in the work of Hanson (2013) and Reason & Bradbury (2008). Jack’s story extended research by Finnessy (2016) and Malins (2015) who were able to record teacher perspectives regarding fear, but whose research did little to influence changes in teachers. Again, this points to the significance of change pedagogies, in this case action research, in helping teachers advocate for LGBTIQ equality, by acknowledging the barriers which stand in their way. Jack’s commitment to emotional expression, even to himself, opened up avenues of reflective possibilities regarding his values, and these will be discussed in Chapter 10 in the context of commitment through teacher role modelling.

This section, though primarily focused on Jack, has explored the various ways several group members interacted with fear in the context of committing to advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality. Fear was presented as a significant barrier to commitment for Jack, and that overcoming this barrier is necessary to fully commit to the role of change agent. Whilst Rachel and Amy were able to process their fear of advocacy, for Jack, fear seemed to overwhelm his commitment to equality by disrupting his engagement.
in inequality for LGBTIQ students in schools, instead revealing deeper hegemonic consent and a willingness to avoid confrontation and to maintain the status quo. This was demonstrated through two scenarios which gave the participants space to plan for action against inequality, and through which Jack stated that he would prefer to remain silent. Jack began to commit to improving his school policy and to improving his interactions with his students, demonstrating a deeper commitment to managing violence through visibility and support. In this way, the group process supported Jack to act on his new awareness of inequality in schools, extending his engagement to help him be more of a figure of equality in his school environment.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the teachers' commitment to advocacy for LGBTIQ students by managing violence. Based on the perspectives of the teachers as well as changes in teacher behaviour, working in the role of advocate for LGBTIQ people involves managing this violence by challenging heteronorms and hierarchies of masculinity by way of challenging students, colleagues and leaders. Connected to this action of challenging is the teacher value of openness, through which Amy was able to demonstrate openness within her classroom and within herself. Fear was also addressed as a significant barrier to commitment, whereby Jack's actions were inhibited despite his engagement. What became evident was the efficacy of action research in helping Jack overcome this barrier, as well as influencing change in Amy's openness and for the other teachers, the various ways in which they expressed motivation and action for managing violence towards LGBTIQ in their schools.

This chapter has highlighted the connections between individual teachers and their school climates, through both the motivation and reluctance to pursue change; the experiences of Amy and Jack in particular, have demonstrated the influence of teachers within schools. Running as an undercurrent throughout the discussion of managing LGBTIQ violence was the concept of values driving change and I will continue this idea in the following chapter in a discussion of committing to advocacy through teacher modelling.
Chapter 10

Commitment through Modelling

I even took the trouble to apologise again and say 'I humbly apologise and I should be more respectful'. It was a first for me. (Jack, Workshop 6)

The teachers balanced their commitment to managing LGBTIQ violence by exploring and enacting the importance of modelling change. Modelling in this context, was defined as the enacting of desired ways of viewing the world, desired ways of interacting with the world and indeed desired ways of being in the world. The above quote provides a seemingly simple example of Jack's modelling of compassion and humility and whilst simple, this action spoke volumes regarding the changes in the way he viewed the LGBTIQ community and their struggles in society.
In Chapter 9, I focussed on various ways in which the teachers demonstrated commitment to their role as social advocates by managing existing ideological violence through both identification of inequality and action on behalf of LGBTIQ students. Whilst not explicitly stated, running through all of the committed actions of the teachers was the notion of modelling alternatives to violence, which also run through the core of social justice education research and critical theory (Brookfield, 2005; Hooks, 2013; Noregua, 2008). Hooks (2013) and Noregua (2008) have argued that the goals of social justice education are to right the wrongs of social inequality through the development of critical engagement and critical awareness in students. In line with this mission statement, a large part of critical, as opposed to analytical, awareness involves an alignment and connection with values, and most significantly, modelling these values to others (Brookfield, 2012). Reason & Bradbury (2008) have stated that emancipatory action research is defined by its orientation to values, and the reflective and active space was designed to allow teachers a chance to explore their own sense of equality, fairness, justice and compassion before modelling these values for their own students.

To this end, this chapter explores modelling through the modelling of teacher values, and specifically, the modelling of equality. Despite alignments to morality, Viray & Nash (2014) and Kim (2013) have also highlighted the challenges of social justice advocacy and the navigation of anger, with anger presenting as a barrier to a teacher’s ability to model their values. This chapter explores both the nature of anger in education and the navigation of anger through reflection and action in the context of modelling values. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the role of action research, critical frameworks and teacher perspectives in exploring this significant theme, before introducing these as the main discussion point of the concluding chapter.

**Introducing Modelling through Values**

Amidst the discussions and actions around change, the theme of values, and the importance of modelling values, emerged as a prominent feature of the research process. For the teachers, the concept of values in the action research process served as a point of discussion, as motivation for reflection and as a catalyst for change. Whilst earlier sessions had discussed concepts relating to values, it wasn’t until later in the process that the teachers overtly explored the concept of values. To this end, I will first present the discussion on values, before exploring theoretical modelling and actual change.

In Session 5, I problem posed values with the group, asking them to reflect on what they believed a value in teaching to be. The following interaction occurred:
Amy: A value is typically positive, whereas beliefs can be very negative and detrimental.

Matt: So what are the values being attended to?

Rachel: Well I think compassion is probably not being attended to by everyone.

Matt: Is equality a value?

Christopher: I think it should be.

Amy: It should be.

Rachel: Yeah it should be.

This discussion revealed the extent to which the teachers had reflected on this topic before, and Amy acknowledged that the concept of values was something she had never considered;

My mind is blown. It's like a riddle going through my head. Value. Belief. I'd never even really thought about the two so much. I almost thought they were interchangeable but I'm realising that they're not.

By the end of the discussion, she was able to express her value of compassion, of respect and of equality and to this end, Amy's reflections align with the values espoused by both Marcuse (1964) and Hytten (2015) explored in Chapter 3. Whilst Marcuse (1964) framed values as broad, social ways of bringing people together, Hytten (2015) specified the values of a teacher, referring to qualities such as openness and sensitivity as virtues; in this context, equality can be considered both a social value, as well as a teacher virtue, as it is necessary at both the levels of social equality and equality within school environments. With these definitions in mind, I have used the terms value and virtue interchangeably, as this study was focussed on the values of teachers.

Referring back to the quoted interaction above, interestingly, in Chapter 9, Amy had engaged with these values without having consciously reflected on her moral position, stating that she would have to challenge her leaders and demonstrating her ability to respectfully challenge her students. Amy was open to connecting with her values and her teacher virtues, and in part, had already enacted them in her classroom. A specific example of Amy's virtuous teaching occurred when she decided, instead of disciplining a student for homophobic comments, to enter into a class discussion around homophobia and heteronormativity. Whilst I presented this as managing existing violence towards LGBTIQ equality as she had discussed the event in the context of challenging homophobia, this was simultaneously an act
of modelling virtues of understanding and compassion as Amy didn’t shame the student for their beliefs; she encouraged them to reflect on their beliefs.

The conscious reflection in the group discussion extended this openness, by allowing her to identify what she values, which according to Hytten (2015), could potentially help her navigate resistance and apathy in the future. Furthermore, Amy's reflections in this part of the process allowed her to contextualise past observations and actions within her values system whilst simultaneously planning for further action in class; this exposed the significance of action research in creating changes which will be further addressed in the section on enacting equality.

Similarly, Christopher was able to reflect on his idea of teacher values;

Matt: I was just going to ask what do you think are your values?

Christopher: Respect.

Like Amy, Christopher espoused the importance of these values, and had previously demonstrated his engagement when he declared it his duty to challenge his colleague. This became a particularly salient issue for Christopher, as discussed in the previous chapter, he had begun to notice discrepancies between teacher performance in workshops on LGBTIQ inclusivity and their enactment of masculine hegemony in the staffroom.

Whilst Christopher had successfully reflected upon what he values in his teaching, Rachel's experience in the group explored the targeted content of values in both reflective and active capacities. Rachel stated that challenging oppression should occur at all levels of the self, noting the differences between focussing on a specific social issue such as gender inequality, and focussing on a value of inclusion;

I would think that if you’re taking a stand against any kind of intolerance in favour of inclusion and respect, then that could infuse everything. It would be extra work, but I guess there’s no reason why you couldn’t have ‘culture days’ and whatever days, or just have a really overt expression of pluralism.

For Rachel, a value was something that transcended discrete categories of social inequality and social domination; Rachel felt that inclusion is inclusion. This statement is consistent with Apple’s (2013) notion of “decentred unities” (p. 13), through which he focussed on the facets of social oppression and social transformation which unite various marginalised groups, as opposed to focussing on the aspects which divide them. For Apple (2013), neo-liberal agendas divide marginalised groups by creating
tensions between them as equality agendas are seen as competing for the finite resources available from the dominant group. Apple (2013) has argued that critical researchers must look at the similarities between marginalised groups, not the differences, uniting classes, races, genders and sexual identities through their similar experiences of oppression in society. This idea affirms Althusser’s (1984) idea that functionally, all ideologies work in the same way and this extended existing literature regarding the role of teachers in supporting LGBTIQ students (Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012); that critical teachers will be advocates for any social inequality manifesting in their class, not specifically sexual orientation.

With regards to action, Rachel was able to share an experience she had with a colleague at school. Rachel stated that her colleague was not focussed on values, but rather on the beliefs around efficiency and performance with regards to the Year 9 program in which they had both been teaching:

> It’s her first year teaching in the program and it’s my fourth year teaching in it and I guess over the four year, I deeply believe in the work that we do and a lot of the value is not quantifiable.

Rachel explained that her colleague was very focussed on streamlining, data crunching and other economic belief systems which “seek to take the human out of the equation”. These observations are consistent with Shannon (2016), Hursh (2009) and Smyth’s (2011) commentary regarding neo-liberalism in schools, whereby teachers become more results focussed and less political in their social agendas. Rachel recognised that claiming values for the purpose of economics, efficiency and ultimately, ideology, “strips them of their core emotional aspect”, a line of thought consistent with Smyth’s (2011) interpretation of the impact of neo-liberal ideals on the role of the teacher; that a good teacher is an apolitical one. Rachel reinforced her values of authenticity and compassion, highlighting the importance of human relations in the decisions we make on a daily basis.

In this example, Rachel had been able to demonstrate a deep reflection on her values, how they operate in society as well as the harmful impact of beliefs masquerading as values. Rachel also discussed the importance of community building and risk taking as desirable results of engaging with the values of understanding and perspective taking;

> And they’re able to build community, and they’re able to take risks in this safe environment. She just says ‘it’s not enough for me to think about the core values because I just need to know what they want, what they expect.
For Rachel’s colleague, the core values were trumped by the expectations and demands of results. Rachel stated that her colleague was focussed on what was required, and what were the measurable results of the program, and whilst Rachel acknowledged that these are acceptable realities of developing a program within a school, she held firm that these should not be the basis of these programs;

I don’t think it’s in the production of their work, I think it’s the person they become, or have the potential to become.

Rachel stated that she had had discussions with her colleague based around these ideals, however that these had “fallen on deaf ears”. One issue with Rachel’s approach was her use of a binary; that a program should either explore values or beliefs. An understanding of social ideologies is necessary to avoid blaming an individual for the beliefs they have internalised, and Rachel could have also engaged in her value of compassion for her colleague’s potentially neo-liberal beliefs around performance, success and results, and potentially altered her approach. Whilst in this study I have differentiated beliefs and values, I have also argued for the balance between managing existing beliefs whilst modelling for the future and for Rachel, a more balanced approach may have been more engaging for her colleague.

Furthermore, whilst Rachel was criticising her colleague for not espousing the value of compassion and understanding, she neglected to show compassion and understanding for her colleague beyond analytical thinking regarding her colleague’s motivation. Rachel was frustrated with her colleague’s attitude, and in her analysed passage, I suggested that she think about the various pressures her colleague may be under or to contextualise what she knows about her colleague within social hierarchies of power. Finally, without information to help this contextualisation, my final suggestion was for Rachel to simply ask her colleague why she thought performance was so important, engaging in problem posing whereby her colleague was complicit in the production of the response. The work of Meyer et al., (2016) suggested that equality for LGBTIQ students in schools requires teachers modelling equality for other teachers. In this way, Rachel could potentially prompt reflection in her colleague in the same way that this research had prompted reflection in Rachel. Whilst this specific action wasn’t again addressed in the research process, Rachel demonstrated change regarding her ability to prioritise her modelling of equality above her anger at other people’s beliefs, and this will be a focus point of the later section regarding the interactions between modelling and anger.
This section has introduced the theme of teacher values in advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality and beyond. Amy, Christopher and Rachel reflected on their own values, highlighting the importance of respect, compassion, understanding and authenticity. Rachel went further, providing an example where she believed she had acted virtuously, however her lack of compassion for her colleague suggested that perhaps for Rachel, at this stage of the process, values were still context dependent, and not infused into all reflections and actions. Consistent with Marcuse (1964), Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015), several participants highlighted the importance of equality in teaching practice, and therefore teacher commitment to advocacy. Whilst this section didn’t discuss any specific committed actions, the teachers had demonstrated more overt connections to their values, which they continued to explore through the idea of modelling equality in their classrooms and beyond.

Modelling Equality

The value of equality was significant to the study, as a discussion point for the teachers and as a series of actions which demonstrated their commitment to advocacy. This section outlines the move from discussions and hypothetical scenarios to real change and action in the classroom. Rachel and Christopher initially discussed equality through the concept of celebration;

Things that fall outside of heteronormativity don’t get celebrated loudly. We always hear about the babies and engagements at staff meetings, and I don’t know why we’ve never heard about someone’s commitment ceremony.

Rachel noticed that despite the seemingly progressive nature of her school environment, there remained a discrepancy to the way in which her faculty “totally celebrate every single kind of life cycle event in a hetero context”, and the lack of LGBTIQ colleagues who are celebrated or even open about their sexual identity. Rachel stated that she is sure there are big life events for these teachers as well, and that they should be celebrated. In this context Rachel used her more compassion-based emotional reactions to discuss and engage in social inequality. Rachel’s comment has also demonstrated a more critical interpretation of equality, whereby relationships do not have to resemble heterosexual relationships in order to be worthy of celebration. Rachel referred specifically to a “commitment ceremony”, thereby modelling equality by framing this ceremony as being just as significant as a wedding, a ceremony denied to LGBTIQ Australians at present.

Whilst given the information provided by Rachel, it is unclear as to whether LGBTIQ couples would be equally celebrated if that had a baby, Rachel defined this life event in a heterosexual context. If this is
Rachel’s experience at work, then her views can be considered counterhegemonic as she has challenged the expected silencing or delegitimising of alternative sexual identities which has been reported throughout the literature (Dragowski et al., 2015; Mary & Hillier, 2012; Vega et al., 2012). These reflections and comments seemingly established a course of action for Rachel, and I will continue this discussion when examining changes in her pedagogical approaches later in this section. More specifically, when referring to a Principal's right to silence their LGBTIQ staff, Jack challenged Rachel’s notions of celebration by introducing the notion of the “greater good”. Rachel viewed celebrating sexual diversity as a social imperative, whereas Jack viewed such a challenge to heteronormativity as being potentially against the best interests of society;

Jack: But there’s also a greater good.

Rachel: But what greater good?

Christopher: In this instance it doesn’t sound like the greater good. It sounds like one individual’s opinion.

Jack displayed some hegemonic viewpoints, stating that the Principal may make decisions for a greater good that teachers do not understand, however, Christopher responded that one person’s opinion cannot represent the greater moral good. For Christopher, the moral imperative of equality was the greater good, and that anything else was adhering to ideology, to risk or to fear. Rachel affirmed this, stating that if there is a greater good, it models pluralism and openness;

Rachel: I think the greater good is that you are creating a school that models pluralism and…

Christopher: Openness.

Whilst this discussion did not involve any direct commitment through the action of modelling, it expanded the discourse on teacher virtues by giving teachers a space to contextualise their own values within their school environment; Christopher and Rachel were able to apply values of equality to their expectations of a Principal's behaviour. Therefore, whilst Hytten (2015) had focused on social justice educators in the classroom, Rachel and Christopher highlighted the importance of equality in leadership as well. Whilst these reflections were important, I also wanted to encourage commitment from the teachers, and to this end, I asked the group to envision an equal classroom.
Envisioning Equality

In order to move from engagement to commitment, the teacher explored theoretical scenarios envisioning what equality could look like in their classrooms. Brookfield (2005) has stated that critical theory is defined by a researcher's ability to envision an alternative way of being and Freire (1999) has in fact stated that hopefulness is inspired in social justice educators not just by deconstructing existing oppression, but by reconstructing an alternative, more equal future. In the context of action research, this practice was part of the planning for action stage, as the teachers prepared to make changes in their own school environments, and prepared to commit to advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality. Rachel envisioned equality through policy and through curriculum and regarding the scenario of the Principal and the LGBTIQ teacher, Rachel made the following assertion;

But then there needs to be a policy across the entire school, that nobody discusses their personal lives. Either no one discusses their personal lives, not their kids, not their marriage, not their pets. The staffroom’s going to be talking about nothing.

Whilst this is a seemingly simplistic solution, it does highlight the inequality with which policy can be applied in schools, and represented a form of modelling as Rachel showed a way in which everyone can be treated equally. Rachel stated that this kind of policy would engender outrage amongst many staff members, which would be a discussion point regarding the silence with which LGBTIQ people are often forced to live their lives. In the context of Kumashiro's (2009) work, this inversion could create a discomfort and potentially prompt cognitive and empathic responses in non-LGBTIQ teachers. Through Gramsci (1971) or Gross’ (2011) critical lens, this is the essence of counterhegemony as it completely upends heteronormative hierarchies by inflicting the same violence of exclusion and silence on heterosexuals. Despite this, the suggestion is perhaps too simplistic, and doesn’t attend to teacher ethics or the nuances with which social justice education interacts with the concept of equality. Simply changing the policy neglects to contextualise the inequality within the teachers' own experiences, which Hooks (2013) and Hytten (2015) have argued may lead to resistance. Instead, Rachel demonstrated a commitment to a more sophisticated notion of equality through her envisioned curriculum which modelled equality through the exploration of a variety of equal relationships.

As stated above, Rachel was tasked with envisioning a curriculum of equality. Following on from her discussions around policy, I asked her to think about a curriculum which would not only be counterhegemonic, but in the context of enacting her virtues of openness, a curriculum which would be
engaging. To this end, Rachel was able to propose a curriculum regarding education around relationships. Rachel stated that she would like to teach a semester long unit called ‘representations of relationships’, exploring several important questions such as “what are relationships?”, “what are romantic relationships?”, “what is friendship?” and “what is family and how does it play out in different contexts?”. Rachel explored the way that a teacher could introduce the broader topic of a relationship before narrowing it down and situating diversity. Whilst the work of Griffin et al., (2004) suggested the adoption of broader themes in the context of safety, Rachel seemingly envisioned a course which was engaging as well as challenging. By starting with the students’ understanding of the world, Hooks (2013) has argued that students can personalise the cause, and that critical engagement is fostered through contextualising student experiences within broader theory. Christopher, however, was challenged by the concept of envisioning equality and this challenge continued in his attempts to enact it in his classroom.

In response to the first scenario in which the participants were asked to consider introducing an LGBTIQ themed book into the English curriculum, Christopher shared his difficulties envisioning equality;

I honestly, probably wouldn’t’ immediately notice that. If students were suggesting these novels, I wouldn’t look at the list and immediately see that there’s a lack of those relationships within them.

Christopher acknowledged that he wouldn’t have immediately noticed the absence of LGBTIQ relationships in the existing curriculum, rather that he would be excited that students were having ideas about their own reading list in the first place. Christopher discussed the demands of teaching, and how engagement in the curriculum can so easily take precedence over engagement in society, and acknowledged that his reluctance to introduce a new text stemmed from the threat of disrupting academic pursuits;

Like my Year 9 class. If it’s working, I don’t want to upset that working. In terms of those three questions in terms of what I would do, what I wouldn’t do and what I’d like to do, because you’re never just teaching one student, you’re teaching a class.

These comments were interesting given the generally supportive climate of Christopher’s school which he had discussed in earlier sessions. I examined his school policy more closely, and saw explicit links between wellbeing and academic success;
Individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

Whilst the impact of wellbeing on academic success has been discussed by Pearson et al., (2007) and Kosciw et al., (2013), Christopher’s wellbeing policy made no mention of broader ideology or the impact of heteronormative violence on identity or attachment. I reflected that perhaps he was under a great deal of academic pressure, and his reflective writing certainly demonstrated this. When asked of any changes Christopher had made with regards to LGBTIQ inequality, he responded the following;

**Reflective Writing Question:** Have you noticed any changes in your practice regarding beliefs and behaviours around sexual orientation?

Christopher: I have become tighter with my homework deadlines.

Unfortunately, as the year was progressing and the workload was increasing, it appeared that Christopher was finding it more and more difficult to find cognitive, emotional and curriculum space for LGBTIQ inequality. Christopher’s statements may have reflected the neo-liberal impact of results-focussed ideology and teaching for testing (Smyth, 2011). According to Smyth (2011) and Hursh (2009), through this ideology, learning is tailored to individual outcomes, and social justice education is not prioritized and in this way, the competing demands and workloads for the teachers may have impacted Christopher’s emotional and cognitive availability to commit to modelling equality. Whilst there are links between academic outcomes and wellbeing, it is possible that Christopher may have viewed wellbeing as something to be considered once academic success had been achieved, and not a simultaneously important consideration of teaching. Despite these challenges, several teachers were able to demonstrate their commitment by moving from envisioning the modelling of equality to actually enacting equality in their schools.

**Enacting Equality**

Having discussed the need for equality and certain visions of equality, ultimately the teachers demonstrated commitment to challenging LGBTIQ inequality through the enactment of equality. Sarah demonstrated her commitment through the organising of a school event which modelled the equality of sexual identities for the whole school. Sarah discussed the establishment of a “Pride Day” at her school, an accomplishment of which she was most proud, but also an event which her school approved;
We had a whole week of that, every morning each year level were doing different activities, and on the Friday we had ‘Pride Day’. Everyone in the school was encouraged to wear bright colours and we sold pancakes and milkshakes and raised enough money, and we made the rainbow pedestrian crossing out the front.

Sarah’s event served to increase the visibility of LGBTIQ people in her school, and she did this through a celebration of difference as opposed to an analysis of violence. Dean (2012) has criticised inclusive measures which focus on the negative outcomes of inequality, stating that it denies marginalised groups their sense of agency in their own fight for change. Sarah’s celebratory week also spoke to social justice education definitions of equality, whereby Riggs & Due (2013) have stated that equality is not homogeneity and sameness, but rather that diverse people are treated equally as humans. In order to achieve this, visibility becomes an important factor and Shannon (2016) has commented on the rarity that LGBTIQ young people are presented with positive role models. To this end, Sarah’s event was counterhegemonic in its disruption of masculine hierarchies through the celebratory visibility of LGBTIQ people.

In addition to the celebratory aspect of the week, Sarah also detailed some classroom activities which took place, displaying initiative and insight into the cognitive and emotional traps of oppression. One example that is particularly worth discussing was called the “heterosexual quiz” which is made up of a list of questions that “some people think are ok to ask homosexual people”, but whereby the word ‘homosexual’ has been replace with the word ‘heterosexual’. This quiz was distributed to all classes, and Sarah provided examples of the questions including “when did you decide you were heterosexual?”, ‘what experience did you have that made you feel that you were heterosexual?’. This line of questioning challenged commonly-held beliefs of LGBTIQ difference as reported by Gray et al., (2016), and also provided students with an opportunity to empathise with the difficulties associated with being asked these questions about your life. From a critical lens, these questions were counterhegemonic as they disrupted the commonly-held normalcy of heterosexuality, and in the context of Hytten’s (2015) concerns, these questions can be considered ethical as they didn’t seek to shame the students for their lack of awareness. Furthermore, these questions modelled equality by prompting reflections on hierarchies without dictating a desired response and allowed students the cognitive and emotional freedom to contextualise their own experience within broader systems. Whilst this section has explored modelling on a whole-school level, the following section addresses the pedagogical changes in
Christopher, Jack and Rachel as they began to try different ways of modelling equality within their individual classrooms.

As discussed above, Christopher had begun to become preoccupied with the engagement of his students in the existing curriculum, and found it difficult to consider LGBTIQ inequality in some of his reflections. Following the exposure to Sarah’s reflections, however, I noticed some shifts in his reflective writing. Christopher again stated that for busy teachers, it’s easy “to get stuck in curriculum” and to not make links with either the “real world” or the future. This seemingly became a focus for Christopher as he began to experiment with equality pedagogy. In Session 4 he commented the following;

I have been thinking before responding to questions and thinking out loud.

Christopher stated that he was trying to take more time when difficult questions arise, highlighting the importance of reflecting on the deeper messages of social questions. Christopher also observed an improvement in the types of discussions he had with his colleagues, stating that he is “thinking out loud” in order to process the concepts he had encountered through education around social inequalities. Whilst it must be noted that these observations could have been recorded by Christopher in his reflective writing, he chose to share them during group discussion. This may have been, as discussed above, due to the collaborative nature of the group in which Chevalier & Buckles (2013) have commented that thoughts and ideas are readily available through the sharing of experiences by co-researchers. Furthermore, Christopher’s notion of thinking before responding in class demonstrated a connection with Hytten’s (2015) notion of ethical teaching through openness. By taking time to respond to resistance in a careful and considered way, Christopher could minimise the shaming of students who have not been exposed to sexual diversity or disruptions to masculine hierarchies. Finally, this practice demonstrated the enactment of his value of respect, as he considered each point of view without simply dismissing ideas which perpetuate heteronormative or masculine ideals.

In the context of the classroom, Christopher discussed his growing awareness regarding gendered language, reflecting on his previous use of “girls” and “boys” in order to refer to students;

I am slightly more aware of using gendered language in the classroom (e.g ‘you boys in the corner’) and using gender to arbitrarily divide groups (e.g boys on the right, girls on the left).

This observation also extended to the design of classroom activities, as he provided the example of having used gender in the past in order to arbitrarily divide the class for various learning tasks. In this
way, Christopher demonstrated an awareness that such divisions are never arbitrary, in line with both Freire (1999) and Gross' (2011) statements that education can never be neutral. Whether intentionally or not, these divisions perpetuate belief systems around gender difference (Coffey, 2001; Connell, 2009; Schippers, 2004). In a more general sense, Christopher was also able to address the idea of perspective taking, a form of cognitive empathy which Segal et al., (2011) have argued encourages students to engage in social issues instead of ignoring social issues. Mintz (2013) has argued that this type of pedagogical example can be an effective way to help students commit to change and to hypothesise and visualise more equitable futures for oppressed and oppressors alike. Through observation of his environment, Christopher was able to link his reflections regarding gender ideology with real action within his classroom. These actions demonstrated a commitment to modelling equality, as Christopher demonstrated to his class that he can interact with them without the use of gender labels, suggesting that they too can interact with each other in the same way. This change highlighted the significance of action research, as exploring either observation, reflection or action in isolation may not have yielded the same pedagogical developments; rather it was these stages working as one cycle.

Jack similarly modelled equality by focussing on activities and visibility. In a specific sense, in his writing, Jack was able to discuss how he had changed the seating arrangements in a class in order to minimise the gender divide that he had observed, and was able to discuss his use of mathematical problems which featured LGBTIQ people;

I’ve been attending to my seating arrangements in class to not reflect gender.

I’ve been using non-heterosexual examples in my mathematics problems.

This observation of gender in the classroom again links the discussion which took place in the groups with a real classroom environment. The nature of group discussion may have also guided his actions, as in Session 1, Rachel, Jessica and Amy had blatantly discussed the ways in which gender is arbitrarily divided in society;

Jessica: Gendered drinks.

Amy: And gardening gloves.

Rachel: Even the amount of extra money that women spend to buy razors. They’re essentially the same, but they’re marketed as pink.
These observations challenged Jack to think about the purpose of such divisions, and in a general sense, Jack reported being “less opinionated and more neutral” in how he responded to students and staff, as well as noticing a reduction in his confrontations. Jack stated that this was due to him being “more selective” in his responses, in an effort “to not possible offend anyone”. These comments are significant in the context of the observation component of action research, as Jack had observed his previous behaviour and manner of interacting with others. This is also significant in the context of reflection, as through his reflections, he had decided to change this behaviour.

Despite Jack’s efforts, there remained a prominent philosophical issue with his promotion of neutrality. According to Marcuse (1964), to be neutral is to allow the continuation and perpetuation of dominant belief systems, as true neutrality doesn’t exist. For Jack, based on topics of discussion in the groups, he had observed his ability to offend people, and chosen this as an aspect of himself that he would like to improve. However, an awareness of offending people is only a small part of the role of a social agent, and it may have indicated issues regarding the connection of education and observation components of the action research. This scenario may be indicative of observation that isn’t informed by critical reflection (Freire, 1968), as he noticed his behaviour and responded without necessarily connecting his behaviour to broader themes of masculine and heteronormative oppression. Jack observed the group and its discussions, however without his own reflection on the role of oppression, he has interpreted his behaviour as offensive, instead of oppressive. To this end, Jack’s response points to the difference between analytical reflective practice and critical reflective practice as outlined in Chapter 5, whereby analytical practice is focussed on how the world is and critical reflective practice is focussed on how the world could, and should, be. By being analytical, Jack may have been more influenced by his perceptions of how others in the group viewed him, rather than being aligned with his values about doing what is right. This exposes a limitation of group discussion, as I didn’t observe Jack’s interpretation until I was analysing the transcripts. At the time, the words “neutral” and “offense” escaped my attention as being critically significant, and instead I focused on his desire to improve his interactions.

In order to influence change, I used the analysed passages in order to expand Jack’s understanding of critical concepts around the dangers of neutrality; specifically, I reiterated the important role played by teachers in fighting for LGBTIQ equality;
Jack: My personal opinions shouldn’t really count. I shouldn’t be saying ‘yes it’s great that you are gay’, or ‘no, it’s bad that you are a gay person’. It’s not my place. I think my place is to promote neutrality and to promote understanding.

Matt: Marcuse discussed the dangers of being neutral, stating that neutrality means that existing beliefs will continue to thrive. In this context, even though it may appear risky, it is in fact your place to say ‘yes it’s great that you are gay’. (Jack’s analysed passage for Workshop 2)

Furthermore, regarding Hytten’s (2015) notions of ethical teaching, it is almost possible that Jack moved too far in the opposite direction to oppression. Instead of being filled with self-righteous indignation based on superior social awareness, the newness of Jack’s understandings may have made him feel uncomfortable addressing the issues, and therefore neutrality seemed a safer option. This would certainly be consistent with the rigidity and dichotomous thinking Jack had displayed when uncomfortable in the past and as discussed in Chapter 9. I will continue the discussion of Jack’s journey in the later section focusing on anger, as this seemed to be a particularly salient barrier for him. Below I continue the discussion regarding pedagogical enactment of equality through the changes implemented by Rachel.

In a similar vein to Jack, Rachel commented the following;

I have been trying to avoid using heteronormative relational examples.

As an English teacher, this provided Rachel with a platform to discuss other types of relationships. With regards to combatting gender norms, Rachel stated that she had begun to ask “everyone for heavy lifting help”, whereas in the past she had tended to select boys to assist her. Rachel also observed that she had been more aware of the language she had been using and had been engaging in more conversations based on the focus group. Whilst not enacting the curriculum she had envisioned, Rachel had begun to commit to modelling equality through more day-to-day examples of counterhegemony such as language.

Interestingly, Rachel was able to be consistent with her observations regarding gender norms outside of the classroom, and in her reflective writing, briefly stated that she had been trying to be more self-sufficient;

I’m trying to notice if I turn to a man for assistance. (Reflective Writing 2).
In this way, Rachel attempted to interrupt the perpetuation of gender stereotypes of men as strong and helpful and women as weak and helpless, as framed by Benjamin (2012) and Larsson et al (2011). Rachel identified her need to “notice” her behaviour, linking the role of awareness as a counterhegemonic act, as described by Gross (2011). In the context of the action research process, awareness worked by linking education and observation; through education Rachel became aware of gender roles in a theoretical sense, and through observation she became aware about how they impact her daily life. Whilst Benjamin's (2012) understanding of gender may still inextricably link her sense of feminine identity to masculinity, as she had consciously observed whether she asked men for help, though a limited piece of data, Rachel was seemingly finding ways to interrupt typical demonstrations of the masculine-feminine binary.

This section has explored the role of equality in commitment to LGBTIQ inequality through teacher modelling. Several teachers explored their ideas around equality coming from school leaders, before envisioning equal policy and equal curriculum. Christopher’s story highlighted the impact of a crowded curriculum and a focus on academic standards, however his eventual prioritisation of LGBTIQ inequality demonstrated the importance of collaboration and communal spaces in an action research group, as he was able to hear Sarah’s work at her school and apply it to his own classroom. Christopher, Jack and Rachel all demonstrated some pedagogical change in the context of equality, however both Jack and Rachel still had some challenges associated with frustration and anger which will be addressed in the following section.

**Anger and Modelling**

For several of the teachers, the theme of anger was a significant barrier to their commitment to LGBTIQ equality through modelling. Rachel and Jack both explored their relationship with anger, and the ways in which their own anger inhibited their ability to model their values. In order to overcome her anger, Rachel spent time reflecting on its nature and impact. In her initial interview, Rachel expressed her strong opinions regarding her role in change, highlighting her obligation to act on her outrage;

I think it’s about creating a classroom culture where the homework is not ‘gay’ and someone is not a ‘faggot’ for doing something stupid. So just really calling people out.

For Rachel, before commencing the research project, this “calling out” students when they casually used homophobic language, was associated with a level of aggression with which she was not entirely
comfortable. Rachel was able to observe the efficacy of such an approach, stating that she believed her aggression and anger may not have encouraged students to reflect on their behaviour;

Because I don’t think it was actually constructive, it just created a ‘she’s a crazy lady when I say gay’.

Rachel’s reflection was significant in the context of her changing perspectives, as she began to question her anger and how it helped her model equality for students subscribing to masculine ideology. Both Kim (2013) and Viray & Nash (2014) have stated that engagement though outrage, anger and aggression often leads to reactions of hostility, defensiveness and deflection, unfortunately diverting emotional and cognitive attention away from critical social reflection.

Rachel continued these initial reflections, hypothesising more compassionate ways of interacting with her students. In Session 3, responding to a specific question regarding the absence of LGBTIQ relationships in the English curriculum, Rachel highlighted the need for sensitivity when raising the issue with students, discussing the importance of not shaming students who sit within heteronormative belief systems;

You’d have to be sensitive about how you raise it, so they don’t feel like you’re shaming them when it’s something that probably is not their fault in any sense. They probably haven’t been exposed. The canon is very white, very male and very heteronormative. That’s the English canon.

Rachel’s comments touched on the issues associated with anger and outrage in advocacy and activism as well as Hytten’s (2015) notions of ethical social justice education and Taylor’s (2015) conceptualisation of teacher dispositions. Rachel’s approach involved the modulation of anger in order to avoid shaming students, acknowledging that interpellation is not their fault, and sensitively challenging them to consider alternative ways of being. Rachel’s discussion had raised an important question regarding the nature of activism which I reflected upon in my journal;

For some people, is it to express anger or to engage others in social transformation? (Researcher Journal, Workshop 6).

Contemporary thought highlights the role in compassion and understanding, even for those deemed oppressors (Kumashiro, 2016; Shel, 2009; Viray & Nash, 2014), and Freire (1968) made similar
statements regarding the dehumanization of all members of society under ideology, not just marginalised people. Therefore, the navigation of anger can be seen as important skill when committing to the role of a change agent, as Kim (2013) and Viray & Nash (2014) have both commented on the potential for anger to lead to disengagement and feelings of disenfranchisement and hopelessness. Viray & Nash (2014) have commented that these feelings can inhibit a person’s ability to maintain their role in social change, instead stating that activists need to engage and enact compassion if they are to fulfil their role in a long term capacity.

Rachel also commented on her demeanour, stating that she had been trying to have an easeful energy around her students, whilst behaving in a curious and supportive manner. Rachel reflected on the importance of demonstrating compassion;

\[
\text{I try engaging in conversations if they’re comfortable talking about relationships, I show that I’m taking an interest and I show that I’m trying not to make a big deal of choices.}
\]

Whilst Rachel’s statements are consistent with Hytten’s (2015) notion of ethical social justice education and Taylor’s (2015) notion of teacher dispositions, she simultaneously discussed her commitment to modelling through her dedication to an agenda;

\[
\text{I mean I own it with my students when I go in guns blazing with an agenda. And I allow them to challenge me.}
\]

Whilst Mezirow (2009) has highlighted the importance of disruption as technique in social activism, Rachel states that her goal isn’t to put anybody offside, but rather to say “let’s just be in the uncomfortable space”. Rachel expressed her strong conviction;

\[
\text{I think that if we as teachers don’t encourage the creation of a safe environment to have conflict or to have differences of opinion then we’re letting our kids down. Because then they’re not learning skills to take into the wider world.}
\]

Rachel highlighted disagreement and dissonance as areas that we must prepare our students to deal with in a safe, but vehement, manner, and this idea is fundamentally talking about how to teach people to engage others. Again, whilst Rachel’s comments attended to Kumashiro’s (2009) ideas around the need for discomfort and Hytten’s (2015) notion of openness to challenge, Rachel had some difficulty navigating her supportive demeanour in an environment of resistance. To this end, like Jessica, Rachel used the reflective writing space to acknowledge the role of anger in inhibiting her commitment to
modelling her values. Despite these difficulties, through the group process, Rachel was able to enact her compassion with her students.

**Enacting Compassion**

Both Rachel and Jack demonstrated a growing commitment to advocacy for LGBTIQ equality by overcoming anger through the modelling of compassion. For Rachel, her experience with anger was, to a large extent, expressed only in her reflective writing, which may have allowed her to share thoughts she may not at first have felt comfortable sharing with the group; Hanson (2013) has highlighted the importance of individual reflection through writing for this very reason. Rachel commented on her struggles and challenges through her writing, and only expressed these to the group once she had reflected upon her own improvements in the ways she was engaging her students in dialogue around social injustice;

> I think when I first became a teacher I was really a bit fierce in my protection of classroom culture and now I try to be a little more gentle.

Rachel explicitly referred to the values with which she was attempting to model to her students;

> Compassion but also rigorous self-reflection. Because I know I fuck up. And I know I’m not always all of the things I aspire to. Reflective practice as a value.

Rachel used an example of a recent field trip to an art museum, in which she had asked the students to consider the concept of land ownership in Australia through a discussion around Aboriginal connections to the land in paintings. Rachel demonstrated a more compassionate reaction, focussing on her role to model pluralism, and to model how pluralism can be normal;

> On a more sophisticated level, or maybe less sophisticated, maybe trying to hook into why it is important. So that there’s less resistance. And whether it’s from a multicultural experience, or a sexual diversity experience or a gender diversity context. Just anything if you’re trying to get people to appreciate pluralism and why it’s so important to create an environment where there’s no normal.

Rachel had previously observed the resistance of her students when being challenged for their homophobic remarks, and instead of reacting aggressively, she chose to look at the spaces between interpellation and transformation by modelling the virtues of understanding and compassion. This act demonstrated her growing commitment to LGBTIQ advocacy as Rachel was no longer focussed on
“calling out” her students for their different beliefs. Rachel’s experience served to demonstrate the challenges described by Viray & Nash (2014) regarding anger and frustration in advocacy, and also the overcoming of this barrier, through the enactment of virtues. By taking the discussion of compassion and living it, Rachel made compassion a verb instead of a noun, which is what Viray & Nash (2014) have asserted is required of social justice educators in their commitment to modelling equality. To this end, Rachel’s story has extended literature by demonstrating a real application of social justice theories in the life of a teacher.

Jack similarly demonstrated changes in his commitment to modelling by engaging with compassion. In the earlier sessions, Jack stated that he hadn’t really ever differentiated the concepts of beliefs and values before. In the earlier discussion of the first two sessions, for Jack, values were vulnerable to external influences;

It depends on the pressure that the context puts on you. If you have enough pressure, you may well end up changing your own value system.

This statement again demonstrated the ways in which Jack allowed fear to infiltrate, not only his management of LGBTIQ violence, but the way he modelled his entire value system. Despite these early sentiments, this framework had begun to shift throughout the later stages of the research. Jack began to associate values with underlying themes of compassion and understanding, and similarly, began to associate beliefs with underlying ideologies. Regarding his understanding of values, his reflections were directly related to the targeted content of one session, in which I had asked the teachers to think about the values they feel are important to the ways in which they live their lives as human beings. Whilst Jack had remained relatively silent during the discussion, in his reflections he commented that he was seeing the difference between beliefs and values. For Jack, connection with his deeper values helped him prioritise change above his earlier worries of offending people;

I’m now trying to listen to people, be empathetic, be humble and try and help.

Throughout the process, Jack had become increasingly aware of both oppression and his role in change, however it was through embracing his values that he found it more comfortable to accept that role.

With regards to action, in the final session, Jack was able to relay a recent experience of engaging compassion, discussing a potential altercation he was able to avoid at a McDonalds, where he accidentally pushed in front of someone and they responded negatively. Jack highlighted that this man
was from an African nation, and he also acknowledged that in the past he would have been more
dismissive or more aggressive because of this fact. Instead of reacting with anger and defensiveness,
Jack recounted the following;

It was easier for me to show a bit more compassion and understanding. Seeing someone else’s
point of view. Which normally I don’t.

Jack stated that he forced himself to see the person’s point of view before reacting, demonstrating the
impact of perspective taking, and in a similar vein to Christopher, taking time to reflect and listen before
acting. Jack’s comments also related to Rachel’s ideas about the importance of pluralism and of taking
time to understand the experience of others, specifically that the beliefs of others can be understood in
the context of their life experience. In this instance, Jack had demonstrated commitment to compassion
outside of the classroom, also demonstrating his increased openness and ability to sympathetically
listen, in line with Hytten’s (2015) ideas around ethical teaching. Significantly, Jack stated that he was
more comfortable showing compassion than he ever had been enacting his anger and his defences. Jack
attributed this change to the conversations that had taken place during the workshops, and that these
reflections allowed him “to drop the self-righteous model” in his mind;

The reason I responded like that is because I thought back to conversations we’ve had here. I
thought you people are all correct. We should be more empathetic and understanding towards
our fellow humans and not always believe that we are the ones in the right with everything.

Even if in the moment he didn’t feel compassion or have understanding, the fact that he values those
two things allowed Jack the space to alter his actions. In essence, Jack’s moral alignment of
understanding and compassion provided him with the guidance to navigate his more reactive and
potentially inhibitory emotions of anger and fear. This change worked in direct opposition to neo-liberal
ideals of individualism and risk management, by framing the individual as part of a larger social group of
“fellow humans” and by suggesting that some things are in fact worth the risk. In this way, Jack
demonstrated commitment through both the management of existing violence regarding his school
policy, as well as through modelling compassion in his interactions with strangers.

Jack was also able to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to this kind of social education, stating that
he would like to run a series of open seminars in order to raise awareness amongst his students and
colleagues, but also to give them the space to think about how they interact with the world;
I’ve been thinking that I’d like to run a series of seminars in order to raise same-sex attracted awareness for students and teachers in my school.

Jack demonstrated greater understanding and greater patience, by allowing for people to have space to reflect and contextualise their own experience. These examples, desires and comments are all indicators that Jack had engaged and committed to his role as an advocate through modelling compassionate ways of interacting with the world. Whilst each of the teachers underwent changes throughout the research process, Jack’s was perhaps the most dramatic.

This section has introduced and explored the relationship between anger and committing to advocacy through the modelling of equality. I introduced the connection between ideological violence and anger through Rachel who demonstrated the importance of acknowledging anger if compassion and understanding is to become more than what Freire (1968) described as idle chatter. Rachel was able to connect with her anger and realised the importance of navigating this by aligning to her own virtues of compassion, understanding and openness. Likewise, Jack, who had previously engaged in anger as a defensive reaction to his own fear, acknowledged the comfort with which addressing people with respect and compassion can engender. If the dislocation of people from their moral agendas can be seen as dehumanisation (Freire, 1968), then likewise, connecting to virtues in order to overcome emotional barriers may be considered a process of rehumanisation (Tan, 2009).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the commitment of the teachers in the study to LGBTIQ equality through the action of modelling desired ways of being. Whilst in Chapter 9, I introduced commitment in the context of managing existing violence, the content of this chapter represented the balance between navigating the present climate of inequality and the critical notion of envisioning alternative futures. The teachers in this study explored modelling through their connection to values, the enactment of equality and through the navigation of anger. This chapter has once again demonstrated the links between the school and the teacher, highlighting the ways in which one can influence and support the other. Sarah’s story demonstrated the influence of one teacher in a school environment, and the changes seen in Rachel and Christopher demonstrated the importance of attending to praxis, to ethics and to fostering a profound connection to issues of social inequality. Throughout the research process, Jack’s changes showed the power of compassion, the power of challenging assumptions and the importance of consideration over reactivity.
The stories of the teachers’ commitment has both confirmed existing literature and extended existing discourses by demonstrating that despite immense institutional and individual barriers, one teacher can make a difference in the lives of their students. Jack’s story has demonstrated that a deep engagement with compassion can extend beyond the classroom into the daily interactions within our social spheres, suggesting that commitment to advocacy may perhaps extend beyond the specific social inequality under investigation, in this case, beyond the context of LGBTIQ issues. Furthermore, the changes observed in the teachers suggest that action research, more specifically collaborative and individual reflection and action can similarly make a difference. This line of thought requires greater attention, and along with the significance of the research design, critical frameworks and the perspectives of teachers, will be explored in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter 11

Conclusions

My research aimed to explore the perspectives of teachers regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools. Following this was an exploration into whether teachers can change in their beliefs and behaviours and embrace their advocacy for equality. Whilst some of the action research process covered well researched areas, specifically the role of the teacher and the school (Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009; Hillier et al., 2010; Leonard et al., 2012; Van Beusekom et al., 2016), the perspectives of the teachers in my study extended existing findings by providing unique voices from social agents working within institutions of liberation and simultaneously, of oppression. Through their discussions and reflections, the teachers were able to describe and analyse the ongoing conflict between the impact of neo-liberalism and ideals of social justice education which continues to dominate social and political agendas in Australian schools today. Furthermore, this research explored the changes in teacher beliefs, behaviours and classroom practice as a result of engaging in collaborative and individual action leading to reflection, demonstrating the significance of collaboration, reflection, values and empathy. These findings have extended a body of work which was, to a large extent, theoretical (Arshard, 2012; Cosier, 2009; Gunzenhauser, 2015; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015). Further to the significant findings, I also discuss the significant implications of my study, specifically in the context of policy, teacher education and research. These implications prompted reflection on the possibility of intersections in advocacy, and I
conclude the chapter, and indeed the thesis, with some final reflections regarding my own experience throughout this research process, and about the continued fight for LGBTIQ equality in Australia.

**Significant Findings**

In the following section, I focus on areas of the research which have contributed to the discourse about social advocacy, the role of education in social change and the nature and function of heteronormativity in schools. The research questions yielded a number of significant findings relating to the teacher perspectives, changes and supports involved in the research process, and there were common elements which have highlighted the importance of this work in improving equality for LGBTIQ students in schools. The teacher perspectives have shed light on the importance of managing violence whilst modelling equality, and exploring teacher change has emphasised the importance of empathy, awareness and values in overcoming barriers to advocacy. Overall, the teachers were supported by collaboration and the opportunity to spend time in reflective spaces, an opportunity seemingly denied to many potential advocates.

**Significant Teacher Perspectives**

This study has gathered the perspectives of Australian teachers. Often overlooked in research into LGBTIQ inequality in schools, these perspectives have both affirmed and extended this growing body of literature. More specifically, the voices of the six teachers have expanded knowledge regarding the intersections between masculinity, heteronormativity and the school, as well as the important role of teachers living as social advocates for equality. These findings were guided by the following two research questions:

1) What are teacher perspectives regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools?

2) What are teacher perspectives regarding their role in improving equality for LGBTIQ students in schools?

Highlighting the gaps in the literature, these questions prompted an exploration of both personal and professional aspects of teaching which may influence advocacy for LGBTIQ equality in schools. The following table addresses the significant perspectives in relation to the major themes of engagement in sexual orientation inequality and the role of the teacher, as well as the importance of the school and of policy. This section outlines the significant perspectives relating to the nature of sexual orientation in schools, in particular the ways in which the teachers viewed sexual identities and gender. The following
section also addresses the various teacher perspectives regarding their role in improving equality, specifically the notions of managing violence and modelling equality for their students. Furthermore, throughout the research process, it was clear that the role of the teacher was inextricably linked with the role of the school and of policy, and to this end, the teachers provided invaluable perspectives regarding these aspects of LGBTIQ inequality in schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Perspectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with Sexual Orientation Inequality</td>
<td>• Overall supportive of LGBTIQ students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Varying perspectives regarding gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging with the Role of the Teacher</td>
<td>• Managing violence towards LGBTIQ students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Modelling equality for students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The importance of values</td>
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<td>The Role of the School</td>
<td>• The importance of school support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Tensions between social justice and neo-liberal ideals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>• Effective and ineffective policy</td>
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Table 11.1 Summary of significant teacher perspectives.

Engaging with Sexual Orientation Inequality

This study allowed teachers to provide their perspectives on sexual orientation and gender both in schools and in their personal lives. The discussions acknowledged that teachers do not exist in the bubble of a school and that they may be influenced by their life experiences. To this end, overall, the teachers demonstrated a range of perspectives regarding the nature and impact of gender and sexual orientation in schools. The teachers expressed more positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ students than have often been addressed in previous literature (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Vega et al., 2012), acknowledging the inequality of sexual identities in their respective schools, and linking this treatment to broader systems of inequality in Australian society. These more progressive views are significant to current research into sexual identities in schools, as they may reflect changing attitudes and growing levels of awareness in educational environments. In this way, the perspectives of the teachers in this
study have affirmed the research by demonstrating the capacity of teachers to challenge existing hierarchies of masculinity and the impact of violence towards LGBTIQ students (Collier et al., 2015; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Meyer et al., 2016). With a great deal of attention being paid to the victimisation of students through research and the media, it is important to remember that there are teachers who are making a difference.

There were varying perspectives regarding gender amongst the group, focusing on the conflicting views of gender as being socially created and gender being a natural set of qualities. This finding was interesting as it potentially demonstrates the levels of masculinity which underpin heteronormativity; whilst the teachers all spoke out against homophobia, some were less aware of its associations with traditional ideas around gender. This suggests that the two areas, heteronormativity and masculinity should not be studied in isolation, affirming the thoughts of Benjamin (2012) and Connell (2009) who have argued that both forms of power are inextricably linked. In this way, this study has given real voices to what has been largely theoretical work, highlighting the importance of sexual orientation and gender in policy and practice relating to LGBTIQ inequality in schools, and I will return to this when examining teacher changes and study implications.

Furthermore, these variances were also extremely significant to research which investigates masculine hierarchies and LGBTIQ inequality, as the views were inextricably linked with the life experience of each teacher. The research question allowed for an exploration of the teachers’ gender role models and earlier life experiences which may have shaped their perspectives, highlighting the importance of exposure and experience in a person’s adherence to ideology. Tan (2009) has discussed the notion of exposure regarding students in schools, however the findings of this study demonstrate that this idea also applies to the experiences of teachers, affirming the research of Finnessy (2016) and Malins (2016), both of whom highlighted the significance of experience in teacher preparedness for advocacy. This variance has also supported the helpfulness of certain key critical concepts in understanding LGBTIQ inequality, as Freire (1998) similarly linked the internalisation of ideologies with life experience; similarly, Althusser (1984) argued that people see themselves in relation to ideologies due to the constant messages being delivered through schools, the media, the church and the government. In line with these assertions, the teachers who had been exposed to alternative gender identities were more likely to display counterhegemonic viewpoints than those with more negative, or invisible, experiences of traditional ways of being.
Therefore, it cannot be assumed that teachers will be equally ready to embrace and celebrate gender and sexual diversity, and that much of this variance can be attributed to the level of exposure to alternative identities, as well as the nature of these experiences for the teacher. Whilst Lykes & Mallona (2008) have commented on the variability in engagement for students, there remains little research regarding teacher preparedness for the expectations placed on them by schools, governments and academia (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bell, 2007). The work of Magnus & Lundin (2016) captured this variability with regards to preservice teacher beliefs around heteronormativity, however in the current study, the variation of the teachers' years of experience has added some depth to this research. The perspectives regarding teachers as neutral and as political actors have pointed to the complexities of ideology and change efforts for teachers already working in schools. Whilst certainly interesting, this study has not explored these ideas in enough depth for these findings to be considered significant, and I will return to this line of thought in the section which addresses further research.

**Engaging with the Role of the Teacher**

Generally, the perspectives of teachers regarding their own role in social change is invaluable to this area of research. In Chapter 8, I explored the various ways in which the teachers saw themselves contributing to social transformation, including their pivotal roles in supporting students and educating students regarding social justice. This consolidates the recommendations of existing literature (Hillier et al., 2010; North, 2009), however has provided actual teacher perspectives in a field dominated by the voices of LGBTIQ students. Due to the significance of the relationship between students and teachers in critical and social justice education frameworks (Freire, 1998; 1999; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015), these findings have contributed to a growing body of knowledge which explores the school environment of sexual orientation inequality from a variety of perspectives. In this way, teacher and student perceptions are not viewed as competing, but rather complementary voices in LGBTIQ equality discourses. Furthermore, given that the recommendations of major research projects (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Leonard et al., 2012) have most often involved teachers, this study has demonstrated the importance of including teacher voices in this process as they were able to offer insider opinions regarding policy and the role of the school.

More specifically, what were most significant to social justice discourse were the perspectives which highlighted the dual role of teachers in both managing existing violence as well as simultaneously modelling for the future. The bulk of literature regarding heteronormativity in schools discusses the need for teachers to respond to existing ideological violence including interventions in bullying and
supporting vulnerable students (Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Van Beusekom et al., 2016; Vega et al., 2012). In contrast, the bulk of critical perspectives highlight the need for teachers to model for equitable futures through the promotion of awareness in colleagues, leaders and students and through the encouragement of compassion and critical reflection (Adams, 2007; Arshard, 2012; Bell, 2007; Cosier, 2009; Kumashiro, 2016). In this way, the teacher perspectives from this study have expanded social justice education discourse through the idea of balancing what is, in essence, their role in the present and the future. Whilst this idea has been presented in the context of policy (Leonard et al., 2010) and activism (Viray & Nash, 2014), this study has extended this research by exploring teacher perspectives on the day-to-day ways teachers can improve equality for LGBTIQ students in their schools with a balanced approach. These insights are significant as they helped the teachers to navigate the often competing demands of anti-bullying policy with education around equality, and several teachers turned disciplinary events into opportunities to explore and address LGBTIQ inequality in the school. To this end, all of the teachers contributed some perspective regarding either the management of LGBTIQ violence, modelling equality to their students and colleagues, or both.

The perspectives gathered throughout the research have also extended discourse relating to teacher values. Whilst social justice educators such as Hytten (2015), Taylor (2015) and Guntzenhauser (2015) have theorised the importance of values in teaching, the teachers in this study were able to reflect on their values, espousing the importance of equality, compassion, understanding and openness in their work. The teachers discussed real examples of interactions with students and colleagues in which their values played a central role, and a significant aspect of the group discussions centred on the teachers reflecting on their own values in life and in teaching. The connections between daily life and their role as teachers are significant as once again, they point to the idea that teachers do not work in isolation from ideology (Althusser, 1984), but also that social transformation does not occur in isolation either (Freire, 1968). These perspectives affirmed critical thought relating to the broad social nature of beliefs and belief systems as discussed by Althusser (1984), suggesting that aspects of transformation such as an orientation to values, will similarly infuse transformative practice in both a teaching role and in broader life. Certainly, the reflection on values influenced the teachers in their beliefs, their behaviours and their practice, and this will be a central discussion point when exploring teacher changes in the following section. As well as discussing their role, throughout the study, the teachers provided their perspectives on the importance of the school in either supporting or challenging their values and commitment to social advocacy.
The Role of the School

Whilst the role of the school in both equality and inequality for LGBTIQ students is a thoroughly researched area (Dragowski et al., 2015; Hillier et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2013; Mary & Hillier, 2012), this study has extended understandings regarding the relationship between the school and teachers. Fullan (1993) discussed the ability of schools and teachers to influence each other regarding advocacy for marginalised students, with Fullan (1993) philosophising that schools can influence change in teachers and that teachers can influence change in their schools; indeed the work of Gray et al., (2016) explored the perspectives of teachers in this very area. What was largely missing from the literature, however, are documented examples of this relationship and the teachers in this study demonstrated the clear links of support and influence. The teacher experiences in schools demonstrated that schools could support the teachers in their advocacy for LGBTIQ equality through the prioritisation of anti-bullying education as well as celebratory events for sexual diversity, both actions which affirm the recommendations of several studies into the improvement of school experiences for LGBTIQ students in schools (David & McInnes, 2012; Marsten, 2015; Safe Schools Coalition, 2016). Simultaneously, the teachers in this study also provided perspectives which demonstrated the school's potential to prioritise academic outcomes, or to ignore teacher feedback regarding anti-bullying policy and education. Therefore, the teacher perspectives have provided actual examples of a prominent ideological conflict in schools today.

The experiences of the teachers within their school environments have highlighted the ongoing conflict between the impact of neo-liberalism and social justice ideals which have been central to this thesis. Critical commentators such as Apple (2013) and Smyth (2011) have noted the influence of neo-liberal ideologies around risk, individuality and achievement on schools, and these notions were all discussed throughout the project. In this way, the perspectives of the teachers have explored the dual role of the school, in either supporting equality or else prioritising what has been considered by Apple (2013) to be more measurable aspects of school life such as academic outcomes; more importantly, the perspectives of the teachers have highlighted the immense area between these conflicting ideals. Again, the perspectives of the teachers in this study have contributed to discourse regarding this conflict by showing how both ideals can interact and impact teachers in Australian schools, a particularly important perspective from members of society at the centre of both ideological fronts. Both social justice education and neo-liberalism highlight the important role of teachers (Hursh, 2009; Rodriguez & Magill, 2016; Smyth, 2011), and thus teacher perspectives potentially help other teachers navigate this
complicated terrain. Regarding school commitment to LGBTIQ equality, the teacher perspectives also reflected this conflict in the context of school policy.

Policy

The teachers’ perspectives in this study made a significant contribution to understandings of policy and the efficacy of policy in a school environment. The literature consistently discussed the role of policy in protecting LGBTIQ students and teachers, with policy featuring in many research implications and conclusions (Guasp, 2012; Hillier et al., 2010; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Leonard et al., 2012). Overall, what is missing from a lot of studies are the perspectives of those intended to follow policy (Lundin, 2015; Russell et al., 2014). The teachers in this study were able to differentiate between what they believed to be effective and ineffective policy, giving their voice to an area typically reserved for bureaucrats. The teachers provided their perspectives on the importance of including the voices of those involved in the design, development or implementation of the policy. The teachers also discussed their perspectives regarding the challenges with implementing a policy without adequate education of the policy’s relevance, reflection on one’s role in the policy, and evidence that various social voices have contributed to the policy.

The above section has attended to a significant gap in the literature regarding teacher perspectives in social change, and specifically teacher perspectives relating to issues of social injustice for LGBTIQ members of a school community. By commenting on their experiences of feeling unheard, ignored and sidelined in the policy process, the teachers have provided a richness and diversity of perspectives which can be considered significant contributions to knowledge and practice in this field. Similarly, by sharing examples of experiences in which the teachers have felt valued, respected and included in policy, the teacher perspectives have provided an invaluable contrast to policy critique by demonstrating more equitable, fair and inclusive strategies which can be adopted by schools.

I conclude that teacher perspectives are a vital source of knowledge and would be helpful if included in planning and action relating to advocacy and change. I will continue this discussion when examining these concepts as implications for policy development later in the chapter. To this end, I conclude that teacher perspectives are an important feature of teacher advocacy for LGBTIQ equality. I will continue this discussion when addressing implications for further research, however I will first discuss the significant changes which occurred in the teachers throughout the research process.

**Significant Teacher Changes**
A significant finding of this study was that, overall, all of the teachers exhibited changes in their beliefs and behaviours relating to LGBTIQ inequality. In an area dominated by studies which gather perspectives, influencing change in teachers can be seen as particularly important, and the third research question specifically referred to change, shaping the design of the study to emphasise shifts in both beliefs and behaviours;

3) Can teachers change their beliefs and behaviours regarding sexual orientation?

The teachers changed regarding their engagement with LGBTIQ inequality in schools, both in terms of the nature and impact of oppression. The teachers also demonstrated changes with regards to their role, both as agents of violence and as agents of change. The following table summarises the observed changes through the research process in the context of the major themes of the data; engagement and commitment. Overall, the significant findings of the study demonstrated engagement through awareness and through emotions, and commitment through values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging through Awareness</td>
<td>• Greater critical awareness of inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater critical awareness of policy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater critical awareness of role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging through Emotions</td>
<td>• Greater emotional engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committing through Values</td>
<td>• Teachers overcame fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers aligned with their values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers overcame their barrier of anger</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Teachers infused equality into pedagogical strategies</td>
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Table 11.2 Summary of significant changes in teacher beliefs and behaviours.

**Engaging through Awareness**

A defining feature of these changes was a growing awareness of inequality in schools and society, affirming existing research which has highlighted the importance of education (Cosier, 2009; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Smyth, 2011), and extending critical concepts by demonstrating their appropriateness in this type of work. Overall, all of the teachers demonstrated greater engagement through awareness, moving away from neutrality and acknowledging that LGBTIQ people face inequality in their day to day lives. This awareness was demonstrated through changes in language, as some of the teachers began to use more gender neutral examples, through observations of social features such as advertisements,
policy and the legal system. The work of Kitchen & Bellini (2012) and Kukner et al., (2016) have documented the impact of awareness for teachers regarding the nature of LGBTIQ inequality in schools, however significant to this research were the realisations that the teachers themselves may have unintentionally been promoting aspects of heteronormativity in the way they interacted with their classrooms, whether it be the examples they chose to focus on in lessons or the ways in which they divided their class according to gender. The teachers were able to notice these actions and to change certain key pedagogical strategies which helped them challenge heteronormative and masculine aspects of their school environments. Given Althusser (1984), Gramsci (1971) and Freire's (1968) assertions that successful ideologies rely on a level of unawareness within society, it is not surprising that a growing awareness would inspire change. These findings are also consistent with discourse exploring LGBTIQ equality in schools, with Arshard (2012) and Cosier (2009) both indicating awareness as a key feature of improving teacher advocacy. These findings are significant in the context of research which focusses on gathering perspectives, as the changes in the teachers suggest that it is helpful for teachers to become more aware of their role in inequality and equality, in both professional and personal arenas. This also extends the more change based work of Kitchen & Bellini (2012), by encouraging teachers to think about how they are connected to broader systems of oppression, and not to view their role as a teacher in isolation from their daily lives. The significance of growing awareness which impacted both the engagement and commitment of teachers to advocacy was accompanied by a significantly growing emotional engagement.

Engaging through Emotions

The teachers also engaged in advocacy for LGBTIQ equality through their growing emotions and empathy, extending a body of literature which remains largely theoretical (Hytten, 2015; Segel et al., 2011; Taylor, 2015; Viray & Nash, 2014) by showing the very real impact of emotional engagement on advocacy. Several teachers were able to understand the experiences of LGBTIQ students through their own experiences of isolation and exclusion, as well as through their own acknowledgement of being perpetrators of heteronormative violence in their adolescence. For a couple of the teachers, this empathy changed the way they approached students when challenging homophobia, demonstrating a greater understanding of Althusser's (1984) ideas of ideology and what Toomey et al., (2012) described as the often unknowable quality of heteronormativity. Whilst several critical commentators and social justice education authors (Freire, 1999; Hytten, 2015; Viray & Nash, 2014) have acknowledged the importance of empathy, there remain few studies which document the impact of empathy on changing
teacher beliefs and behaviours. Through these ideas, the action research process can be considered counterhegemonic (Gramsci, 1971), as it not only provided a space for teachers to challenge their own internalised ideas of gender and sexuality, but also through emotional engagement and empathy, provided the teachers with motivation to change. In this way, the findings of this study have extended existing research by demonstrating that teacher beliefs and behaviours around sexual orientation and sexual diversity can change by way of a process of education and reflection, and I will elaborate on the importance of these two aspects when exploring the significant supports of change.

**Committing through Values**

This study demonstrated that an orientation to values can help teachers overcome barriers to their advocacy. Again, these findings have expanded predominantly theoretical discussions regarding the importance of values in education (Gunzenhauser, 2015; Hytten, 2015; Taylor, 2015), and the importance of teachers engaging with their values (Arshard 2012; Cosier, 2009) in order to commit to advocacy. One particularly significant demonstration of growing commitment was the enacting of compassion both within and outside of the classroom. The teacher perspectives demonstrated the significance of values in teaching, and the actions reported by the teachers have shown the significance of reflecting on values in order to inspire change. This was shown in changing interactions with colleagues and students which reflected the enactment of compassion, as well as changing strategies within classrooms which reflected the enactment of equality. Most significantly, several teachers began to prioritise their values over their fear or their anger, requesting changes in policy and practice within their schools. These findings are significant as they extend the social commentary of Hytten (2015) and Taylor (2015) by showing that conscious reflection on values can create change in teachers. In this way, the teachers have provided real examples of teachers using values to become more engaged and committed advocates for social equality. This extends the work of both Kitchen & Bellini (2012) and Kukner et al., (2016), who focussed on promoting awareness as a primary strategy for change. Whilst this is undoubtedly helpful for teachers, this study has shown the efficacy of including values in a program for LGBTIQ equality. Furthermore, these findings have extended the work of Freire (1998) who, whilst recognising the barrier of fear, did not provide strategies for teachers to overcome their fears.

The changes described throughout the research are particularly significant regarding discourse for LGBTIQ equality in schools. Whilst action research is, in essence, a methodology of change, the bulk of literature has focussed on gathering perspectives of relevant parties in schools (Gray et al., 2016; Hillier
et al., 2010; Van Beusekom et al., 2016). Whilst this is undoubtedly important research, my study has attended to the significant gap regarding not only what the role of the teacher is, but whether teachers can be supported in their efforts to embrace and enact this role. This research has extended the work of Kitchen & Bellini (2012) and Kukner et al., (2016), by providing teachers with a space to be both reflective and active regarding their role in equality, and also to contextualise inequality for LGBTIQ students within their own experience, thus making them more critical (Hooks, 2013; Tan, 2009). Whilst Hooks (2013) and Tan (2009) have discussed the importance of this contextualisation for students, there remain gaps in both research and teacher education programs which facilitate the same process for teachers. Furthermore, this study demonstrated the significance of barriers to engagement and commitment including fear of advocacy and anger in the face of resistance, as well as the significance of reflection, validation and encouragement in overcoming such obstacles. This work again extends the findings of Kitchen & Bellini (2012) and Kukner et al., (2016), by not expecting teaches to simply adopt more equal and critical ways of thinking and interacting with the world around them; rather the teachers were allowed to struggle with advocacy as well as find ways to overcome their barriers. To this end, I conclude that the various elements which comprised this action research process supported the teachers in changes which resulted in more active, more reflective and more compassionate change agents within their school environments.

**Significant Teacher Supports**

Both the gathering of teacher perspectives and the changes observed in the teachers were supported by significant, key aspects of the action research process. Overall, the importance of collaboration, reflective spaces and validation was highlighted in the findings, as these three supports allowed the teachers to share their perspectives and to change their beliefs and behaviours. This part of the research process was in relation to the fourth research question:

4) What are the supports required for teachers to engage and commit to advocacy for LGBTIQ inequality?

The following table summarises these supports, connecting the importance of collaboration, reflection and validation to the exploration of perspectives and the changes in teacher beliefs, behaviours and practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports for Teacher Perspectives and Teacher Changes</th>
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233
Collaboration

Improved reflection
Exploring sensitive issues
Building relationships through dialogue and problem posing

Reflective Spaces

Attention to Praxis
Improved awareness of self and practice

Validation

Exposure to theory
Overcoming fear and anger
Making sense of experience

Table 11.3 Supports for teacher perspectives and teacher changes.

Collaboration

The importance of collaboration was evident in both the gathering of perspectives and changes in the teachers. Collaboration lies at the core of action research, with Reason & Bradbury (2008) having argued that the sharing of ideas not only prompts change through planning for action, but also allows co-researchers to access thoughts and feelings they may not have been aware they had. This was certainly true for the present study, with several teachers reporting in the reflective writing pieces that the group discussions had challenged them to think about aspects of inequality, their role in change and the role of the school that they had not previously considered. In this way, collaboration allowed the teachers to both engage in issues of inequality and to commit to advocacy for equality through shared knowledge, shared expertise, shared experience and shared strategies. These findings affirmed the research of Ingram (2014) and Robinson (2013) who highlighted the importance of collaborative spaces for teachers, however expanded much existing research into sexual orientation pedagogy. Whilst studies by Kitchen & Bellini (2012) and Kukner et al., (2016) took place in a group format, the focus was the relationship between the participant and the researcher, not amongst the group members. In contrast, the present study emphasised collaboration amongst group members in order to explore difficulties and challenges, to encourage discussion and to create a warm and open atmosphere. In this way, the teachers were encouraged to interact and to build relationships, an idea strongly associated with Freire’s (1968) ideas around social transformation.
These findings consolidated the appropriateness of critical notions of oppression and social transformation in understanding sexual orientation inequality. Whilst critical concepts have long been used to analyse race and class relations, Freire’s (1968) concepts of dialogue and problem posing provided a space for honest reflection on experiences and beliefs relating to sexual diversity, and examples of behaviour which demonstrated both interpellation and counterhegemonic sentiments. The concept of dialogue placed importance on the facilitator and teachers working as co-researchers, allowing me to share my own experiences in order to stimulate discussion, and simultaneously to remain quiet and observe when discussion was flowing between the teachers. Problem posing similarly placed the emphasis on the perspectives of the teachers, whereby knowledge was created within the group as opposed to the teachers being educated in a more traditionally didactic fashion. The use of these concepts have extended the change-based work of Kukner et al., (2016) by focusing on the relationships of group members, and not the content being delivered. Due to the sensitive nature of personal beliefs around gender and sexuality, this emphasis was seemingly helpful in allowing the teachers to explore their past and future beliefs and actions. Furthermore, whilst the supports have been discussed in the contexts of either perspectives or change, in this action research group, perspectives and change were inextricably linked; that exploring perspectives actually created change. These findings consolidate existing thought around the efficacy of action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Chevalier & Buckles, 2013), whereby reflections were seen as informing practice and practice was seen as informing reflections. Significantly, the findings also promote the use of action research for issues of sexual orientation inequality.

**Reflective Spaces**

The use of reflective spaces was a significant support for the teachers. The study’s attention to praxis had a significant influence on teacher change, as the teachers were provided space and guidance which shaped both their observations and reflections throughout the action research process. As stated, these supports led to greater awareness of social surroundings, and in particular, the influence and impact of masculine ideology in school environments. These findings consolidate Freire’s (1968) assertions regarding the importance of reflection in change, as he has stated that without reflection, change is just action for action’s sake. By building upon their new awareness, the teachers were able to use the reflective spaces to change their language, to modify pedagogical strategies and to change the ways in which they interacted with colleagues and students. Significant to the group process, the reflective spaces allowed the teachers to also explore their changes privately. Certainly both Jack and Rachel
wrote about changes in their beliefs and pedagogical strategies before they addressed the group, and Hanson (2013) has commented on the importance of providing both collaborative and individual spaces for this very reason. This concept extends existing literature which has either focussed on individual responses (Gray et al., 2016; Magnus & Lundin, 2016) or collaborative education (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Kukner et al., 2016); the findings of this study suggest that it may be beneficial for teachers to have both. Certainly for the teachers, reflection thrived in both contexts; for some of the teachers, listening to shared experiences prompted their own reflections, and for others, having the opportunity to explore changes in private allowed them to feel comfortable in expressing observations of change.

Validation

Another significant finding was that the teacher changes were supported by validation. Several teachers were validated in their concerns and experiences through the analysed passages and through the group discussion, providing a space for the teachers to comfortably explore their advocacy. In many ways, the use of critical theory to help the teachers make sense of their experience and the use of action research to facilitate change also attended to gaps in both literature and critical frameworks. In reviewing the literature regarding LGBTIQ inequality in schools, it became clear that many studies and much policy viewed the role of the teacher as significant and provided guidance regarding the ways in which teachers could help LGBTIQ students in their schools (Mary & Hillier, 2012; SSDS, DETV, 2008; Vega et al., 2012). Similarly, whilst Freire (1998) acknowledged fear and anger as potential barriers or limitations to the engagement and commitment of teachers, in his writing he almost expected teachers to simply overcome these barriers through acknowledgement. What was missing from this guidance was an acknowledgement that there are ideological and emotional barriers which may influence either an individual teacher’s decision to act on behalf of their LGBTIQ students, or for research which did acknowledge barriers, the ways in which individual teachers could overcome them. Similarly, whilst Freire's (1998) work acknowledged fear and Viray & Nash (2014) acknowledged anger and suggested an orientation to compassion, this study has demonstrated the efficacy of moving beyond acknowledgement, to both collaboration with other teachers, and contextualisation of perspectives within literature. Gosin et al., (2003) have stated that the best action research combines the expertise and experiences of everyday people with academic knowledge, and in this way, the teachers have a language with which to pass on their new knowledge and new experiences to others. Furthermore, the orientation to values extended the work of Hytten (2015) by providing evidence that reflection on ethics and morality may actually influence the behaviour of a teacher. Hytten’s (2015) work had been
theoretical in nature, and this study has demonstrated her theory regarding ethics, openness and teacher values in real classrooms for real teachers.

This section has addressed the perspectives of a group of teachers, the ways in which the teachers changed during the research process, as well as the aspects of action research which supported this change. Particularly pertinent throughout the process was the importance of reflection, the importance of contextualisation and the importance of teacher values. The following section addresses the implications of study findings, which specifically focus on these areas as significant to discourses regarding the role of teachers in LGBTIQ equality in schools.

**Implications**

This study has several important implications in the areas of research, teacher education and policy. Across the findings and in the context of existing literature, the specific implications include the importance of teacher perspectives, the importance of values and compassion, the importance of collaboration and the importance of praxis. This section addresses these implications before establishing the limitations and avenues for future research.

**Teacher Perspectives**

The teacher perspectives expressed throughout the research have implications for research, for policy and for teacher education. Over recent years, researchers have increasingly attended to teacher perspectives in a field which has been dominated by the voices of students (Dragwski et al., 2015; Russell et al., 2014; Toomey et al., 2014). This study has demonstrated the importance of teacher perspectives on advocacy for LGBTIQ equality, specifically the role of barriers and the role of underlying heteronormative beliefs. These perspectives enhance student understandings of LGBTIQ inequality from the perspectives of those whom research has suggested can help change school environments. Teacher perspectives are not in competition with student perspectives, but rather provide a unique balance regarding experiences of inequality and to this end, more research into a variety of perspectives would help explore this complex issue.

Similarly, research has inextricably linked teachers and school policy as teachers are expected to uphold school values and anti-discriminatory behaviours (Porecca, 2010; Vega et al., 2012). The findings of this study suggest that teachers may need more than direction in order to make a policy live, as the co-researchers in the action research group explored the absence of their perspectives in the development
of school policy, at both State and individual school levels. These expressions have implications for policy, as they suggest that teachers should be included in the development of school policy for LGBTIQ equality, if not at State level, than within their individual schools. Whilst there will undoubtedly be schools already engaging in this practice, the policies explored in this study have demonstrated that many schools do not. Finally, the teacher perspectives gathered in this study have significant implications for teacher education. The ways in which the teachers explored LGBTIQ inequality through their own experiences have highlighted the importance of contextualising teacher education within the lives of teachers. In this way, teachers are seen as having a voice in education, and are also treated as individual members of society who have unique life experiences which shape their practice. These perspectives work in contrast to neo-liberal ideals of teachers which frame teachers as conduits of knowledge, detached from any cultural contextualisation (Hursh, 2009; Smyth, 2011).

**Compassion and Values**

The concepts of compassion and values similarly have implications for research, policy and teacher education. Both Lynch et al., (2009) and Apple (2013) have expressed a need for further study into the role of compassion in social transformation. Apple (2013) has stated that the affective system is “just as foundational as other structured and structuring systems that serve as building blocks of society” (p16), and Lynch et al., (2009) have question why the affective domain is largely ignored in research.

This present study had significant implications for research into the role of the affective domain in social advocacy research. The engagement stories of the teachers detailed empathy and compassion and the teachers were able to utilise the affective domain in order to overcome individual emotional barriers including fear and anger. Whilst there is seemingly a body of literature philosophising the role of ethics, morality, compassion and values in teaching (Arshard, 2012; Hytten, 2015; Gunzenhauser, 2015; Taylor, 2015), more studies documenting the impact of these concepts on teaching for equality would strengthen this area of research. The findings of this study demonstrated that specific reflection on values allowed some of the teachers to overcome their barriers to advocacy for LGBTIQ equality, and therefore, the notion of values has significant implications for teacher education. Providing space for preservice and existing teachers to think about their teacher values may help teachers navigate the complex areas between neo-liberal and social justice agendas as they attempt to maintain academic
standards whilst helping students become moral members of society. Similarly, the teachers also commented on the importance of values in policy. In Chapter 3, I explored critiques of safety measures which framed anti-bullying policy as ineffective in attending to underlying ideologies of masculinity and heteronormativity (Marsten, 2015; Saltmarsh, 2012). The findings of this study demonstrated the importance of balancing safety measures with the modelling of equality and fairness, and this notion could impact policy development in schools. Whilst many schools will already be balancing the management of violence with the modelling of equality, the findings of this study have suggested that this balance should be a priority for schools and the Department of Education, which still lists sexual orientation and gender policy alongside physical and mental illness (DETV, 2016).

**Collaboration**

The importance of collaboration in the research process has implications for research and teacher education. Whilst there is a long history of action research in the field of education and social justice, this study has demonstrated the importance of collaboration in exploring teacher perceptions of LGBTIQ inequality. Several of the teachers reached new depths of understanding regarding their own heteronormative beliefs due to the sharing of experiences which defined this collaborative research project. As well as research into heteronormativity in schools, the importance of collaboration has implications for teacher education programs. Many of the teachers reported feeling supported by the collaboration in the group, allowing them to express deeply held beliefs and to contextualise inequality through their own experiences, facilitating greater empathy and greater motivation to enact their role in change. To this end, collaboration can be interwoven into existing teacher education at the level of University courses and professional development for existing teachers.

**Reflection and Action: Praxis for Change**

Finally, the impacts of praxis on the research outcomes of this study have important implications for research, education and policy. I have highlighted the balance of managing violence and modelling equality as a significant finding, and indeed this balance has implications for research which often focusses on one aspect or the other. Much literature regarding LGBTIQ student experiences in schools has focussed on safety and anti-bullying discourses (Pearson et al., 2007; Kosciw et al., 2013; Dragowski et al., 2015), whilst much social justice education theory has focussed on the importance of ethics and morality in teaching (Cosier, 2009; Hytten, 2015; Tan, 2009). I contend that these two aspects of equality can be balanced in research, investigating perspectives and change, as the findings of my study.
demonstrate that one influences the other. Similarly, teacher education can provide spaces for both reflection and for action, contextualising inequality within the lives of the teachers, exploring strategies for change and simultaneously encouraging action. Finally, the notion of praxis has been shown to have implications for policy. Several teachers commented on the importance of policy connecting action to broader notions of masculine and heteronormative ideology, encouraging teachers to not only enact policy, but also to reflect on their role within inequality and their role within change.

This section has addressed several implications for research, policy development and teacher education. The significance of teacher perceptions, of values, collaboration and of praxis have expanded existing literature and has provided a richer understanding of the experiences of teachers as well as the potential for teachers to be agents of change for LGBTIQ equality in schools. Further to this, this study has highlighted the potential for teachers to be agents of change for a range of social inequality issues, an implication which requires further reflection.

**Reflecting on Intersections in Oppression**

An outcome of this study was a deep reflection regarding the role of teachers as agents of change across a range of inequality issues in society. Apple (2013) has discussed the concept of “decentred unities” (p13), which describes spaces of common ground between social movements. Apple (2013) has highlighted the potential challenges with focusing on a particular social group, instead suggesting that it is perhaps more beneficial to understand exploitation and domination in daily life.

Throughout the data chapters, I have discussed the flexibility of content as an advantage of action research which contributed to change for the teachers. Throughout the sessions, I was able to navigate between various examples of oppression including race, age, and gender. Jack had commented that he didn’t feel prepared to engage in issues of LGBTIQ inequality as he didn’t feel he could relate. Whilst the group was able to “find a way in”, as Rachel described it, this example served to demonstrate the possibly limiting impact of defining the type of oppression under examination. Certainly, Glass’ (2001) notion of varying identities within society played a part, as the teachers could discuss both experiences of being an oppressor as well as experiences being oppressed. These discussions served to enrichen the data, but more significantly, to deepen engagement with the struggles of LGBTIQ students in schools.
Apple’s (2013) ideas suggest that perhaps a more general lens of oppression and domination would be a more helpful foundation for transformative pedagogies aiming to engage teachers in social advocacy. Some literature (Griffin et al., 2004) has described the benefits of adopting broad themes in the school curriculum instead of addressing sexual orientation, however this was suggested in the context of safety and avoiding negative reactions from the community. The idea of decentered unities shares a similar sentiment, however the motivation is more to do with uniting on common ground against ideologies and mechanisms of oppression, not avoiding risk. Furthermore, the basis of critical understandings of values and morals is that they are universal across humans and situations (Alfred, 2016; Marcuse, 1964; Van Heertum, 2009). Therefore, focusing on one area of oppression at the expense of others creates a fundamental critical dilemma (Apple, 2013). To this end, I would be interested in adapting the model for advocacy which emerged from the research, and I will discuss this and other reflections in the final section below.

**Final Reflections**

After this process, I feel more equipped to manage the fight for equality. Debates around the marriage plebiscite and marriage equality continue to become more vitriolic, oppressive and potentially damaging to our country as a whole, and following this research process, I am much more reflective, calm and wise. Most importantly, in the face of oppression, I can direct my anger, outrage and hurt at heteronormative belief systems, not the people who maintain them.

At the end of Chapter 6, I introduced a model for teacher advocacy. As stated, this model was an integration of previous conceptual work as well as the findings of this study and helped me organise my thoughts regarding what I was observing, thinking and feeling during the research process. I am very interested in conducting further research into the efficacy of this model as a guide for both designing action research processes, as well as situating various participants throughout the research process.

With regards to specific future research, I would be interested in further study either exploring a specific ideology or else utilising the above plan for studying engagement and commitment to advocacy through the various intersections in social oppression. Whilst the focus of discussions related to the importance of schools and the role of the teacher, critical thought links agents of change with various institutions.
ranging from media to the law, to the Government and the family. In the future, I would be interested in adapting this model in order to see it yields similar results within institutions other than the school.

The changes I have noticed in myself and the teachers in this group have renewed my faith in research for the purpose of change. At the end of the process, I felt that I had learned as much as I had taught, truly having experienced a process of collaboration. I also feel that I have learned patience for social transformation. For sexual orientation equality to be possible in Australia, it is going to take more than one grand act; it will be possible through the compassionate interactions and ongoing educative efforts of those working for a more equitable future.

To this end, this study has renewed my faith in teachers. Having the opportunity to work with a group of engaged and committed teachers demonstrated the extent to which some Australian teachers value our young people, value the future and indeed value values. Whilst I don’t have strong memories of any particular teacher influencing my life, this study has shown me that for some young people, their teachers will play a significant part in how they see the world and how they see themselves; as a person worthy of love, care and of having a voice in society.

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Appendix A

Plain Language Statement for Principals

Project:

Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Inequality in Schools: Perceptions, Supports and Teacher Changes

Introduction

Your school is invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr Helen Stokes and Dr Kylie Smith (Principal Researchers) and Mr Matthew Holt (PhD Student) of the Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. This research forms part of Mr Holt’s PhD thesis and has received clearance by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne.
This study aims to explore the perspectives of secondary school classroom teachers with regards to their beliefs and behaviours of what it means to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) young person in a secondary school. The study also aims to explore teacher perceptions of factors that support or limit school-based wellbeing programs, policies and practices for LGBTIQ students. Finally, the study aims to explore if action research can influence teacher beliefs and behaviours around sexual orientation through a process of education, observation and reflection, and whether changes to teachers’ beliefs and behaviours can influence or change their pedagogical practice around sexual orientation.

What will participants be asked to do?

Should you agree for a teacher in your school to participate, the selected teacher will be asked to attend a one to one 30 minute interview. After this, they will be asked to participate in 6 action research workshops between March and August. These workshops will take place outside of work hours at a location that is convenient and accessible for all participants. Each workshop will take an hour and will consist of 6 secondary school teachers from 6 schools. Within the first workshop, participants will be asked to engage in 15 minutes of ice breakers and 45 minutes of discussion. Within each subsequent workshop, participants will be asked to participate in 15-30 minutes of reflective writing and 30-45 minutes of group discussion. Participants will be asked to reflect on their own life experiences, their experiences working in classrooms, as well as discussing and observing potential changes in their beliefs and behaviours. The interview and workshops will be audio-taped and participant writing will be collected so that we can have a more accurate record of what they say. With your permission, participants will be asked to discuss your school curriculum as well as school policy which refers to sexual orientation.

What will you be asked to do?

Circulate a flyer inviting participation in this project and allow the teacher who chooses to participate to draw on policies and practices within the school during the action research workshops.

How will confidentiality be protected?

We intend to protect both the participants’ and your school’s anonymity to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Participant names and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that the participants supply. This will only be able to be linked to participant responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send their writing and workshop transcripts for checking. In the final report, participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess either the participants’ or your school’s identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, and as the discussion will explore curriculum and policy, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify your school.

How will participants receive feedback?
The discussions will be transcribed after each workshop and emailed to participants for their approval. After each workshop, participants will also be provided with an analysed passage of their contribution to discussion, and they will have the opportunity to further discuss their thoughts with Mr Holt via email or telephone. At the completion of the thesis, a de-identified summary of main findings can be made available for you if you so wish. The results will most likely be published and presented at conferences. Data will be stored in accordance with University of Melbourne guidelines and will be disposed of with the assistance of the University at least 5 years after publication.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the numbers provided. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please contact Matthew Holt at m.holt@student.unimelb.edu.au expressing your interest.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith                   Dr Helen Stokes                   Mr Matthew Holt
kylieas@unimelb.edu.au           h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au           m.holt@student.unimelb.edu.au
(ph) 8344 9632                   (ph) 8344 9646                   (ph) 9035 5610

Appendix B

Principal Consent Form

Project Title:

Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Inequality in Schools: Perceptions, Supports and Teacher Changes

Name: ________________________________

School: ________________________________
I hereby consent to the following:

1) That the above listed school may participate in the project

2) That I have read and understand the aims of the project

3) That I have read and understand what activities (both in school and out of school) teachers are being asked to be involved in as well as the time commitments of the project

4) That I understand that the confidentiality of the school and participants cannot be guaranteed

5) That teachers and researchers may have access to school policy documents

6) That teachers may discuss the school’s curriculum

Signed: _____________________________________________

Date: _________

Appendix C

Plain Language Statement for Teachers

Project:

Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Inequality in Schools: Perceptions, Supports and Teacher Changes

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr Helen Stokes and Dr Kylie Smith (Principal Researchers) and Mr Matthew Holt (PhD Student) of the Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. This research forms part of Mr Holt’s PhD thesis and has received clearance by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne.
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**What will I be asked to do?**

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to attend a one to one 30 minute interview. After this, you will be asked to participate in 6 1-hour workshops between March and August. These workshops will take place outside of work hours at a location that is convenient and accessible for all participants. Each workshop will take an hour and will consist of you and 5 other secondary school teachers from 5 other schools. The first workshop will consist of 15 minutes of ice breakers and 45 minutes of discussion. In all subsequent workshops you will be asked to participate in 15-30 minutes of reflective writing and 30-45 minutes of group discussion. You will be asked to reflect on your own life experiences, your experiences working in classrooms, as well as to analyse policy and to discuss pedagogical strategies. With your permission, both the interview and workshops will be audio-taped and your writing will be collected so that we can have a more accurate record of what you say.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your writing and workshop transcripts for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym.

Due to the nature of the topic, we are only recruiting a small sample to form our research group, as it is important to us that every participant can contribute equally. Although we will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you.

**How will I receive feedback?**

The discussions will be transcribed after each workshop and emailed to you for your approval. After each workshop, you will also be provided with a passage of your contribution to discussion which will be analysed through the lens of relevant theory; you will have the opportunity to further discuss your thoughts with Mr Holt via email or telephone. At the completion of the thesis, a copy can be made available for you if you so wish, and the results will most likely be published and presented at conferences.

**Will participation prejudice me in any way?**
Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. Furthermore, counselling services will be offered from an external organisation should you wish utilise them.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the numbers provided. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please contact Matthew Holt at m.holt@student.unimelb.edu.au to arrange an interview time.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith
Dr Helen Stokes
Mr Matthew Holt
kylieas@unimelb.edu.au h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au m.holt@student.unimelb.edu.au
(ph) 8344 9632 (ph) 8344 9646 (ph) 9035 5610

Appendix D

Consent Form for Teachers

Principal Researchers: Dr Helen Stokes and Dr Kylie Smith
Student Researcher: Mr Matthew Holt

I,........................................................................................................... (Name)
of.........................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................
(Address)

hereby consent to be a participant of a human research study to be undertaken by Dr Helen Stokes and Dr Kylie Smith.
I understand that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the following project:

**Teacher Advocacy for LGBTIQ Inequality in Schools: Perceptions, Supports and Teacher Changes**

I acknowledge that:

1. The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study have been explained to me to my satisfaction.
2. Individual interviews and workshops will be audio-taped, transcribed and the transcriptions used for data analysis.
3. The information I provide will be coded and kept separately from my name and address.
4. Results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic and professional journals.
5. Individual results will not be released to any person except at the individual's request and on the individual's authorisation.
6. I will be referred to by a pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study.
7. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease.
8. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.
9. I will follow the listed protocols during my participation in the research.

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

(Participant)

**Group Protocols**

1. **Confidentiality** - everything shared in the group is confidential and is not to leave the room. This means that you do not discuss events shared by other participants outside the workshops including your work setting. The group needs to be able to trust that what is discussed in the workshops does not go any further. Any issues relating to confidentiality between group members must be discussed with the student researcher.
2. **Giving Attention** - members will give supportive attention to the person who is speaking and avoid side conversations.
3. **Avoid Interruptions** – Do not interrupt while a person is speaking. In the case that this occurs the student researcher will stop the interruption and return the conversation to the person who was speaking.

4. **Questions** - group members have the right to ask questions and the right to refuse to answer.

5. **Advice** – information shared will support you to reflect on your ideas and understandings. We ask that you do not provide advice or answers to a person’s reflections.

6. **Language** - language must be respectful and appropriate.

These protocols will be reiterated in each session, and whilst the above listed aren’t negotiable, you may add to the list following group discussion.

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**Appendix E**

**Reflective Writing Workshops 2-5**

Name: ________________________________________

Date:   _______________________

Reflect on and describe any changes you have noticed in your personal beliefs (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any changes you have noticed in your professional beliefs (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any pedagogical changes (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any changes you have noticed in your behaviour in or out of school (Provide examples if possible):

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What and who do you think supported any of these changes?

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Were there any barriers in the way of any of these changes?

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Are you now more aware of policy and has your interpretation and use of the policy changed?

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Appendix F

Final Reflections

Name: ________________________________________

Date:   _______________________

Reflect on and describe any changes that you have observed in your personal beliefs (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any changes that you have observed in your professional beliefs (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any changes that you have observed in the language you use professionally (Provide examples if possible):

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Reflect on and describe any changes that you have observed in your classroom management (Provide examples if possible):

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Are you now more aware of policy and has your interpretation and use of the policy changed?

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Reflect on and describe any changes you have observed in your day-to-day behavior (Provide examples if possible):

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To what extent do you consider this issue to be significant in your day-to-day life? Why?

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What supported any changes in your ideas and practices? (e.g. workshops, discussions, readings)

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What barriers have you encountered to making changes in your ideas and practice?

What would you like to continue to work on and what plans will you make to do this?

Appendix G

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Can you tell me about your experience with supporting same-sex attracted students in your school?

What is your understanding of the role of a teacher in supporting the wellbeing of same-sex attracted young people in Australian schools?

What is your understanding of the wellbeing situation of same-sex attracted young people in Australian schools?

What are your professional beliefs regarding same-sex attracted people?

Have you always felt that way?
If not, then what did you believe before compared to now? Why do you think your beliefs changed?

What are your personal beliefs regarding same-sex attracted people?

Have you always felt that way?

If not, then what did you believe before compared to now? Why do you think your beliefs changed?