‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

Robert John Moolman

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2019

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
University of Melbourne
Abstract
Schools are rarely the spaces of fairness, kindness, inclusion and equality that some perceive them to be. At its heart, this work is one that considers how school leaders understand and react to the discrimination and oppression of lesbian, gay, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals within their environment and, more importantly, what drives engaged, visible school leaders to change these situations. The key research question that is going to be considered is; ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ Flowing from this question are the sub-questions - What is the role of school leadership? What is the role of teachers? What are the significant forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?

This thesis utilises qualitative research and narrative inquiry using semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants at school sites in Victoria, Australia. The semi-structured interviews are analysed using critical theory, in order to understand motivations, actions and behaviours. Critical theory concepts such as power, oppression, culture, repressive tolerance and leading change have contributed to the analysis. The data chapters in the thesis first consider the broad, wide ranging idea of culture and environment and how these impact LGBTQ change processes. There is a focus on visible leadership within school spaces and the ability to manage change in a difficult social environment. In the two final data chapters there is a more detailed description of the factors that enable change and those that hinder it within schools. The conclusion draws together the findings from the data chapters in order to address the research questions. This thesis ends with a section considering the road ahead for LGBTQ inclusive practice.

The underlying emphasis of this thesis is to understand what prompts school leadership to move from a position of wanting to do something for their LGBTQ community to overt action, with leaders engaging and driving the change process in a positive and affirming manner. There are schools in the State of Victoria that have adopted overt and clear LGBTQ-inclusive policies or programs, and this work illuminates the way they went about managing the process of implementing and running those policies and programs.
The thesis investigates that point that exists between the expectations of diversity and inclusivity, documented by government and education authorities, and the eventual adoption and implementation of school policies or actions focusing on LGBTQ students and staff. The underlying purpose of doing this research is to inspire change within the schooling system and to document the path to success and its benefits. It is envisioned that the research will help schools and education authorities to drive more action in this space. This thesis will assist schools, facing the legal and increasingly social expectations for change and with the prerequisite tools and resources for change, to move beyond a hesitant position and into one of action, so that, one day, schools can indeed become spaces for fairness, kindness, equity and inclusion.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface;

ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;

iii. The thesis is fewer than 100 000 words in length exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Robert John Moolman
Acknowledgements

I speak without any fear of contradiction, that this thesis would not be what it is today without the love and support that I have received from so many people. There are four who are particularly important. No amount of thanks that will ever be enough for Bradley Martin, Dr. Marnie O’ Bryan, Associate Professor Helen Stokes, and Associate Professor Kylie Smith. When I have been at my best, they have celebrated the joys of this experience with me. When I have been at my worst and hiding in spaces to avoid everything, they have dragged, pushed, cajoled and enticed me into the light. They have all helped me in so many different ways. Never in a million years will I be able to repay them for their love, kindness and generosity. I will however endeavour to pay it forward and to always remember and cherish the support, advice and care.

I want to acknowledge my biological family, who has always driven me to do my best, to be kind and to believe in myself. The little gay kid in me could not imagine what my life would have been like without Mom, Dad, Niki, Andrew (and all of the nieces, nephews and in-laws) in it. They are and have always been my touchpoint, role-models and ‘my hart se punt’. I also want to acknowledge the kindness and generosity that I received from Oom Terry, Matty and Shannon, which has meant that this journey and this work was possible. Their continued support of me and my family means that they will forever be part of the memory of this thesis.

My logical family, Bradley Martin, Dudley Moo-Mar and Rupert Moo-Mar cannot be acknowledged enough. They have given up so much to allow me to keep pursuing this research. They were there watching me typing away over weekends, they understood when went into a little study hole or when I needed a hand (or paw) of support. My love for the three of them is part of why this work means so much. A special thanks to Ross, Marg and the Martin family, who have embraced this kid from South Africa and have watched as I drove Bradley crazy and cheered me on when things were going well.
My utmost appreciation and thanks must go to the principals and the teachers involved in the interviews, for opening up their hearts and their school to me. I hope that this research can create the type of change we were all hoping it could. Teachers play and have played an important part of my life, so a special thank you to all educators, and my educators in particular, ranging from my school teachers to my university professors, both in South Africa and Australia. Acknowledgement must also go to the MGSE administrative support, who put up with hundreds of inane emails and requests for help, and who always took the time to point me in the right direction. I want to acknowledge, remember and thank, Dr. Malcolm Turnbull, the first chair of my thesis committee whose laugh and sage advice I am sorry that other students cannot hear (and to Associate Professor Russell Cross, who stepped in for the last few months).

Finally, to all the friends and colleagues who have advised, supported, enquired about or just sat through another discussion about the research that I was doing. Please know, that every one of you deserve a little part of this, for being part of the best cheerleading team around. I cannot believe I am in the stadium and the finish line is about to be crossed. I would also like to make a special mention of Mona Stevens, the Board of the Utah Pride Center and my colleagues and friends at the Center, who gave me time, support and space to complete this work. I am so proud to be working for an organisation where LGBTQ identities are celebrated and where we create change every day.

None of this work would be here without you all, ‘baie, baie, dankie!’
# Table of Contents

**Abstract** ................................................................................................................................. i

**Declaration** ............................................................................................................................... iii

**Acknowledgements** ................................................................................................................ iv

**Table of Contents** ...................................................................................................................... vi

**Chapter 1 – Introduction of the rationale and positioning of the work** ............................... 1

  - Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1
  - Positioning the research ........................................................................................................ 3
    - Context in which the research was conducted ................................................................. 4
    - Focal Point of the Research ............................................................................................... 5
    - The legislative expectations ............................................................................................... 6
  - Thesis terminology and considerations ............................................................................. 11
    - LGBTQ .............................................................................................................................. 11
    - Heteronormativity .............................................................................................................. 12
  - Thesis structure and chapter outline .................................................................................. 12
  - Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 15

**Chapter 2 – Literature Review** .............................................................................................. 16

  - Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 16
  - Challenges for LGBTQ individuals ................................................................................... 17
    - Current reality .................................................................................................................... 17
    - Identity Development ........................................................................................................ 21
  - Challenges for school leadership ......................................................................................... 23
    - Current realities ................................................................................................................ 23
    - Dilemmas faced by school leaders ..................................................................................... 25
  - Challenges for Teachers ......................................................................................................... 27
    - Current realities ................................................................................................................ 27
    - Teacher education and training ......................................................................................... 29
  - Vision and Goals of Australian education .......................................................................... 31
  - Safe Schools and Gay-Straight Alliances ........................................................................... 33
    - Impact of safe schools ....................................................................................................... 35
    - Safe Schools Coalition in Australia .................................................................................. 36
  - Role of education ................................................................................................................... 38
    - School as a place to organise knowledge, meaning and promote agency ...................... 40
    - School as a place of care ..................................................................................................... 42
  - Leading Change .................................................................................................................... 45
  - Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 50

**Chapter 3 – Critical theory** .................................................................................................... 52

  - Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 52
Chapter 5 - Culture and Environment ......................................................... 109

Introduction ................................................................................................. 109

Impact of school inclusive culture ............................................................... 109

Power and Culture ....................................................................................... 114

Socio-Economic context and Culture ......................................................... 118

Adapting culture .......................................................................................... 122

Using familiar language and concepts ....................................................... 123

Collaborative, community focus ................................................................. 126

Power of symbolic representation ............................................................. 127
Chapter 6 – Visible Leadership ................................................................. 141

Introduction ....................................................................................... 141

Leading with purpose ........................................................................ 142
The role of the leader ......................................................................... 142
Symbolic leadership and action .......................................................... 145

Leading others and building support ................................................ 150
Creating a revolutionary consciousness .......................................... 151
Enabling enlightenment and empowerment .................................... 154
Building coalitions ............................................................................ 159

Dialogue ............................................................................................ 162

Conclusion .......................................................................................... 166

Chapter 7 - Constraining LGBTQ inclusion .................................... 168

Introduction ....................................................................................... 168

Fear of engaging in LGBTQ issues .................................................... 169
Fear of initiating the LGBTQ change process ................................. 170
Heteronormative fear of the ‘sexual other’ ...................................... 175
Fear of lack of knowledge and understanding ............................. 180

Permission to drive the change process ............................................ 183
Non-LGBTQ perspective .................................................................. 183
LGBTQ perspective .......................................................................... 185
The ‘Non-threatening Queer’ perspective ....................................... 186

Organisational barriers and resistance to change ......................... 188
Self-Interest ...................................................................................... 189
Intolerant perspectives and understandings .................................. 191
Resource burden and fatigue .............................................................. 193
Lack of trust ...................................................................................... 195

Conclusion .......................................................................................... 196

Chapter 8 - Enabling LGBTQ Change ............................................. 199

Introduction ....................................................................................... 199

The need to provide care .................................................................. 199

Contact with LGBTQ individuals .................................................... 203

Finding and seeing support .............................................................. 208
Support from peers, colleagues and leadership ........................... 208
Support from external organisations or legislation ...................... 210
Support from students at the school .............................................. 213

Visible and vocal leadership ............................................................ 215
Common understanding of the purpose of education ......................................................... 217
Vision and Values .............................................................................................................. 217
Praxis – reflection and action.......................................................................................... 221
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 223

Chapter 9 – Conclusion and Findings .............................................................................. 225

Introduction....................................................................................................................... 225

What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian,
gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff? .................................... 225
A common understanding of the purpose of education................................................. 226
A clear school vision and well-articulated set of school values .................................... 227

What is the role of school leadership? ............................................................................. 228
They should be visible and vocal symbols of change ............................................... 228
They should form strong coalitions and facilitate dialogue ....................................... 229
They should understand the expectations upon them ................................................. 230

What is the role of teachers? ......................................................................................... 231
They should develop knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ issues ..................... 231
They should recognise the importance of colleagues and students’ perspectives ...... 232

Other forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change? ................................. 232
Fear .................................................................................................................................. 233
Contact theory ................................................................................................................ 234
Who leads the change? .................................................................................................. 234

The road to a more inclusive schooling system ............................................................. 235

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................... 239

APPENDIX # 1 – School site invitation to participate .................................................... 249
APPENDIX # 2 – Principal Information sheet................................................................. 250
APPENDIX # 3 – School Consent Form ......................................................................... 251
APPENDIX # 4 – Email invitation to participate ............................................................. 252
APPENDIX #5 -Advertisement ....................................................................................... 253
APPENDIX #6 – Plain language statement .................................................................. 254
APPENDIX #7 – Interview Consent form ..................................................................... 255
APPENDIX #8 – List of interview questions .................................................................. 256
APPENDIX # 9 – Invitation to debrief .......................................................................... 257
Chapter 1 – Introduction of the rationale and positioning of the work

Introduction

This thesis grew from the idea of change happening in education spaces and from the opportunities that schools and educational leadership have to incite and drive change for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals within those spaces. This research should encourage the development of more diverse and inclusive schools. Schools that better reflect and interpret the social and political attitudes of a more accepting and welcoming Australian society regarding LGBTQ individuals.

At its heart, this work is one which considers how schools understand and react to the discrimination and oppression of LGBTQ individuals which may exist within their environment and, more importantly, what drives the engaged school leaders to attempt to change these situations. The key research question that is going to be considered is; ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ Flowing from this question are some of the following sub-questions - What is the role of school leadership? What is the role of teachers? What are the significant forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?

Before we can ask the research question, there needs to be an indication of a problem that should be addressed. The current research paints the image of schools as unsafe and perilous spaces for LGBTQ individuals (Hillier et al., 2010; Ullman, 2015; Kosciw et al., 2018). There are distinct and dangerous problems associated with homophobia and transphobia in schools. In a national survey of Australian gender and sexuality diverse young people, it is reported that 61% of young people experience verbal or physical abuse due to being perceived as LGBTQ and that 80% of this abuse takes place at school (Hillier et al., 2010). This study reports that as many as 37% of the
young people surveyed considered their schools to be homophobic and transphobic, while only 20% felt their schools were safe and supportive of their sexuality (Hillier et al., 2010).

In contrast to the data above that highlights the negative experiences in some schools, there is data that shows that if schools are able to be more inclusive and better understand their LGBTQ staff and students, there are positive outcomes. Research by Patterson (2013) and Ullman (2015) indicates that schools can make an important difference in LGBTQ individuals’ lives if they create cultures that are safe, supportive, and inclusive of LGBTQ identities. There is a correlation between school climates that are supportive of LGBTQ identities and constructive school outcomes (Patterson, 2013; Ullman, 2015). In schools where the students see staff members as caring and willing to step in to help correct homophobic behaviours there are feelings of connectedness and happiness reported in that school space by the LGBTQ students (Patterson, 2013; Ullman, 2015).

Moore (2000) contends that what is taught in schools is never a 'neutral or innocent decision or simply an outcome of changes in educational theory' (p. 19). The way a school operates, and the knowledge being transmitted in classrooms is socially constructed, and decisions are made as to what is essential and what is not. The education curriculum and school environment are a reflection of our social identity (Apple, 2013). The history of the curriculum, school policies and school change can be considered to be a social history of our culture and norms (Apple, 2013; Moore, 2000). Kumashiro (2015) argues that as progressive social movements start to emerge in society, education can be a method to transform individuals in a way that is deemed desirable by society. Kumashiro (2015) continues to say that as societies’ norms change, the social change is reflected in the curriculum, the school leadership, school culture and teachers.

While some schools have done very little to address the gap between expectation and execution, other schools have implemented a change in policy and outlook. It is the journey and struggles of these successful schools that this research highlights and that can provide a 'roadmap' for how others could adopt a more progressive stance on LGBTQ rights within the educational
environment. This thesis uses data collected through semi-structured interviews to tell the stories of individuals and schools that are being proactive in driving change for LGBTQ individuals. The purpose is twofold: first, to serve as examples of best practice; and second, to show those who fear change and who fear addressing this situation that while it may seem daunting, and at times be difficult, the results and the outcome are worth it.

This research project afforded an opportunity to study the success stories and narratives of participants from two very different schools in Victoria, Australia. Both schools embarked on a journey of LGBTQ inclusive practice and had recognised the importance of their LGBTQ staff and students. When this research was conducted, one of the schools was at the start of the process. The other school had been a vocal advocate of inclusivity for many years. One of the schools consists of a relatively heterogeneous school stakeholder population, whereas the other describes a very homogenous one. The critical themes of school culture and visible leadership emerged in the analysis of the narratives that were collected. The data also provided an opportunity to examine and explore those factors that facilitate change and LGBTQ inclusive practice and those that constrain and hinder it.

The section above has explained the relevance of the research that has been conducted. The next section positions the research and considers the space within the LGBTQ, education and leadership realm where this thesis is situated.

**Positioning the research**

This section considers two issues; first, the context within which the research was conducted, and second, the focal point of the work. The research also sits in context of the statistics presented above regarding bullying, and negative school experiences (Hillier et al., 2010), as well as the research that recognises the impact and benefits of pursuing LGBTQ inclusive practice (Patterson, 2013; Ullman, 2015).
Context in which the research was conducted

This research was seven years in the making. The writing of this thesis occurred before, during and after a period of significant social change in the Australian landscape. In 2008, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), articulated a set of broad and far reaching goals in their document, ‘The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ (Barr et al., 2008). This guiding document for the Australian education system sets forth a vision for the education and training of young people in Australia and seeks to guide principals, school management, teachers, education departments and students in understanding key priority areas.

There were organisations and schools actively, and seemingly effectively, pursuing inclusive LGBTQ procedures and policies (Minus18, 2016; FYA, 2017). In particular, the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSC), an Australian Government-funded national network of organisations was doing significant work with school communities to create safer and more inclusive environments for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families. According to the website FYA (2017), the Safe Schools Coalition offered teacher training, a variety of resources to improve teacher knowledge and skills and consultation or support. The SSC connected with a variety of public, private and religious schools in order to support the needs of their school community (FYA, 2017).

However, two critical issues were to arise – the marriage equality plebiscite and the reaction to the Safe Schools Coalition work in schools. The data collection had started well before the Australian Government decided to actively pursue changing the legislation around 'marriage equality' and fund a postal survey to poll the population about their views on marriage between same-sex couples. The referendum led to the adoption of marriage equality in Australia in 2018 and legislative change regarding gender on passports and identity documents in 2019. While on the surface, this may provide the illusion of a more inclusive community for LGBTQ individuals, the reality was that the public survey and discourse around marriage equality amplified many negative perspectives on LGBTQ individuals. More recently, there have been homophobic
comments from rugby player Israel Folau and a furore about transgender footballer Hannah Mouncey. Homophobia and transphobic comments continue to play out through social media and in press comments sections.

The second important issue was the push-back against the Safe Schools Coalition of Australia (SSC). There was a public and negative response to many of the initiatives that the SSC put forward, led by politicians who felt that it was inappropriate to teach these topics in schools. A vitriolic media campaign was levelled against crucial SSC leaders (Fenwick, 2016; Law, 2017; Parkinson, 2016). In 2017 funding for the SSC was discontinued, however the group’s resources were put onto the Australian Government Department of Education website, under the Student Wellbeing Hub (“Student Wellbeing Hub,” 2019). At that point, it became clear that there was still much work to do if Australian schools are to be genuinely 'safe' for LGBTQ students. This thesis provides a valuable opportunity to critically examine the experience of education leaders in two schools committed to the reformation of culture and practice for the benefit of a particularly vulnerable demographic within their institutions.

The participant responses in this thesis had been shaped by experiences and views of an Australia that had not yet gone through that difficult period.

**Focal Point of the Research**

This research sits at the junction between 'what should be done?' and 'what could be done?'. There are documents, guidelines (DET, 2016) and legislation (Equal Opportunity Act, 2010) that point to the fact that our society has settled the question of 'what should be done?'. With regards to LGBTQ individuals, these documents state that education needs to be inclusive and equitable. On addressing the question of 'what could be done?', there are a plethora of organisations that have resources and curriculum documents that could help schools understand various options. Organisations such as the Safe Schools Coalition (SSC), the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Minus18, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), all have approved content and web-based ideas that could be implemented at
schools (FYA, 2017; GLSEN, 2017; Minus18, 2016). So, what is missing is the link between those two. In other words, the will and the drive to embark on the complex and challenging journey between what we could do and what we should do. It is that focal point that forms the crux of this research.

In order to better understand where the focus of this research is situated, it is necessary to unpack further and describe the questions raised above.

**The legislative expectations**

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which provides the policy framework for the Australian curriculum, clearly states that two critical goals of the Australian curriculum are that, ‘Australian schooling should promote equity and excellence’ and that, ‘All young Australians should become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens’ (Barr et al., 2008, p. 7). While expressed in broad terms, these goals point to the importance of recognising individuals and taking personal situations into account in order to produce vibrant and engaged learners. The use of the term ‘equity’ is particularly important, as it emphasises the idea that it is not sufficient to simply provide equal access to education and resources (‘equality’). Equity means that in some cases, because of situations outside of the student’s control, (be they issues of sexuality, disability, aboriginality, gender etc.) they may require extra, targeted intervention and resources to ensure the high-quality education envisioned by the education authorities.

The Melbourne Declaration extends this commitment to a fair and inclusive education through educational goals that focus on well-being and a strong sense of identity. The Declaration states that its aim is to develop ‘confident and creative individuals’ who ‘have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing; develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others.’ (Barr et al., 2008, p. 8). These goals for the new curriculum have to take into consideration the situations that exist at schools regarding how, in some schools,
LGBTQ individuals might be marginalised and their sexual or gender-identities ignored. Chapter 2 explores the literature regarding the social and emotional context of being LGBTQ at schools. The goals of the Melbourne Declaration do not seem to be achievable aims if schools neglect to adequately and overtly address the experiences of the LGBTQ staff and students in their care.

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) used the goals of the Melbourne Declaration to inform the development of the Australian curriculum. ACARA is the authoritative body which provides advice on the Australian national curriculum, the assessment and reporting for government ministers (ACARA, 2013). Key elements of the curriculum include the proposition that students should develop ‘personal and social capability’ (p. 17) in order to better understand themselves and others (ACARA, 2013). This element entails helping students to develop empathy for others and trying to build positive relationships with their peers. A further dimension is that students should develop intercultural understanding (ACARA, 2013). While this might be understood as a race or ethnically based dimension, it commensurately draws attention to the need for students to understand how personal and group identities are formed and the changing nature of society and culture. Only then are students positioned to ‘recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect’ (ACARA, 2013, p. 17).

The two schools in this study from which participant narratives were drawn, are both located in Victoria, Australia. In addition to the philosophical positioning of the Melbourne Declaration, and the mandates of the Australian curriculum, schools in Victoria also need to be aware of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006). The Charter protects twenty civil and political rights relating to themes of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. When schools consider issues of bullying that may arise from not being proactive in this space, they must be cognisant of rights contained in the Charter, such as the 'Right to privacy and reputation' or the 'Right to protection from inhuman or degrading treatment' (Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006).
The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 also imposes a duty on schools to proactively ensure that discrimination does not occur. The aim of the Act is to identify and eliminate discrimination and to promote ways in which equality and equity can be achieved. Under the Act, it is prohibited to discriminate directly or indirectly on, among other things, the attributes of gender identity, lawful sexual activity and sexual orientation (Equal Opportunity Act 2010). Through the expectation of a 'positive duty of care', the Act compels school leaders, teachers and support staff to put effective strategies in place to provide positive and safe environments for all students. The Act does provide for exceptions in the case of religious schools. A religious school is allowed to discriminate based on religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity if it conforms to their doctrine, beliefs or religious principles (Equal Opportunity Act 2010).

The legislative landscape of Australia in general, and Victoria in particular, establishes that all students should be supported to complete their studies in an environment free from discrimination or harassment. Beyond any moral imperative, there is a clear legal framework in place to protect the rights of LGBTQ students.

Implementing LGBTQ social justice

The section above has described the policy, guideline and legislative expectations for LGBTQ inclusive practice. This section will consider some of the actions that school leaders and teachers can take to create an LGBTQ inclusive space.

There are some inherent problems with inclusive education initiatives. Policy frameworks developed within individual schools reflect the cultural and educational priorities of the institution. Armstrong et al. (2011) state that in formulating policy, words such as 'diversity', 'inclusivity' and 'social justice' at least notionally signpost the values and goals school leaders seek to embed in institutional culture. The extent to which they succeed, however, is difficult to judge given the full range of possible interpretations which might attach to each concept (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). Morrish & O'Mara (2011) claim that such terms have become
ubiquitous in school and education authority documentation: all-encompassing concepts that are sometimes considered to be a ‘signifier of everything and yet nothing’ (p. 974).

Some of the policy guidelines which are derived from the Melbourne Declaration and ACARA, about diversity, inclusion or equity could be considered vague and non-measurable. School leaders often differ as to how they are going to achieve goals that will create the empathetic, confident individuals as anticipated by education guidelines (Barr et al., 2008). While there are a variety of different options that are available to schools in order to achieve those goals, if a school does commit to promote and encourage LGBTQ inclusion and recognition in the school environment, solutions and actions can be found in a variety of sources.

For example, a suggested set of criteria for a safe and inclusive school are presented by the Victorian Government’s Department of Education and Training on their Safe Schools Coalition webpage (DET, 2016; “Student Wellbeing Hub,” 2019). This site includes resources, suggested curriculum ideas and a variety of suggestions for improving a school environment and making it more affirming and inclusive for those individuals who are same-sex attracted or gender diverse (DET, 2016; FYA, 2017). Another example of a well-respected online resource is the Minus18 site (Minus18, 2016). This resource claims to be the most extensive network for LGBTQ youth in Australia and provides tools and content focused on youth issues. The site also has some particular resources focused on transgender and gender identity topics that may emerge at a school (Minus18, 2016). The 'Fair go, sport!' site and program set up by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), provides a starter kit for schools aiming to make their sport and physical education departments safer and more inclusive for young people who want to play sport and for coaches who want to support those sportspeople who are LGBTQ (VEOHRC, 2015). These three examples are all Australian-based and are just a small sample of the tested and researched resources and ideas available to schools.

When considering the criteria for the evaluation of a school that would be safe and inclusive for LGBTQ staff and students, there are a variety of measures suggested as appropriate. These
include: visible signs of support for gender and sexual diversity around the school; leadership acknowledgement and discussion at meetings and assemblies; accessible and well distributed anti-bullying policies; guidelines that explicitly describe homophobia and transphobia; opportunities for students to take their same-sex partners to school dances; and specific staff professional development or training (DET, 2016; Minus18, 2016; VEOHRC, 2015).

There is a debate about the size and scale of the LGBTQ initiatives that should be incorporated. While this thesis does not assess the full spectrum of programs or plans that the school leaders choose to pursue, it is worthwhile noting that a broad whole-school process should be the goal of school leaders. Dyson (2008) claims that taking a whole-school approach is a powerful strategy in health promotion and is important in reinforcing sexuality education programs. In the 'Catching on Everywhere Report', Dyson (2008) evaluated a whole school sexuality program which had been initiated by the Victorian Government. The program was evaluated in fifty school settings and concluded that in any sexuality education program, a 'whole-school approach' to student safety and wellbeing was crucial in stemming episodes of homophobic bullying and intimidation (Dyson, 2008). Further, the most crucial action schools could take when trying to incorporate LGBTQ students and issues into a school and the curriculum, was to create and celebrate diversity continually and reflecting LGBTQ identities at the school. Dyson (2008) states that inclusiveness should be reflected in every aspect of the school, from its curriculum, teaching and learning, organisation, policies and culture, to its community and stakeholder engagement.

This section articulates the main focus of the research. The research question is situated at that nexus between expectations and action. There are a variety of legal requirements for leaders of schools to follow in order to make the schools safe for their students and staff, and there are several different LGBTQ social justice programs or ideas that they could implement. The research has been positioned at that point which seeks to understand the driving forces for change. It investigates the factors that connect the expectations to take action and the action itself.
Thesis terminology and considerations

This field of study is one fraught with confusion and misunderstanding when it comes to some important terminology. These concepts will be used to underpin some of the later findings and to enhance understandings of the challenges and opportunities that school leaders face when seeking to become more LGBTQ inclusive.

LGBTQ

This term describes the spectrum of individuals, sexualities and gender identities that are present and discussed in this thesis. This initialism has been explained earlier to mean; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. For purposes of clarity, the terms lesbian, gay and bisexual refer to sexual identities, and the term transgender refers to gender identity (Riggle & Rostosky, 2012). There are many different ways in which the three sexualities can be ordered, but I have chosen to acknowledge the historical marginalisation and invisibility of lesbians by placing the 'L' first (Witthaus, 2010). The term queer is a broad, all-encompassing term that is somewhat trickier to define as Riggle and Rostosky (2012), state it can refer to gender or sexual identity. Queer is an indispensable term to include in this discussion not only as it was a term used by participants in the study, but also due to its increasing popularity as a way to identify among young people.

There are two important caveats. First, using these letters maintains the sense of 'otherness' that exists, and it perpetuates an idea that there is a notion of being ‘normal’ i.e. heterosexual. It does not acknowledge the fluidity of gender or sexuality (Meyer & Carlson, 2014). Second, I understand that the notion of limiting this work to LGBTQ is problematic as there are so many different identities which are explicitly excluded from it. For example, in Australia, the more common terminology used in research is LGBTQI or LGBTIA, which includes the vital identity of the intersex and asexual individuals. While I want to be clear that I am in no way seeking to marginalise individuals who identify as intersex, asexual, genderqueer or questioning, and I am not suggesting that any of these identities are fixed; it is important to me that the initialism be one that best illustrates and defines the identities as discussed by research participants.
Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is the term that is given to situations whereby issues of sexuality and gender fluidity are relegated to a marginalised and stigmatised position (Meyer & Carlson, 2014). The key assumption is that heterosexuality is the norm or the default, and any alternate gender or sexual identity does not need to be acknowledged (Miller & Mahamat, 2000; Witthaus, 2010). Heteronormativity goes hand in hand with ideas of power, hegemony and control, as it is a way for those who are in the dominant position of power to police 'other' or 'different' forms of gender or sexuality (Meyer & Carlson, 2014). Another way to consider this phenomenon is to think about the term 'homophobia'. This term often goes hand in hand with heteronormativity, but its focus is the stigmatisation of LGBTQ people through fear, hatred, bullying and other ignorant behaviours.

One of the important reasons for including this term is that Kumashiro (2015) claims that many teachers do not understand every day, implicit assumptions of heterosexism that exist within their classrooms. This thesis is an attempt to understand why schools stand up to challenge the invisible ways in which society seeks to favour heteronormative identities. It investigates the reasons why teachers, students, and school leadership in two school settings sought to address heteronormativity and homophobia within their school environments.

Thesis structure and chapter outline

This thesis is structured to address the research question ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ It also investigates the sub-questions of; ‘What is the role of school leadership? What is the role of teachers? What are the significant forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?’ This introductory chapter lays out the rationale for the research and the focus of the study. It also briefly considers a few important definitions that will be used throughout the thesis.
The second chapter lays out the literature and research, which taken together form a contemporary discourse around issues of gender, sexuality in the Australian public education system. It argues that to understand the prevailing discourse in education and its role in creating change, is to understand the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals within our schools. The chapter also addresses the challenges facing change-makers within the Australian education context.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework used to understand and conceptualise research data and inform findings. In selecting a framework, the focus is on the writings and ideas of the critical theorists who describe theories and concepts such as power, oppression, culture, repressive tolerance and leading change. This critical theory framework is an integral part of understanding the choices that people make and how or why individuals are either maintaining a status quo or working to transform school cultures and environments.

The methodology used to collect the data is detailed in Chapter Four. This chapter includes a discussion about the relevance of the research and the research design used for the data collection and analysis. The benefits and limitations of qualitative research are considered. There is also a section examining the use of narrative inquiry using semi-structured interviews. This chapter contains a discussion about the validity and reliability of data and research findings. The final section considers the essential ethics components of this thesis.

Chapters Five to Eight present research findings.

Chapter Five begins with a discussion of institutional culture and environment. The first section focuses on how school culture can be adapted, and LGBTQ inclusive practice can be embedded. Critical theory is used to understand the underlying culture and environment as described in the semi-structured interviews and how they play a part in the changes that happened and are still happening within each institution. The impact of the school culture on the pace of change and the desire for change are explored, particularly within the constructs of hegemony, oppression
and repressive tolerance. There is also an investigation into how the inclusive LGBTQ practice has impacted the school environment and how it is being maintained.

Chapter Six focuses on the leaders of the schools and observes how they have led the changes in the school. It uses the ideas put forth by critical theorists on the use of power, symbolism, dialogue and praxis. The leaders in these schools identified several vital decisions, such as the importance of coalitions of stakeholders and empowering individuals to make a change. The data indicates that the strategies employed by the schools’ leaders inspired the school stakeholders to understand why the LGBTQ inclusive practice is important.

The next two chapters consider those factors identified by research participants as enabling change and those factors which worked to hinder and constrain it. Chapter Seven scrutinises those factors that limited and constrained the change process, and that slowed down the process of LGBTQ inclusive teaching and culture. The discussion explores concepts such as fear of driving the change, fear of lack of knowledge and the cultural fear of ‘the other’. It also considers the organisational barriers and resistance to change that might exist. Chapter Eight examines how LGBTQ inclusive practice has been enabled and facilitated in target schools. These factors include the need to provide care; contact with LGBTQ staff and students; and the power of seeing and finding support amongst peers, external organisations and students within the schools.

The final chapter brings together the findings from data chapters and presents conclusions that answer the key research question. This chapter considers the importance of the change process. It analyses the forces and factors that enable school management to implement a successful change process so that schools become more inclusive of the LGBTQ students and staff. The conclusion reiterates the underlying purpose of this research and answers why this change took place and how it could inspire change within the schooling system.
Conclusion

As described above, the key focus of this thesis is to understand what prompts schools to move from a position of wanting to do something for their LGBTQ community to overt action, where school leaders engage and drive the change process in a positive and affirming manner. There are schools in Victoria that have adopted overt and explicit LGBTQ policies, and this research seeks to illuminate the narratives of the change makers and the way two institutions managed the process of implementing LGBTQ inclusive programs or policies. It investigates the journey of change; from the building of expectations of diversity and inclusivity documented by government and education authorities to the eventual adoption and implementation of a broad-ranging school policy focusing on LGBTQ students and staff. Within that journey, there are stories, challenges, successes and opportunities that will be analysed and used to encourage other schools to begin their transition to a more inclusive and nurturing environment.

This research will help schools and education authorities to drive more action in this space. It will assist schools facing challenges and increasing social expectation for change. By documenting the steps taken, and by identifying the tools and resources which leaders identified as a prerequisite for change, this thesis will enable others to also move beyond a hesitant position and into one of action.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review that investigates research undertaken about the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in secondary education and about the expectations for programs that support safe, educational environments. The chapter explores the research about the realities for LGBTQ students at schools today. It will first consider the education environment that exists, and that poses challenges to LGBTQ students within the space. The next two sections introduce literature that considers how school leaders and teachers have to grapple with this social justice issue. The fourth section focuses on Australian education goals and objectives. The debate surrounding the Safe Schools Coalition is investigated in the fifth section. The penultimate section in this chapter links to the critical idea that when school stakeholders have a clear idea of how they perceive the role of education at their school, then they are more likely to be active drivers of change. Finally, there is a review of research understanding how an organisation’s leaders drive and manage change.

The challenges that are prevalent when it comes to issues of same-sex attraction or gender diversity are complex. Morrish and O'Mara (2011) contend that even while looking in the direction of democracy and inclusion, many educational institutions prefer their diverse minorities to ‘embody their differences in a visible way’ (p. 956). Therefore, when it comes to many diversity and inclusivity policies, schools tend to be focused on issues of race, gender, disability or nationality (Morrish & O'Mara, 2011). This focus means that some schools are neglecting or marginalising their LGBTQ stakeholders. This chapter will review literature that considers the implication of not including LGBTQ individuals in school life and policies and the experiences of those individuals at schools. Reilly (2007) makes the point that while it is vital that diversity and inclusion policies are being written and implemented, research shows that many are failing to recognize the ‘presence, promise and potential for pride of their LGBTQ or questioning populations’ (p. 122) in their formulation, discourse and curricular representation.
In the next three sections, I will be investigating some of the issues faced by LGBTQ individuals within the education environment and the challenges that leaders of schools' face when trying to implement LGBTQ inclusive policy or school programs. This literature review will lead to a section describing the current Australian education goals and objectives and the expectations for equality.

**Challenges for LGBTQ individuals**

This first section of the literature review examines the challenges and reality of being a young LGBTQ student in school. This section is probably the main reason why LGBTQ inclusive practices should be taking place within schools in Australia, particularly when one considers the rates of verbal and physical bullying and the impact on young people (Hillier et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2018; Ullman, 2015). This section is an overview of the current reality of being an LGBTQ student and then a discussion on the importance of identity development and how LGBTQ students struggle within discriminatory school spaces.

**Current reality**

It is recognised that schools can be dangerous places, and unsafe environments for LGBTQ youth and they are still spaces of marginalisation despite the increased global acceptance of LGBTQ identities (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013; Ollis, 2010; Ullman, 2015). LGBTQ populations at schools are vulnerable groups and these negative school experiences affect the mental, social and economic lives of the students who experience them (Russell, Horn, Kosciw, & Saewyc, 2010). Research done in the USA by Russell et al. (2010) indicates that the rates of bullying and victimisation of young LGBTQ individuals at schools is increasing, and that this increase is being fostered by the school cultures and contexts in terms of their attitudes to these young people.

Even though it appeared that Australia was moving toward LGBTQ inclusion at unprecedented speed a few years ago, schools continue to perpetuate stereotypes of gender and conservative
cultural beliefs (McGuire, 2017; Ward, 2017). Shannon and Smith (2017) state that one of the most important functions of a school is to help guide participation in society and the socialisation of young people. This work is particularly important and challenging when working with LGBTQ students as the opportunity to discuss LGBTQ identity, culture, history and lived experience is often absent in school (Shannon & Smith, 2017). The result of schools not visibly including LGBTQ youth is that their legitimacy in the space is devalued, their sense of belonging decreases and disproportionate rates of depression, suicidal ideation and anxiety are reported (Fulcher, 2017; Hillier et al., 2010; Patterson, 2013; Shannon & Smith, 2017). This is of even more concern, Floyd and Bakeman (2006) claim that young people are coming-out at earlier and earlier ages. The work of Ryan and Futterman (1998) suggesting that this is because there is an increase in ideas of self-labelling, self-awareness, and an openness to disclose their sexual or gender identity to others.

In considering a justification for the research there has been an investigation into the reality of the lives of young LGBTQ youth at schools. In the first chapter, some of the statistics gained from the report of Hillier et al. (2010) based on the national survey of Australian gender and sexuality diverse young people, ‘Writing themselves in 3: The third national report into the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young people’, were highlighted. This research reported that 61% of young people experience verbal or physical abuse due to being perceived as LGBTQ and that 80% of this abuse takes place at school. It also shows that 37% of young people considered their schools to be unsafe (Fulcher, 2017; Hillier et al., 2010). In separate research work, ‘Free2Be?: Exploring the schooling experiences of Australia’s sexuality and gender diverse secondary school students’, Ullman (2015) reports that 94% of students report having heard homophobic language at schools and even when the language was used in front of a staff member, only 5% reported ever seeing anything done by that teacher. Ullman’s research (2015) also found that teachers listed students who were being perceived as being gay, was one of the top three reasons students reported being bullied at school. The largest United States survey mirrored the results found in Australia, with the ‘The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation’s Schools’ indicating that in 2017, that 59.5% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at schools due to their sexual
identity and that 70.1% experienced verbal harassment during school hours (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018).

The ‘Writing Themselves in 3’ survey in Australia indicates that young people felt less safe, were increasingly prone to self-harm and drug use and had increased suicidal ideation (Hillier et al., 2010). According to work done in the ‘Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools’ (Smith, Ward, Mitchell, & Sainsbury, 2010) and the research done by Ward (2017), ‘I Just Want to Be Myself': How We Can Challenge Homophobia, Transphobia, and Racism in Australian Schools’ there are critical results of LGBTQ bullying, harassment or violence in schools. They are that there is a reduction in levels of attendance at school, which could jeopardize overall performance and experiences of homophobia can lead to higher rates of homelessness. Patterson’s (2013) research in the United States, ‘Schooling, sexual orientation, law, and policy: Making schools safe for all students’, exposes other consequences of homophobia and heteronormativity within school environments. LGBTQ students may feel frightened or less confident when they do attend school, may fight back when challenged, feel unable to get support and experience loneliness and distress (Patterson, 2013). LGBTQ students, therefore, struggle to achieve their full academic potential and do not access the full range of programs available to them (Patterson, 2013; Smith et al., 2010). Ullman (2015) points to the fact that schools that are perceived as discriminatory to LGBTQ youth, also lack any formal policies that might be used to make the space safer, thus perpetuating the problem.

Jones (2017) makes the vital point that the majority of the research has been focused on gay and lesbian young people, and their research, ‘Evidence affirming school supports for Australian transgender and gender diverse students’, finds that literature is only recently starting to investigate the impact of unsafe school spaces on transgender or gender non-conforming youth. Patterson (2013) expands on this fact and states that the experiences of these young people are even more hostile and discriminatory. These young people experience heightened levels of discrimination, depression and are more likely to be bullied at school (Patterson, 2013). In further research, Jones et al. (2016) add that the complexity of gender identities that are fluid or non-
binary creates a problematic situation for schools in that many are closeted and afraid to reach out for care. This situation leads to a lack of structural support within the school and about 25% of young transgender or gender diverse young people therefore, report that they avoid school because of this lack of support and the expectation to conform to the gender stereotypes (Jones et al., 2016). Research finds that young transgender and gender non-conforming youth have to use the internet to collect information about their identities, to find support and for meeting others like themselves, this could be both a positive and/or negative experience (Jones et al., 2016; Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden, & Davies, 2014).

In Chapter 1, the research of Patterson, (2013) and Ullman (2015) was cited to show that schools that are safe, supportive and inclusive of LGBTQ young people are making a difference in their lives. School climates that are considered supportive and which recognise LGBTQ identities are shown to correlate with feelings of connectedness and even increased attendance and achievement rates of the LGBTQ young people. (Patterson, 2013; Ullman, 2015). LGBTQ students who felt safe and supported at school also had better educational outcomes (Desai, 2019; Smith et al., 2010; Ullman, 2015). In supportive schools, truancy behaviour decreased and where there was a specific space or club for LGBTQ students, such as a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), students were less likely to hear homophobic language and felt safer (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018; Patterson, 2013; Ullman, 2015). Even though in most school spaces LGBTQ youth are in the minority, institutional visibility of LGBTQ young people and their identities, improved the school climate and enhanced general school wellbeing (Desai, 2019; Ullman, 2015; Ward, 2017). With regards to gender non-conforming and transgender young people, it is worth noting that they are more likely than other LGBTQ youth to advocate for themselves and to become activists for their wellbeing (Jones et al., 2016).

This section examined the current experiences of students at schools and the impact on them if there was an inclusive space or one which was marginalising their identities. Discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia are just some of the ways in which young LGBTQ students experience schooling, and unfortunately, this not only affects them but Rasmussen et al. (2017)
found that it also affects and impacts those that have to intervene, their families and LGBTQ allies as well. Shannon and Smith (2017) claim that an essential step in integrating and including different genders and sexualities into schools was to focus on the interplay between those in power and those who sought to adapt the school culture or school curricula. This interplay significantly impacts the identity development of young LGBTQ people (Shannon & Smith, 2017). The next section considers some of the literature surrounding this critical part of growing up.

**Identity Development**

Shannon and Smith (2017) argue that understanding gender or sexual identity is often a private and very personal experience, but it one which lies at the heart of connecting self-identity and social norms. When considering how individuals go about developing a sense of self, Wyn (2009) states that it is important to remember the need to build one’s own personal multifaceted and fluid identity (sense of self) within a social context. Individuals make active choices about constructing their sense of self and their identity, and often those choices are articulated or first considered within a school environment (Wyn, 2009). The question therefore arises, what about those whose sense of self conflicts with that of the community norms, such as a young gay person or young transgender person? Halverson (2005) contends that ‘LGBTQ youth face more extreme developmental challenges than most mainstream youth, such as learning to manage a stigmatised identity in a potentially hostile environment, making participation in identity-work activities particularly important’ (p. 67). For LGBTQ persons, the tasks of understanding how they see their identity and creating a social identity is burdened by the need to go through a process of development, termed ‘coming out’, wherein they acknowledge their sexual minority status and go through the, sometimes traumatic, process of sharing that information with others (Côté & Levine, 2002, cited in Halverson, 2005).

There are challenges to being a young LGBTQ student trying to develop a sense identity while at school. The literature states that when trying to construct and maintain a viable social and personal identity, some of the specific issues that LGBTQ individuals face include; unlearning the assumptions of heterosexuality, disclosing their identity and learning to manage a stigmatised
identity (Herdt, & Boxer 1993, Ryan & Futterman, 1998, Hetrick & Martin, 1987, cited in Halverson, 2005, p. 75). In many cases, the literature found that construction of that identity is being done within an environment that is being seen as unsupportive, for example where schools have no policies recognising LGBTQ persons or where the verbal bullying of perceived LGBTQ students occurs (Hillier et al., 2010; Ullman, 2015).

Cohler and Hammack (2007) found that there are different ways in which LGBTQ young people experience their time at school. Research indicates that time, location, socio-economic status, culture and context are playing a more significant role in the debate and understanding of the identity development of LGBTQ young people than they have in the past (Cohler & Hammack, 2007). Cohler and Hammack (2007) assert that there appears to be two distinctly different narratives emerging in the way same-sex attracted or gender diverse youth see themselves, and how they chronicle their development. Both of these narratives co-exist in today's society, and the context of each person's story drives their own experiences.

The first narrative is one of 'struggle and success' (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, p. 49). This narrative is based on the stories of same-sex attracted adolescents whose reported experiences were those of harassment, internalised homophobia, anxiety, minority-stress and depression. However, there were also the success stories realised after the struggle, and the models of resilience in a heterosexist world (Cohler & Hammack, 2007). The primary task of an adolescent in this narrative was to 'come out' and to manage the process of 'coming out' in order to feel accepted into gay culture and into society at large (Cohler & Hammack, 2007).

The second narrative that exists is identified as a 'narrative of emancipation' (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, p. 49). This narrative is a journey of self-acceptance where the young person seeks to de-pathologise the experience of sexual identity development and how they self-label and cope with issues of minority stress. This narrative acknowledges the individual's resilience, and the fluidity of their 'sexuality' (Cohler & Hammack, 2007). These young people feel emboldened to ‘live a diverse sexual life, way outside of conventional taxonomy’ (Cohler & Hammack, 2007, p. 54). This
resilience is aided by supportive settings that promote unconditional self-acceptance (Symons, O'Sullivan, Borkoles, Andersen, & Polman, 2014). As was discussed in the section above, schools with GSA-clubs and supportive staff or policies were found to be influential and vital protective factors against any homophobia or verbal bullying (Desai, 2019; Fleming, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2018; Ullman, 2015). It is therefore important that if schools are seeking to assist young people in developing resilient and a strong sense of self, that they understand the imperative for spaces that can promote that opportunity to grow and be accepted.

The impact of this literature for schools and their change program is that it indicates that identity development is different and, in many cases, more difficult for those who identify as LGBTQ. The research in this thesis explores the challenges policymakers have when taking cognisance of this diversity within the LGBTQ population in order to implement more inclusive and targeted programs. The next section focuses on literature that highlights the challenges that school leadership and other stakeholders have with LGBTQ-inclusive practice.

Challenges for school leadership

In the previous section, the literature describes the experiences, challenges and narratives of young people in school. This section focuses on the literature that explores and explains the challenges of being a school principal or leader. It has been broken into a sub-section describing literature relating to current school leadership issues and experiences and then another sub-section that highlights the complexity of the thinking that leaders have to consider when it comes to LGBTQ inclusion and diversity.

Current realities

The literature highlights some critical challenges for consideration when it comes to an understanding of the impact and complexity of LGBTQ inclusive change on school leaders. This sub-section will examine the current issues and experiences being reported in schools.
Ullman (2015) maintains that many Australian school leaders have avoided confronting the issue of LGBTQ marginalisation, by not having policies in place to deal with it, or not embedding any LGBTQ-focused curriculum at the school. Only 40% of young people at school knew where to go to get any information on sexuality or gender diversity, and about 25% recalled spending any formal class time on these topics (Ullman, 2015). Once again, according to the international work coming from the USA and the 2017 School Climate survey, this trend is global, with 62.2% of LGBTQ students in the United States of America seeing discriminatory policies in place at their schools (Kosciw et al., 2018). This research further states that many school leaders have not considered the impact of gendered dress policies, dance attendance policies or policies that regulate where transgender and gender non-conforming young people can go to the bathroom (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018; Meyer & Carlson, 2014). School leaders have also not begun to catch up with policies on using correct pronouns and preferred names (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018). Findings in literature from both the USA and Australia state that the absence of school policy or the discriminatory policy has an effect on the ways in which LGBTQ youth are able to connect and feel safe, as described in the previous section (Kosciw et al., 2018; Ullman, 2015; Ward, 2017).

School leaders are being called upon to operate in environments where different practices, beliefs and values interact in unexpected ways. Meyer and Carlson (2014) state that this can potentially inform a more positive, supportive school space. The ways that students define and express themselves and their sexuality are changing and faced with that, the options for school leaders are to either maintain the status quo or begin to redefine what is meant by the term ‘normal’ (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010). Carpenter and Lee (2010) contend that a key problem in education environments is the difficulty in moving from the situation where the curriculum and the hidden curriculum are not heteronormative and to an environment where all groups and individuals are affirmed and included in order to fully embrace the concept of ‘diversity’ within the classrooms.
Where school leaders have instituted broad anti-harassment or anti-bullying policies which included LGBTQ students, there was a significant benefit (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016; Ullman, 2015). However, these are not effective if they are not publicised, visible and have adequate resources to embed them into the school culture (Meyer & Carlson, 2014). Where this comprehensive work has been done, there was an increased positivity about coming to school, connection with the school culture, and a far better school climate reported (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016; Ullman, 2015). School leadership must understand and work to maintain the critical space that schools occupy in discrediting myths and enabling respect for sexual and gender diversity (Ferfolja, 2013). The next section goes on to describe the challenging positions held by school leaders as custodians of school culture and strategy.

Dilemmas faced by school leaders

There has always been a struggle between the ideas of ‘assimilation’ (recognition) and of ‘liberation’ (redistribution) in the LGBTQ space (Fraser, 1997). When thinking about leading school policy or curriculum, leaders have to be cognisant of these two different end goals.

Jagose (1996), states that those arguing for assimilation would contend that social change should ensure that same-sex attracted and gender diverse individuals have the same social and legal recognition as their heterosexual counterparts. An example of this would be the ‘marriage equality’ movement, which drives the narrative that LGBTQ people are just like everyone else, with a history and culture that should allow them to assimilate and live as everyone else does (Jagose, 1996). Fraser (1997) states that a slightly different way to consider this concept is to think about it as a struggle for recognition that encourages the group to stand out and call attention to itself, its history and its cultural practices. The strategy to address this struggle would be through ‘affirmation’, which seeks to extend recognition to the group and acknowledge and celebrate their identities (Fraser, 1997). One of the drawbacks of this struggle is that there is no desire to understand the underlying class structure, but instead to allow the identity within the group to flourish (Fraser, 1997). This strategy depoliticises the issue of sexual or gender identity
and seeks to allow the LGBTQ subjects to develop their voice within pre-existing structures (Shannon & Smith, 2017).

A different perspective from Jagose (1996), would be to consider those who support liberation and who would prefer to directly challenge the traditional knowledge around gendered behaviour, monogamy and the claims of ‘sameness’. Fraser (1997) feels that this can also be considered to be a struggle for redistribution, which focuses on trying to break down the structures and practices that promote group divisions and the class system. The outcome of the struggle for redistribution is entirely different from that of recognition and assimilation as described above. There is a desire to deconstruct and challenge the entire group differentiation system and to create more fluid and intersecting identities and differences. Within the LGBTQ context this would entail ‘deconstruct[ing] the entire homo-hetero dichotomy and destabilise all fixed gender identities’ (Fraser, 1997, p. 24). Activist teachers or stakeholders might prefer school leaders to follow this path and would prefer alternative understandings of families, gender and sexuality being put forward that challenge privilege and power (Shannon & Smith, 2017)

A further challenge that exists for leaders who want to try to implement LGBTQ change in schools is that of understanding what their school policies mean. They should consider how those policies can bring people to common understandings necessary for LGBTQ inclusive practice. The reality is that when thinking about the formulation of school policies containing words such as ‘diversity’, ‘inclusivity’ and ‘social justice’, they become subjective terms that each means something different to the reader depending on the social contexts or their understandings (Armstrong et al., 2011). The achievement of these social justice terms is complicated and there is often no common understanding of their meaning (Armstrong et al., 2011). School management and staff can begin to understand the change that needs to take place by focusing on the social and political realities that exist within and outside organizations. They should recognise the need to deal with interest groups (and their varying agendas), build power bases, negotiate conflicts, and create compromises that will drive their change process forward in a way that helps the community to understand it (Bolman & Deal, 2011).
School leaders have significant decisions that need to be made. Understanding the importance of these decisions to the school culture and LGBTQ staff and students is imperative. School leadership should have a clear understanding of the LGBTQ inclusive work they want to do, but this requires time and, as described above, some careful thinking. The next section considers how teachers are being impacted by expectations surrounding LGBTQ inclusive practice.

**Challenges for Teachers**

This section considers what the literature says about teachers and the work that needs to be done to improve their knowledge and understanding. The current realities and perceptions regarding school staff members is an essential consideration as this points to one of the reasons why this thesis is important and why school leaders need to step in to help their colleagues. The second part of this section examines the literature that highlights the key reason why teachers are generally ill-prepared for work with LGBTQ young people.

**Current realities**

One of the realities that exist within schools that should be cause for concern, is that harassment and marginalisation of LGBTQ youth exist (as pointed out in the section above). Added to that, teachers are often not acting to address this bullying and are not engaged in helping young people who are victims of this discrimination (Robinson et al., 2014; Ullman, 2015). Where young people had heard the homophobic language at school, less than 5% of the students reported that the teacher did anything about it (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016). There are many places that young LGBTQ people can feel and see discrimination, but due to the sheer amount of time that they spend at school and due to the role of teachers in school spaces, the negative impact that takes place at school is important to understand (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). Teachers function as that critical point of contact for the young LGBTQ student, and they are seen as a way to connect school and policy support with individual student identity and outcomes (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016).
In research undertaken in Australia, Robinson et al. (2014) found that even though student peers were the ones that committed the majority of the bullying or marginalising, it was the homophobia and transphobia committed by teachers that had the most lasting and profound effect on students' lives and sense of self-worth. Teachers report that they often lack confidence and understanding of how to challenge homophobia and transphobia due to inadequate training (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016; Ward, 2017). Ward (2017) contends that the inability for teachers to engage in dialogue or to understand the issues for LGBTQ youth is exacerbated in religious school systems. Robinson et al. (2014), argues that the space in schools that are the most stressful for LGBTQ youth is most often the Health and Physical Education classes or locker rooms. In these classes the teachers expect them to change clothes, play in teams that might not align with their gender identity, or students were given special treatment by teachers who were trying to be sensitive to their situation, but which resulted in more bullying or ostracisation (Robinson et al., 2014).

Once again, the experiences in Australian mirror those internationally. In the national school climate survey in the USA, 55.3% of students felt that teachers would handle a homophobic bullying incident poorly and that there would be no active intervention (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018). As a result of this perception, they did not report homophobic or transphobic incidents (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018). Where the student did choose to report a bullying incident, 60.4% reported that the teachers told them to ignore it, or they ignored the report (Kosciw et al., 2018).

Anxiety and notions of controversy are still attached to any work in schools that relate to gender or sexuality, and it is often just too controversial for teachers and school communities (Shannon & Smith, 2017). While it would be wonderful to think that schools are open to being brave and exploring these topics, there are different ways in which school leadership can silence and refuse to expose students to these discussions (Ferfolja, 2013; Shannon & Smith, 2017). Examples of how teacher marginalise LGBTQ issues are seen when they give opportunities to parents to remove their children from classes where LGBTQ issues are being discussed; or when decisions
are made to not expose students to information about these topics (Ferfolja, 2013; Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017; Ollis, 2010; Shannon & Smith, 2017). Teachers themselves can be silenced through leadership or parents carefully monitoring the teachers and their lesson plans or when pressure is placed on teachers to stay neutral or silent on controversial issues (Ferfolja, 2013; Ollis, 2010; Shannon & Smith, 2017). There is also the assumption by some teachers that they might be considered ‘queer’ or ‘gay’ if they pursue discussions around LGBTQ issues and that as a result of this, they might be harassed themselves (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017).

When schools and school policies are supportive of LGBTQ inclusion, it is reported that the teachers were positive about engaging with students about sexual or gender diversity (Jones & Hillier, 2012; Ollis, 2010; Ullman, 2015). Within these schools, the students were far more likely to report instances of verbal or physical bullying or harassment to staff members, and they felt supported by staff (Ullman, 2015). It is reassuring to know that LGBTQ students are quick to seek out supportive staff and that about 97.7% of LGBTQ students can identify a teacher whom they consider an ally and whom they see as being able to support them (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018). In schools where there was robust support and where students knew or could identify many supportive staff, there was a far better connection to the values and mission of the school, a better sense of belonging, and better academic results (Desai, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018).

**Teacher education and training**

The sub-section above describes and details the literature surrounding teachers, the perception of their engagement and the realities of being a teacher in a school that is supportive of LGBTQ students or one which is not. Teachers are instrumental in creating positive climates in the classroom (Day, Fish, Grossman, & Russell, 2019). One of the reasons that the literature recognises as a significant factor in teacher engagement or lack of engagement is the training, support or education that they have received about LGBTQ issues (Ferfolja, 2013; Jones & Hillier, 2012; Ollis, 2010; Ullman, 2015; Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016; Walsh & Townsin, 2018).
There is a need for better and more thorough training and education of teachers, both pre-service and during their time as teachers in schools (Robinson et al., 2014; Ward, 2017). The subject of LGBTQ sexual and gender identities remains controversial and difficult for teachers to discuss with their peers openly and most certainly with the students in their classroom (Ullman, 2015; Walsh & Townsin, 2018). This fear might stem from ideas of being victimised themselves or a lack of leadership or policy direction on what they may or may not say (Ullman, 2015; Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016). However, the primary reason for this fear, is that there is a distinct lack of training and education for teachers in issues of sexuality, gender and different LGBTQ identities (Ollis, 2010; Ullman, 2015). Zacko-Smith and Smith (2010), stated that ‘most pre-service and in-service teachers are woefully undereducated and underprepared by traditional teacher education programs to deal with educational issues related to sexual orientation’ (p. 4). The result of this is that teachers do not understand fundamental issues such as the difference between sex, gender and sexuality, let alone more complex ones such as where gender and sexuality are considered fluid, flexible and flowing concepts (Ferfolja, 2013; Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010).

Ferfolja (2013) makes the point that teachers need to be provided with adequate in-service and pre-service education and training in order to help both themselves and the students that are in their care. They need to be provided with opportunities to ask questions, understand issues, and to examine their own firmly held beliefs surrounding issues of gender or sexuality (Ferfolja, 2013; Ward, 2017). Once thorough education takes place on these topics, the teachers appear to return to the classroom more motivated to include sexual and gender diversity issues into conversations and more able to tackle homophobia or transphobia (Ollis, 2010; Walsh & Townsin, 2018).

Jones and Hillier (2012) state that teachers need to be better equipped at providing a safe, brave space for students and colleagues, and this is done through better information, and better training. Supportive and informed teachers are seen as one of the significant factors affecting positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth in schools (Kosciw et al., 2013). The next section will examine the Australian educational context and the furore surrounding the Safe Schools Coalition that occurred over the past few years. This section will help to inform an understanding of the
Vision and Goals of Australian education

This section explores the vision and key goals that the Australian education authorities deem essential for all schools. It aids an understanding of the expectations of Australian authorities when it comes to the role of schools within Australia.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), set out a comprehensive list of goals and objectives for Australian education in a document known as, ‘The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ (Barr et al., 2008). This Declaration provides an overarching vision for its understanding of the role of education in its preamble. It states:

*Education equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence.*

*‘Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion (Barr et al., 2008, p. 4).*

Within the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, there is also a clear emphasis on what schools should consider as their primary goals. These include an expectation that Australian schools should promote excellence and equity (Barr et al., 2008). Equity seeks to achieve ‘fairness’ and to address concerns and disparities that are seen in educational achievement and resources linked to variables such as demographics, physical disadvantages, race, sexuality and gender identity (Kornhaber, Griffith, & Tyler, 2014; Unterhalter, 2009). Unterhalter (2009) states that ‘equity’ is a term that is important to
differentiate from ‘equality’ which implies equal distribution of resources for all, regardless of disadvantage.

The Melbourne Declaration makes it clear that Australian schools should strive toward a unified understanding of society. The document declares that; ‘the Australian governments, in collaboration with all school sectors, commit to promoting equity and excellence in Australian schooling’ (Barr et al., 2008, p. 8). The Declaration then describes how schools should aim to promote those ideals. It describes the criteria for ‘excellent’ and ‘equitable’ provision of schooling. This can be achieved using, among others, ideas such as; ‘provid[ing] all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location’, ‘ensur[ing] that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes’ and that schools seek to, ‘reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantage, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness’ (Barr et al., 2008, p. 8). These criteria for schools allow school management, staff and students to see the democratic ideal of equity in practice. They also directly mention the imperative that schools have not to discriminate or allow discrimination based on sexuality or gender.

The Declaration also includes the idea that students should create their own meaning and understanding of society. Some examples of how the document envisions the creation of meaning are by having young people be active and informed, where they understand the Australian culture, diversity, democracy, equity and their potential roles in life (Barr et al., 2008). This belief emphasises the idea that schools have a duty to enable their students to understand their place in society and to become active participants. Young (2011) contends that a point to bear in mind when thinking about how a school engages in this goal-seeking to create meaning and understanding, is to think about the content of the curriculum and to consider how well the staff are able to address the important knowledge that enables students to understand their world better and to interact as critical, active citizens. Young (2011) further states that there is a
need for schools to enable students to comprehend and discuss critical issues through the prescribed curriculum that they would not necessarily discuss in their homes.

The final point to be made is one that considers the changing face of the Australian education environment and the need to be looking toward the future, and toward social justice. The Australian Curriculum documentation has a section on “Ethical Considerations” and states that;

*As cultural, social, environmental and technological changes transform the world, the demands placed on learners and education systems are changing. Technologies bring local and distant communities into classrooms, exposing students to knowledge and global concerns as never before. Complex issues require responses that take account of ethical considerations such as human rights and responsibilities, animal rights, environmental issues and global justice (ACARA, 2016).*

Building ethical understanding and allowing schools to challenge, discuss and include these complex issues throughout all stages of school life should be an essential consideration for school leadership. This goal for ethical understanding assists students in engaging with the more multifaceted issues that they are likely to encounter in the future and to navigate a world of competing values, rights, interests and norms (ACARA, 2016). Within this set of Melbourne Declaration goals, there is also the reality of the socio-political environment, and one of the critical debates that have raged in the education sphere is that of the Safe Schools Coalition.

**Safe Schools and Gay-Straight Alliances**

This section will investigate the phenomenon of safe schools and gay-straight alliances. It starts off with a short explanation of what they are and then move on to looking at literature that explains their impact. The final part of this section will look at the debate and discourse around the Australian Safe Schools Coalition.
Schools are not always safe for all students, as has been shown in the literature above. Safe schools are considered to be ones where the experiences of LGBTQ students and staff are positive ones and where there are policies and program strategies that support the experiences of these individuals (Russell et al., 2010). Palkki and Caldwell (2018) make the point that safe schools and spaces are those where the students ‘feel welcome expressing traits that define them as other’ (p. 29). Russell et al. (2010) point out that much of the work around creating safe schools and spaces for LGBTQ young people grew from the ideas of anti-bullying and lack of safety in schools.

The concept of safe schools has continued to focus on the policies and practices within schools and how positive changes can affect school achievement (Russell et al., 2010). Safe schools and the initiatives around the world vary, but the research of Russell et al. (2010) point to there being a few important characteristics, these include; non-discrimination policies that mention sexual and gender identity, teacher intervention training, inclusion of LGBTQ people and issues in the curricula, and the presence of school-based support groups (often called Gay-Straight Alliances or GSA’s). Some of the more progressive steps can be seen in the recent moves by the New Zealand government to issue a guide that schools should actively review the nature of their gendered environments, such as toilet spaces, uniforms or cultures, as well as revise the curriculum (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2017).

The number of student-led school-based clubs or programs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances, have grown dramatically over the last few years (Fetner & Kush, 2008; Russell et al., 2010). Fetner and Kush (2008) postulate that the increase in GSA’s might be an indication of the generational shift that is happening regarding attitudes to sexuality and gender. The multitude of GSA’s have different agendas, but most focus on creating safe and brave spaces for LGBTQ students, improving interpersonal support, advocacy training and social recreation (Fetner & Kush, 2008; McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2017; Russell et al., 2010). They have been found to be spaces that empower young LGBTQ people and where they are able to challenge the dominant norms of gender and sexuality (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2017; Russell et al., 2010). The GSA’s are often also at the forefront of leading LGBTQ activism focusing on
better treatment of LGBTQ students within the school (Fetner & Kush, 2008). The formation of GSA’s at schools can be limited by issues such as school budget, a rural location and the size of the school (Fetner & Kush, 2008).

**Impact of safe schools**

Kosciw et al. (2018), in their USA research, found that the presence of supportive policies reduced the number of homophobic remarks and also decreased the levels of bullying and harassment based on gender or sexual identity. Russell et al. (2010) argue that having policies that are inclusive and which clearly identify anti-bullying regulations based on gender and sexual identities enable school leadership to enforce non-discrimination measures and provide a context for institutional backing of the regulations.

Russell et al. (2010) claim that in schools where the teachers had been exposed to comprehensive training, there were fewer reports of bullying, a higher class attendance rate, better grades and there were overall more positive relationships between students and staff. At schools were there was access to supportive LGBTQ related resources and where LGBTQ topics had been incorporated into the curricula, Russell et al. (2010) argue that there was a more positive school climate and improved rates of LGBTQ student wellbeing.

Important research findings out of the USA are finding that the presence of GSA’s is linked to safer schools in general for all students (Fetner & Kush, 2008; Russell et al., 2010). Research indicates that young people reported that GSA’s fostered higher feelings of teacher and classmate support (Day et al., 2019). In a study undertaken by Szalacha (2003) it was found that the mere presence of the GSA was the most important predictive factor of perceptions of school safety by LGBTQ students. This research is supported by the work of Marx and Kettrey (2016) who found that not only did the presence of a GSA improve perceptions of safety, but that presence also lowered levels of homophobic remarks and victimisation, as well as improved mental health outcomes in young LGBTQ students. School sponsored and supported GSA’s have been shown to be effective ways to improve school climate and improve student connectedness.
(Day et al., 2019). This is positive news for those schools with GSA’s but concerning for those schools that lack either the resources or the will to initiate a student led school program of this nature (Fetner & Kush, 2008).

The information above focused on what safe schools and GSA’s are in general and the impact that they have on school culture and climate. In Australia, the discourse around the Safe Schools Coalition is important to consider for the context of this thesis. The next part of this section focuses on the work of the SSC and the socio-political uproar that occurred through the course of the research.

**Safe Schools Coalition in Australia**

The Safe Schools Coalition was a national network of organisations working toward making Australian schools safer places for gender and sexuality diverse young people, school staff and families (Cover, Rasmussen, Aggleton, & Marshall, 2017; Fulcher, 2017; Shannon & Smith, 2017). Started in 2010, this coalition provided education and training for schools and teachers, helped to develop resources for schools and young people in order to better explain topics such as being intersex, gender diversity, and sexuality and it provided online curriculum and professional development for teachers (Cover et al., 2017; Shannon & Smith, 2017; Thompson, 2019; Ward, 2010, 2017). Shannon and Smith (2017) point out that the resources were based on academic and peer-reviewed information, and they included information on depression, suicidality and other mental health issues and teaching and learning resources for classrooms across Australia. Parkinson (2016) argues that no school who was a part of the Safe Schools Coalition was mandated to conduct particular courses or classes and they were not held to any particular standard of participation.

Conservative and right-wing ideologues set off a backlash against the SSC in 2016, after they began to interpret the resources and the purpose of the Safe Schools Coalition as intimidating and bullying young people into believing and conforming to the ‘homosexual agenda’ and as
attempts at ‘social engineering’ (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 248). Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull ordered a review of the program. Moral panic and outrage ensued, stoked by organisations such as the Australian Christian Lobby and the Christian Democratic Party (Shannon & Smith, 2017). These groups fostered the ideas, which featured as headlines in conservative media, that the Safe Schools Coalition were pushing radical agendas and gender theories, that it was about destroying the fabric of society and even that it was being driven by predatory adults (Davidson, 2019; Fenwick, 2016; Shannon & Smith, 2017). In a presentation to the New South Wales Committee of Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children and Young People, the conservative Australian Family Association testified that SSC sexualised young people and the education system (Kelleher, 2016). The testimony claimed, among other things, that the Safe School Coalition encouraged children to experiment with gender transition treatment, to believe that gender is fluid, and that boys who identify as girls should use bathrooms and clothes that they feel comfortable with (Kelleher, 2016).

The Louden Review (2016) was commissioned to look into the SSC and to examine all of the material and resources of the SSC. Fenwick (2016) points out that teacher unions and a variety of other organisations came to the defence of the SSC, with over thirty new schools signing up to join the SSC after the review was announced. The Review concluded that it was supportive of the work being done, but that some of the activities in one of the resources would need teacher sensitivity and guidance (Louden, 2016). Carden (2019) argued that conservative politicians pounced on this pronouncement, and as a result the Safe Schools Coalition was defunded by Federal Government, and the funding streams for similar work in other states dried up as well. However, the resources are still available online (“Student Wellbeing Hub,” 2019) but schools must now use their own budgets to train and educate staff (Carden, 2019).

Thompson (2019) claims that the attacks on the Safe School Coalition have not yet abated. He argues that they have also been connected with the marriage equality plebiscite that was held in Australia in 2017 and more recently with attacks on transgender students’ rights in schools (Thompson, 2019). The controversy about Safe Schools Coalition is thought by Thompson (2019)
to be undoubtedly homophobic and dangerous, in that the discourse affects young LGBTQ people and their own identity and mental health. Cover et al. (2017) point out that the discourse is rooted in a similar debate to the one described in the section on school leadership above, in that it is about assimilation or liberation. The question boiling down to a choice between schools tolerating LGBTQ people in the space and maintaining the heteronormative status quo, or having schools engage in a more liberated discussion that considers gender and sexuality in different ways and in which social change can be created that welcomes inclusion and diversity (Cover et al., 2017).

The section above has contextualised the goals and aims of the Australian education authorities, as well as the challenges in the education environment when it comes to including LGBTQ specific curriculum. The impact of safe schools and GSA’s is important to recognise and consider for this thesis as it is the end goal of the process that is under investigation. The research question relates to the factors that drive school leaders to take the step toward implementing or initiating a safe school type program or GSA at the school. One of the factors that helps leaders to take that step, is the way they see their role in education and what they consider the purpose of education to be. This is address in the next section.

**Role of education**

In the first chapter, it was explained that this research sits at the nexus between the expectations of Australian education authorities and the tools or curriculum that exist. The research seeks to understand why and how school leaders choose to undertake work that would lead to LGBTQ inclusive school environments. The next section will explore the different literature about what the purpose and role of schools are in society. This information will add to an understanding of why some school leaders choose to act and why others might not.

A key consideration for any school leader, teacher or stakeholder when thinking about taking up the challenge to be LGBTQ-inclusive, is what they see as the role of education. An understanding of how you comprehend the purpose and role of education is important to the discussion about
why you might act or seek to lead change. The struggle to determine the role of education as it pertains to the LGBTQ community seems to be in keeping with the description by Kincheloe (2007), who describes education as a:

\[ \ldots \text{Janus-faced institution with its two faces looking toward opposite goals and outcomes: in one direction, a democratic, inclusive, socially sensitive objective concerned with multiple sources of knowledge and socioeconomic mobility for diverse students from marginalized backgrounds; and in the other, a standardised, exclusive, socially regulatory agenda that serves the interest of the dominant power and those students most closely aligned with the social and cultural markers associated with such power (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 12).} \]

This quote describes the tension that exists for school leaders who seek to engage in social and democratic issues. That engagement might be seen as contradictory to a different understanding of the role of education that considers the mission of academic success to be paramount. The question of how to get the ‘Janus faced’ education system to consider looking in the direction of LGBTQ inclusivity is not an easy one to address.

Understanding the role and purpose of education has profound implications for those who seek to drive LGBTQ inclusive practice in the educational space. Different philosophical ideas about why we educate, and why schools exist, underscore the decisions and directions that schools may adopt from time to time. They speak directly to teachers’ and school leaders’ willingness to engage in social issues and to the focus they place on ideas such as LGBTQ, indigenous or disability inclusion within the school community.

Labaree (1997) identifies a conundrum that schools face by questioning whether education is primarily a private good, essentially an investment in a young person’s economic future, or a public good, which establishes the moral foundation of society. He asks:

\['\text{Should schools present themselves as a model of our best hopes for our society and mechanism for remaking that society in images of those hopes? Should} \]
schools focus on adapting students to the needs of society as currently constructed? Alternatively, should they focus primarily on serving the individual hopes and ambitions of these students? The way you choose to answer this question determines the kind of goals you seek to impose on schools.’ (Labaree, 1997, p. 41)

The sub-sections below will briefly describe different perspectives on the purpose and role of schools in an educational community. I will first examine the idea that schools are places to organise knowledge, meaning and promote agency. Then I will move on to explore the idea that schools should be places of care.

**School as a place to organise knowledge, meaning and promote agency**

Biesta (2009) argues that one view of the purpose of education is that education enables a greater understanding of one's place in society and that it should help individuals interpret and analyse their respective position of privilege or oppression. Biesta (2009) calls this function of schools ‘the socialisation function’, and he argues that schools enable individuals to become part of ‘particular social, cultural and political ‘orders’’(p. 40). The schools can actively pursue this socialisation, or it could come about through the perpetuation of particular actions or behaviours within the school. Biesta states;

‘Through its socialising function education inserts individuals into existing ways of doing and being and, through this, plays an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition – both with regard to its desirable and its undesirable aspects’ (Biesta, 2009, p. 40).

Labaree (1997) describes a similar role for schools and he uses the term ‘democratic equality approach to schooling’ (p. 44) when considering the important public-goods related role that schools have. He argues that schools play an essential role in preparing young people to engage in citizenship fully, to understand their responsibilities and rights and to promote the ideals of equality. Schools that strive towards ideas of democracy and equity do so in a manner that
enables students to understand the importance of good citizenship and their role in shaping a just society. They also encourage students to recognise their role in creating a common culture and their responsibility as members of that culture to treat people with respect and to address discrimination. Schools which strive for this ‘democratic equality’, also focus on, ‘equal access’, which is the opportunity for all students, no matter their education level, to access a good education (Labaree, 1997, p. 44).

Freire (1996) anticipates this understanding of education when he describes the efforts of what he calls the ‘humanist, revolutionary educator’ (p. 56). He maintains that a socially activist educator is vital in order to help students (and themselves) engage in critical thinking and to enable both scholar and teacher to develop into more self-actualised beings (Freire, 1996). Education, therefore, becomes a space that enables people to use their creative power in order to engage with a reality that is continually changing and transforming. This view of education encourages an interactive process whereby collaboration is of paramount importance (Peterson, 2009). Within this collaborative and engaging space, education enables individuals to ‘become beings for themselves’ (Freire, 1996, p. 55).

While Giroux (2016) would agree with the need for students to understand the society they are surrounded by, he extends the idea of socialising students and encouraging students to act and behave using democratic ideals (Giroux, 2016). He contends that education is about ‘changing the way people see things’ (p. 61). Giroux (2016) is adamant that education is more than just making students aware of the issues, it is about developing their ability to identify the structural and ideological forces that are at work in the world that keeps perpetuating human suffering and oppression in order for them to be able to take action or resist them. Kumashiro (2002) supports this idea and urges educators to understand and embrace their role as agents for social change and to rise to the challenge of those difficult conversations. He argues that;

‘The desire to learn only what is comforting goes hand in hand with the resistance to learning what is discomforting, and this resistance often proves to
Kumashiro (2002) states that it is important to call attention to and trouble the places that the staff and students may find themselves so that they can seek to better engage with the social structures that surround them. Helping students to understand their place in society is one way to consider the role and purpose of education. It is also an important driving factor for some teachers and leaders when they seek to justify their actions and therefore important to consider for this research.

**School as a place of care**

A different way that the role of education can be considered is through the concept of ‘care’. This is slightly different to the explanation above regarding the role of education being one of helping students to create agency and engage in the world around them. Considering schools as a place of care can be summarised as one where a school leader or teacher considers the role of education to be one that should, first and foremost, focus on the mental and physical care of the students. Understanding the concept of care is important as it once again links to the research question and can be used to consider the actions and driving forces behind decisions made regarding LGBTQ individuals in school environments.

Noddings (1988) argues for what she calls ‘an ethics of caring, relations and response’ (p. 215). This idea relates to a different way in which teachers hoping to lead and engage in LGBTQ inclusive practice can conceptualise the role of education. Noddings (1998) states that schools can no longer stay in a state of paralysis regarding their obligations, and she advocates for schools to be institutions that engage in the education of moral people. Beista (2009) similarly speaks about the ‘subjectification function’ of schools where they strive to enable individuals to create their sense of being and purpose. He declares; ‘that any education worthy of its name should always contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those being educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting’ (p. 41).
Noddings (1988) counters the idea that schools are only meant to promote ‘basic skills’ or ‘academic skills’, arguing that proponents of that philosophical view of education maintain what she terms, ‘Christian-American supremacy’ (p. 217). The only way to perpetuate this supremacy is to avoid significant engagement with moral issues and the social dilemmas that affect our environment. She colourfully describes the situation that many schools find themselves in, hypothesising:

‘Too many feisty minorities have found their voices and are beginning to suggest alternatives among moral priorities. In such a climate, the only way left for the weakening group in power is to block discussion entirely and hope that hegemonic structures will press things down into the old containers. The need for moral education is apparent to everyone but, concerns about the form it should take induce paralysis’ (Noddings, 1988, p. 218).

Noddings (1988) advocates for a broader, more complete understanding of what that sort of moral education would look like. In her view, schools need to be engaged in developing a ‘relational ethic’ orientation that keeps the ‘focus on the human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relations to each other’ (Noddings, 1988, p. 218). The nature of the relationship must be appropriate to specific situations and any acts of caring must be done out of ‘love and natural inclination’ and only at a last resort out of a ‘sense of duty’ (Noddings, 1988, p. 219).

More recently, bell hooks (sic) (2014) explained this perspective on the role of education;

‘To allow one’s feeling of care and will to nurture particular individuals in the classroom - to expand and embrace everyone - goes against the notion of privatised passion. In student journals from various classes I have taught, there have always been complaints about the perceived special bonding between myself and particular students. Realising that my students were uncertain about expressions of care and love in the classroom, I found it necessary to teach on the subject. I asked students once: ‘Why do you feel that the regard I
extended to a particular student cannot also be extended to you? Why do you think there is not enough love or care to go round?’ To answer these questions, they had to think deeply about the society we live in, how we are taught to compete with one another. They had to think about capitalism and how it informs the way we think about love and care, the way we live in our bodies, the way we try to separate mind from body’ (hooks, 2014, p. 199).

The relational construction of care requires both subjective and objective elements. In any caring relationship, each person brings their subjective understanding of moral imperatives and different modes of behaviour, but there is also an objective component that helps to direct attention to an individual's choices or judgement with the purpose of allowing growth and developing agency (Noddings, 1988). There is an important caveat to this ethical care relationship in schools. Tronto (2010) highlights the two dangers that can emerge and that caregiving institutions should guard against; ‘paternalism’ where those who are providing the care assume or are assumed to be the most knowledgeable and to having a superior understanding of what is needed and ‘parochialism’ were caregivers develop favourites and provide more care to those who they perceive as being more worthy recipients (Tronto, 2010, p. 161).

In order to engage and enable an education system that has care and relationships at its core, an educational institution must understand why it is providing care. This chapter highlights the literature that points to why LGBTQ students and teachers need care in the current education environment. Where schools see care as a critical component of their LGBTQ work, there must be a precise method for providing care. Tronto (2010) argues that schools must decide on the purpose of the care that they want to provide. They need to consider the politics of power that exist in the environment that could compete against or dominate the types of care that could be offered, and that could conflict with the espoused purpose. Finally, attention must be given to the particularity of specific and different ways humans have of providing care and the plurality of ways in which the needs of diverse individuals may be addressed (Tronto, 2010).
As this section illustrates, there is a constant interplay between different role players in a school as each has ideas as to what they find imperative. The power and interests of different stakeholders lend weight to some goals above others (hooks, 2014). This interplay between power and education goals is perhaps to be best understood in light of the reality that ‘no education is politically neutral’ (hooks, 2014, p. 37). This realisation is an important consideration given the overtly politically partisan nature of implementing LGBTQ inclusive practise.

Education is at times a space of contested ideologies, but for all that, the future is never bleak. bell hooks (2014) again finds the pragmatic line;

‘The academy is not a paradise. However, learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility.’ (hooks, 2014, p. 207)

Theories on the role of education are global, but issues impacting the delivery of education must be understood within the context of the Australian environment as described above. If one understands how individuals, and particularly school leaders, consider the purpose of education, then this helps in understanding why they may or may not take action to help LGBTQ youth or the school shape the atmosphere. The next section considers the complexity of taking that action and of leading change which will help LGBTQ youth and teachers in schools.

Leading Change

An important part of this work concerns leadership and change and therefore also, the factors that drive change, hinder it or facilitate it. If we accept that there is an integral part of leadership that entails driving change in a space where there needs to be a realignment of values, then we also need to acknowledge that this is not an easy process.

There is little doubt that the expectations of a change process in schools have become far more complicated than in the past. Dempster and Berry (2003) contend that this complication is due to the changes in the way that schools are administered and managed, as well as to the
complexity of the social issues. Issues such as sexuality and gender identity are often new issues that principals and teachers have to grapple with as educators (Dempster and Berry, 2003). They can easily create ethically problematic situations for some who may either not understand their complexity or who may have different sets of values or attitudes to the issue than their peers or than the students (Dempster & Berry, 2003).

John Kotter (2007), one of the leader authors on change and implementing change, had the following to say about managing change through an organisation:

\[
\text{Guiding change may be the ultimate test of a leader – no business survives over the long term if it can't reinvent itself. But, human nature being what it is, fundamental change is often resisted mightily by the people it most affects: those in the trenches of the business. Thus, leading change is both absolutely essential and incredibly difficult} \text{ } \text{(Kotter, 2007, p. 97).}
\]

Leading the type of ethical, social change that is being described in this thesis is difficult. As Kotter points out, there is often a fear of something new and different that leads to a resistance to change and perpetuation of the status quo, even if, in this case, that might include oppression of LGBTQ individuals in the school space. Principals not only have to accommodate the pressing day to day responsibilities of their job but are also increasingly expected to understand and manage the social health and wellbeing of their staff and students (Dempster & Berry, 2003). While experience can facilitate different options and ideas in the making of these decisions and judgements, there is often going to be resistance to any form of long-term change strategy (Dempster & Berry, 2003).

Kotter (2007) states that resistance to change can be defined as the phenomenon that obstructs any process at its beginning or throughout its development; the resistance aims to maintain the status quo. It can affect the process by delaying the start of change, inhibiting its execution and increasing the costs and resource expectations (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003). Any leader of a school who seeks to drive a change process must understand the some of the patterns of behaviour and the normal reaction to change, in order to anticipate, react appropriately and
adapt their implementation of the change program (Blanchard, 1992). The resistance to change may be due to several factors - self-interest, misunderstandings, lack of trust, change fatigue, resources, past change initiatives – all of which affect the eventual success or failure of the process (Kotter, 2007; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

Addressing change around issues such as LGBTQ inclusivity, which are mostly cultural in nature, provides a unique challenge because ‘unlike structural change that can be mandated, cultural change requires altering long-held assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that represent the norm for people in the organisation’ (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 2). Bolman and Deal (2011) state, ‘organizations are filled with people who have their own interpretations of what is and should be happening. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker (p. 19).’ These prejudices and blind spots are often conflicting, competing and contradictory (Belasen, 2000). Leaders act through and with other people and in order to establish the conditions that enable sufficient progress, the leader has to influence the thoughts, beliefs and actions of other persons. This influence may be targeted at helping people to accomplish something specific or quite broad and transformative (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). For school leaders to have to balance the aim of LGBTQ inclusive practice and policy development, with an understanding of their blind spots as well as taking the other role-players truth into account, is no easy feat.

The challenge for leaders is to effectively communicate the need for change, to ensure the buy-in of key stakeholders and the community at large. Equally challenging is the implementation of change. Waldersee and Griffiths (2004) argue that there has been an ever-changing series of recommendations to organisational leaders on how to implement change. These can be broadly divided into two methods – unilateral change or participative change (Dunphy & Griffiths, 1996). Leaders who seek to implement unilateral change are prescriptive and use authority-based techniques. These are usually driven by the leader, bureaucratic, focused on how resources are assigned and follow formal organisational hierarchy lines. The belief is that social attitudes and behavioural changes will be adjusted over time, by the changes in workplace structure (Beer,
Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990). Participative change is based on consultation that directly targets the values, attitudes and skills of employees. The purpose of this method is to build employee support for the change and develop ownership for the change (Dunphy & Griffiths, 1996).

Apple (2013) reasons that change occurs within a social context, and schools both reflect and create the values of the world around them. Driving change concerning LGBTQ issues raises complex questions of how much change a school can or should strive for. An ambitious change agenda is likely to provoke aggressive opposition to change and charges of politicisation of the education system (see for example the campaign against Safe Schools programs described in a section above). For that reason, organisations and leadership may choose strategies that are incremental or evolutionary, and that keep the basic framework of the organisation running but seek to alter certain small aspects within the workplace in order to improve processes or daily running of the business (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003). Alternatively, they may also choose to undergo a full strategic or transformational change in which the entire framework of the organisation transforms, often aimed to achieve some competitive advantage for the organisation (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003). Leading an organization through a change process, such as LGBTQ inclusivity, is not only complicated but also requires a solid understanding of organisational change strategy. If teachers and principals do not know and understand what the guiding principles and drivers of change are (in the sense of being able to use them appropriately), even the best ideas and intentions will not take hold within a school culture (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005).

When considering a change to the school culture and within the social justice realm, a significant driving force is the ability to engage in moral purpose and to establish a narrative around the need or desire for change. This narrative will enable those within the environment to understand how the change will improve educational systems and the learning within that school space (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter, 1996). Once a school community understands that there is a need and imperative for change, there needs to be a clear and articulated change process that enables everyone to understand how it is going to work, where to apply their energy and how to take
ownership of the process in their classrooms (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). This understanding of change cannot exist without opportunities to learn about the issues and to learn from other staff. A robust evaluation process that continually assesses the actions and collects data (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). A further requirement for successful change is to build a sound set of resources that engage the stakeholders and to understand the inter-relationship of those stakeholders, their needs and their desire for growth in order to push the process forward (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter, 1996).

It is equally imperative to understand the reasons people resist change. Even changes that may appear to be positive or rational have an element of uncertainty and loss about them, and it is important that leaders not merely assume that they can eliminate resistance. Experienced managers anticipate and accept resistant responses to the proposed change and take the time to understand people’s concern (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). There are a variety of reasons that people in an organisation may resist wanting to implement LGBTQ policies or practices. Staff, students and parents may feel that they are going to lose something or that their position or values or worldview are under attack or scrutiny. They, therefore, seek to subtly undermine the process in order to maintain the status quo (Blanchard, 1992; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Stakeholders may not understand the moral purpose or sense of urgency that leadership describe and might feel very differently about the situation due to their understandings, beliefs or values and not trust that the change is going to incorporate their views or their knowledge (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003). Within school settings, staff, parents and students at schools come to this issue from different faith and cultural backgrounds. While some may need time to discuss and understand the change entirely, others will have entrenched perspectives which become an issue for change leaders to manage. Still, other stakeholders may be tired of continual change and particularly of engaging in change processes that do not work due to lack of resources or unclear vision (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

If one chooses to view resistance as an opportunity to strengthen operational outcomes and to correct personal biases, then resistance can be positive. It is crucial for school leadership to have
a continual evaluation and to react decisively to the points of resistance. They should always remember that; ‘resistance, properly understood as feedback, can be an important resource in improving the quality and clarity of the objectives and strategies at the heart of a change proposal. Moreover, properly used, it can enhance the prospects for successful implementation’ (Ford & Ford, 2009).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored literature that sets the scene and contextualises the upcoming research. In order to understand why LGBTQ inclusive change is important, this chapter has considered a variety of different topics and literature. In summary, the experience for LGBTQ youth and teachers at Australian schools is a complex one in that it can be both challenging and hopeful at the same time.

In some cases, there are implications for an individual's mental health, their achievement and their connection with the school ethos. School leadership has difficult decisions to make regarding how to lead and embed LGBTQ-inclusive thinking and values. These decisions are complicated by the environment in which Australian education is operating and the emergence of vocal right-wing, conservative ideologues who are seeking to prevent any work that might address the realities of LGBTQ people at schools. Coupled with that is the complexity of leading any change in an organisation. The research that has been done reflects the different change journeys of schools when it comes to LGBTQ inclusivity. This work relies on how the leaders of the schools understood their role in the education process and how they understood the purpose of education.

In other situations, there is a sense of hopefulness that this work is being done and being considered. The emergence of this language in school policies and government policies is a sign that there is a desire to change the school environment. This research also brings to the fore the work being done by teachers and leaders in schools to drive change. In his discourse on 'hope', Paulo Freire (1992), states that, 'one of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious,
correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles might be' (p.3). This sense of hope and the development of teachers' and education authorities' understanding of how schools can be changed for LGBTQ individuals stand in opposition to the challenges and resistance that exists both inside and outside some schools.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework that is used to understand the actions and decisions made by school leadership is discussed. There is an exploration of the crucial concepts that both hinder and help drive LGBTQ change in schools. The critical theory concepts and perspectives described in Chapter 3, were used to analyse and understand the data that was collected.
Chapter 3 – Critical theory

Introduction

This chapter considers some of the fundamental theories, perspectives and thoughts of critical theory. The purpose is to assist in the analysis and examination of the data that has been collected in this thesis. The first section will explain the choice of critical theory as a framework. The second section will move on to identify and examine the theoretical constructs that were used to underpin the analysis of the data in the data chapters. This section will investigate how critical theorists such as Freire, Gramsci, McLaren, Marcuse and Giroux enable a deeper understanding of concepts such as culture, power, oppression, leadership and change. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation as to why other paradigms were not considered for this work. Overall, the theoretical framework developed in this chapter strives to set up a toolkit of ideas that will be used as the thread that helps understand how and why those in positions of power and influence drive cultural change in their school environments.

The choice of framework, and indeed the thesis itself, is to live up to the maxim of Karl Marx, who famously stated that; ‘the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.’ (Rush, 2004, p. 9). Educators who seek to improve the lives of their colleagues and students are compelled to act where they see situations of oppression and marginalisation. The use of critical theory contributes to an understanding of both why that is important and how they can drive the necessary change.

Why Critical Theory?

This thesis is focused on how those in school leadership identify the need for schools to adopt and act on a change process to enable a more inclusive educational experience for the LGBTQ young people and staff in schools. The thesis is, therefore, based on a theoretical framework that focuses on transformation. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) point out that critical theory ideologies provide four important opportunities for researchers. First the prospect of
understanding how to transform a space; second, the opportunity of considering a variety of perspectives when conducting the research; third, the role of the individual and the context are important and that they interact continually; and finally, that the position and perspective of a researcher are valuable.

One of the driving factors for undertaking this thesis is to understand ways to transform an environment that can be oppressive to LGBTQ individuals. Researchers contend that the opportunity to discover data that could be transformative and to enable changes in behaviour or practice that lead to the creation of a more fair and just society is a fundamental element of critical theory (Bronner, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011). Creswell (2007) points out that ‘value [to the critical theorist] is found in the reasoned reflection and the change in practice’ (as cited in Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 109). This central aim of critical theory, that is to transform society, connects to the aim of this thesis by allowing the researcher to analyse and comprehend of how schools can or have been transformed into more inclusive institutions. The work that has been done relies on the reflection and consideration of the environment and speaks to ways in this thesis in which the schools have changed their practice.

Felluga (2015) states that using critical theory enables the researcher to consider the problems arising in the data from a variety of different perspectives and enables the opportunity to envision a variety of different possibilities. As the issues considered in critical theory are broad, Sim and Van Loon (2009) point out that one not only has the opportunity to analyse the cultural practices in an environment, but there is also the chance to consider the contexts – social, gender, political, historical, ethnic – in which the cultural artefacts and structures exist. Bronner (2011) supports that point, saying that using critical theory enables the research to use the changing social, political and historical circumstances in order to understand the possibilities and challenges that schools and LGBTQ people face in order to drive change. Rush (2004) describes the theory as such:

‘... critical theory is not merely descriptive, it is a way to instigate social change by providing knowledge of the forces of social inequality that can, in turn,
The point he makes is that critical theory incorporates a variety of ideas and perspectives that allow the qualitative researcher to connect theory to practice and to analyse the social forces of domination that exist in environments. It also offers the opportunity to make social inequality and domination in schools visible, and to engage in the causes of the inequality and consider reactions to the oppression for future transformation.

Gale, Mills, and Cross (2017) point out that one of the essential considerations to keep in mind when thinking about the use of critical theory in a school context is how this theory is going to be enacted within the space. It is also important to consider how the educational experiences of marginalised staff and students, and spaces of oppression, are going to be transformed (Gale et al., 2017). The transformational intent and aspects of critical theory can be seen enacted within the classroom (Gale et al., 2017). Teachers who are informed by critical theory can open up spaces that previously marginalised groups did not have access to and have the potential to change and challenge social structures in school environments with regards to values, norms and expectations (Gale et al., 2017). Researchers point out that school leadership has a role to play in influencing the school environment and community (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003). The actions and roles they take can be explained through their understanding of pedagogy and their understanding of the factors that oppress groups within that space (Lingard et al., 2003). This thesis uses critical theory to analyse and interpret the interplay between the individual, that is the school leaders, and the context that they find themselves in.

There are specific elements to consider when thinking about the individual within a school space. Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) point out that the first consideration when reflecting on the individual and the context, is that we must be concerned with the ‘empowerment of the individual’. The second being that individuals (and change leaders) need to understand, study, and be aware of spaces where discrimination and oppression have happened and continue to happen and to work to change them (Kincheloe et al., 2011). This thesis strives to understand
those leaders who seek to drive and implement change. The researchers Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) state that those leaders are most likely to be individuals who have an awareness and understanding of the conditions of our everyday life and of the economic and political environments that shape the process of schooling and education. When considering the environment and context at schools, the leaders and school stakeholders need to consider areas in which individuals are being denied the ability to be authentic or to participate fully. Giroux (2011) maintains that one of the central tenets of critical theory is 'an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices in which social agency has been denied and produced' (p.3). There are two interconnected ideas explored in this statement, first, the connection between the individual and the organisation; and second, between the critical theory concepts of oppression, power and marginalisation, which will be further discussed in this chapter, and the pedagogical actions and practices that drive change. These interconnected ideas are essential elements to understanding why the critical theory lens has been chosen for this work.

One further element of this research that is important to note, is the position that the researcher occupies. As a gay, cis-gendered, male teacher, the choice of this framework has encouraged me to engage in the educational discourse surrounding inclusive schooling and an opportunity to 'announce [my] partisanship in the struggle for a better world' (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 164). Lincoln et al. (2011) point out that using critical theory acknowledges the interplay between the subject and the researcher. This interplay enables the construction of knowledge through the researcher who incorporates not only their own perspectives, but also the insights and perceptions of the subjects.

The use of critical theory not only allows for the voices of the subjects to be heard; it also acknowledges the voice of the inquirer of the research. Kincheloe et al. (2011) states that the relationship between these two is often flexible and is governed by issues such as social relationships, the power dynamics between the subject and researcher, and the subjectivity of language. There is, therefore, according to Lincoln et al. (2011), a sensitivity that exists in capturing the voices of the participants and it is filtered through the researcher's paradigm and
perspective in order to present the knowledge. Bronner (2011) adds to this and states that it is thus the role of the critical theorist to ‘understand a fact within the value-laden context wherein it assumes meaning’ (p. 25). The subjectivity that is inherent in my own thinking and the perspectives of the participants, is challenging to navigate. It is important to bear in mind when analysing and considering the contexts and described experiences in this research. I feel confident that my position as a member of the LGBTQ community and experienced teacher has equipped me with a unique opportunity and some valuable insights for this study.

Before moving on to the next section, it important to highlight one of the other paradigms that were considered as options for the framework. An important potential framework that was considered was queer theory. The initial thinking was that if the research was on LGBTQ individuals and their experiences as school activists for change, then why not use a theory that focuses directly on this ‘queer’ experience? Jagose (1996) explains that queer theory flows from post-modernist thought and considers the experience of both dominant and marginalised identities in heteronormative environments where there are prescribed codes of behaviour and understandings. Broadly speaking, queer theory’s focus is on the understandings, contestations and analysis of queerness and the incongruities between sex, gender, desire and sexuality. Cohen (2013) emphasises that there is an aspiration to conceptualise sexuality, gender and sexual expression differently and to contest the presumed stable categories under which they have been defined in our current society. Cohen (2013) goes on to say that queer theory seeks to resist the assimilationist ideas that exist in some cultures and environment and to challenge them by encouraging an understanding of the fluidity and movement of peoples sexual and gender identity.

While queer theory has been assumed to be ‘full of possibility and untapped potentiality’ (Edeleman, 1994 as cited in Jagose, 1996, p.2), it remains a theory that actively resists definition and there is a feeling that the more it strives toward a definition, the less queer it becomes (Jagose, 1996). The emphasis on fluidity of thought, identity and gender are inherent in queer theory, and this thesis strives to analyse and contextualise environments and the specific
transformation that exists in school spaces. I wanted a theoretical frame that helped consider current educational theory and practice. Queer theory would not have worked as the entire framework for this thesis, as in the end, this research must confront the realities of teaching in a school and of understanding how to transform a school culture into a more inclusive one and perhaps into a space in which some of the queer theory ideas are further developed.

The choice of a critical theory research framework enables an understanding of the ways to confront and challenge injustice and seek to transform the environment. The use of critical theory assists this investigation to explore concepts such as culture, leadership, power, tolerance and dialogue, with the view to understanding how they can hurt or help a process of LGBTQ inclusive school practice.

The section above presented the key reasons why critical theory was the most fitting choice for this thesis. The next section describes and considers some of the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of critical theory.

**Theoretical concepts**

The second section of this chapter develops an understanding of the critical theory concepts that are going to assist in the investigation into how and why leaders of educational organisations decide to act in their environment to make it a more inclusive one for LGBTQ individuals. As was explained above, critical theorists, have sought to understand a wide variety of social phenomenon and incorporates a range of perspectives and focus areas. This section focuses on those concepts within critical theory that will help to explain and understand individuals’ action in an environment and the change that they could engage in.

The concepts that are considered in this section are; power, hegemony, oppression, culture, repressive tolerance, alienation and reification, enlightenment, the relationship between leadership and critical theory, and finally, dialogue and praxis. There is an interaction and overlap
between all of these concepts that should not be ignored or overlooked. The interface between these concepts will be further developed in the analysis of the data that follows in the later chapters.

**Power**

The first concept is that of ‘power’. It is one of the overarching ideas that govern much of what is being considered; such as hegemony, oppression and the creation of a culture. As this thesis is about transforming an environment through intervention by leadership, it is essential to understand how those in positions of influence can bring their power to bear on situations and how they are enabled to act through their positions of power. Crossley (2005) argues that critical theorists consider the concept of ‘power’ in several ways, which could be summarised as to understandings of ‘who has power’ and ‘how they got power’. Both of these perspectives are examined briefly in the section below.

*Who has power?*

Hannah Arendt (2006), contends that power emerges when we create a structure that contains our power of action. An example would be when a constitution for society is created that enshrines the rights of some to exercise the power of decision making and actions over others (Arendt, 2006; Greene, 2009). This definition of power also means that there are, therefore, people who are excluded from the decision-making process, and this marginalisation can continue for an extended period. Apple (1995) asks us to consider how those who are in positions of power in schools can keep reproducing the positions of privilege in order to create dominant traditions. However, and important to this thesis, we should not consider those outside the so-called ‘corridors of power’, to be ‘powerless'. Crossley (2005) reminds us that much depends on the relationships, interactions, reactions and strategic actions that exist between the powerful and the powerless.

Crossley (2005) goes on to say that the context and conditions of power at a particular time and space have implications as to how it might be exerted for control and how those who are
perceived to be powerless, might engage and resist. As was described in the literature review in the section on the current education environment, there appears to be a shifting of the power balance between those who seek to maintain previous norms and values as they relate to the queer community and those in society who seek to strive for progress (Cover et al., 2017; Shannon & Smith, 2017; Thompson, 2019). This is particularly evident in the discourse surrounding the Safe Schools Coalition. In this case, LGBTQ inclusive progress and transformation sees those who were previously powerless to affect change, being heard in important spaces and being granted access to some of those corridors of power from which they were previously excluded. This thesis aims to uncover how that power dynamic has shifted and what drove that shift.

A final point in this section is the reminder by Crossley (2005) that power can be an invisible force that inhibits actions. Those actions that might be expected, or be seen as resistance, are absent due to the influence of power. For example, in a space where there is total control and where any resistance would be met with further repressive action or persecution, people might act as though they consent or sanction the control. This invisible force, described by Crossley (2005), enables and empowers the powerful elite to make sure that future protests, never come to light or make it onto an agenda.

*How is power created?*

While the notion of who holds power is essential, a different focus could also be considered, and that focus is to consider how power is created. McLaren (2009) states that understanding where power comes from speaks to the relationships that have come to being through domination and resistance. Felluga (2015) adds to that and contends that power can be seen as that human dynamic that comes to the fore within the context of our relationships with others. To examine this idea, the work of Michel Foucault, an influential writer on power and a post-structuralist philosopher is useful. While much of his work is outside the realm of critical theory, his work on power and its origins has been used by critical theorists as a tool to understand how power is related to knowledge and transformation in spaces (Felluga, 2015; McLaren, 2009).
Foucault (1980) considers power to be part of a discourse that contains a set of anonymous and historical rules that are determined by the space, time, and socio-economic context. These discourses favour some individuals over others, favour what can and cannot be discussed and who is subject to the discussion and who can control it (Foucault, 1980; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2009). Therefore, by being one of the individuals that the discourse favours, you are granted power over others who are excluded.

One of the most critical elements of this discussion is that of dominant discourse. A dominant discourse is the dialogue, discussions and speeches that are ever prevalent in a space. These are the narratives which Foucault (1980) sees as the system of truth that is perpetuated in an environment and that constrains what gets discussed and by whom. For example, in a school, it might be the textbooks that get used, or the values and beliefs that are described in the school website. Dominant discourse is an important topic, as it enables consideration as to whether those schools who claim to be inclusive on their websites and marketing, actually are. The power that this dominant discourse holds is that of being able to shape our understandings, practices, language, and how individuals and organisations provide meaning (Foucault, 1980; McLaren, 2009). The dominant discourse for this thesis and in these spaces might be one that considers issues of sexuality and gender identity to be left out of the classroom or that these topics do not enhance education curriculum. A final point on understanding where power comes from, is highlighted by Felluga (2015) who states that within critical theory thinking, power relies on actions of one person (or group) on another person (or group) that can react. The relationships that exist at schools between staff, students, leadership and parents are vital in understanding how power is provided and used, and they are significant to the considerations of this thesis in how change and transformation were driven.

Once again, it is important to note that power is not something that is inherently negative or to be shunned, and both Felluga (2015) and hooks (2009) point out that much depends on how it is being used. Teachers and school leaders have the opportunity to create ways to use their positions of professional power constructively and to open up spaces in which to enable critical
discussions on issues such as class, sexuality, gender or race. However, hooks (2009) states that there can be a fear of losing control of the discussion and of the order that has been established, so often leaders default to convention and to perpetuating the structures and rules that have shaped professional practice for so long. Power can be used to drive progressive and transformational change and just as quickly as it can be used to maintain oppression or maintain the status quo (hooks, 2009). This thesis considers the different ways in which power is used, obtained, and how it can be a tool for transformation and change.

Hegemony

Arising from the concept of power comes the critical theory perspective on ‘hegemony’. Critical theorists state that this concept imagines the political society and civil society superstructures that exist and that influence individuals (Bronner, 2011; Crossley, 2005; Gramsci, 2014). Gramsci (2014) argues that the dominant group in the civil society can exercise control and rule over their environment, due to the ‘consent’ provided by the masses as a result of their historical and cultural positions. He goes on to say that the political society is also able to exercise direct domination through the legal enforcement of discipline on those groups that do not actively or passively consent to their power (Gramsci, 2014).

The term ‘hegemony’ thus focuses explicitly on how groups in positions of power seek to embed that power through social and economic relations that keep others subordinate and exploited (Crossley, 2005; Felluga, 2015; Gramsci, 2014). Felluga (2015) claims that this embedded power could be achieved through control of the media, education, bureaucracy or military that would subdue an opposition. Gramsci (2014) states that in order for a relationship of supremacy to succeed, there can be domination or a situation where there is perceived ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ that will win the hearts and minds of the people. Once this has been achieved, the status quo becomes readily accepted, inevitable, and the one which the majority identify with (Crossley, 2005; Gramsci, 2014).
The concept of hegemony underpins much of critical theory and the analysis in this thesis through the ideas of how individuals and groups may emerge from oppression and marginalisation. Any subaltern group (oppressed or marginalised group) that finds itself outside the realms of hegemonic power and that seeks to challenge the ruling group could do so through a counter-hegemonic strategy. That strategy would consist of these oppressed groups empowering themselves, coalescing around important issues in which they find solidarity, and using their agency to effect change through collective action, alliances and consultation (Crossley, 2005; Felluga, 2015; Gramsci, 2014). Darder et al. (2009) describe those spaces that begin to exist where counter-hegemonic actions arise. These would be precisely the type of spaces that might form the focus of this thesis. In this dissertation, they are the spaces within schools that can amplify the voices of those who have been subject to prejudice or been marginalised.

Gramsci (2014) states that a critical understanding of self and the hegemonic forces at work in the environment is an important first step in the struggle to be free from those forces. Those seeking to change a dominant hegemonic discourse need to develop their intellectual and moral leadership that engages with the ideas, customs, beliefs and practices of the dominant power (Gramsci, 2014). Freire (1996) contends that as the oppressed and their allies become involved in an activist battle which strives for change and liberation, their belief in themselves to create action, means that they begin to see themselves as more enlightened and their feelings of being connected to humanity increase. Freire (1996) asserts that this belief in themselves cannot be merely a cognitive experience; it must go further. For the struggle to succeed he explains that there must be praxis, that is both further action and continual critical reflection (Freire, 1996).

However, Darder et al. (2009) point out that it is essential to remember that situations do arise where those who are seeking change from the hegemonic situation are confronted with the pressures and forces brought to bear by the regime and struggle to keep momentum. Gramsci (2014) speaks of the need for there to be philosophical advances as well as politico-practical ones. He stresses that subaltern groups need to seek consensus for change and work through the existing cultural structures in order to organically address the issues and lend a sense of
genuineness and inevitability to the change process (Gramsci, 2014). Some examples of ways to do that, could be by connecting with popular symbols and sentiments, such as flags, family, or home. Crossley (2005) points out that by connecting in this way, a movement can communicate the message that they are similar in outlook to those in power and that they are open to support from others.

Hegemony can be won and lost through groups securing the support of the masses. Gramsci (2014) describes the constant battle for hegemonic dominance as being either a ‘war of manoeuvre’ or a ‘war of position’ (p. 108). The first exists in a situation where the hegemonic position of the powerful is intellectually or morally weak. There is room to manoeuvre and assault at the position of power; thus, the ‘war’ continues until more clear and decisive positions are established (Gramsci, 2014). The ‘war of position’ is a battle for hegemonic supremacy wherein the oppressed group operates within the culture of domination and speaks to society in the language it understands. An important element within a ‘war of position’ is to seek and work with other excluded and marginalised groups in order to engage en masse with the struggle in order to claim the hegemonic positions (Gramsci, 2014).

The concept of hegemony is particularly crucial for this thesis. Through the literature review, it has been shown how a dominant heterosexual hegemony within society and inaction from education authorities, have limited access to fully inclusive educational practices for LGBTQ individuals and stakeholders. This thesis strives to understand how and why some of those people under that hegemonic discourse were able to change their schools. The analysis in the future chapters also considers the hegemonic structures that exist in the schools and ways in which the war to defeat them was undertaken using the cultural, symbolic and popular sentiments to effect change at the organisation.

**Oppression**

Power and hegemonic spaces have been described in the two sub-sections above, and from within the concepts of power and hegemony, follows the critical theory concept of ‘oppression’.
The experience for many LGBTQ staff and students in schools in a hegemonic and heteronormative environment can be seen as one that is often oppressive. There are a variety of ways in which this oppression can be experienced and expressed.

Iris Marion Young (2009) vividly describes the ‘Five Faces of Oppression’ that individuals may experience in spaces where there are hegemonic factors at work. The first being exploitation, in which the social process focuses its energy and resources on one group to the detriment of the other (an example in this thesis would be the focus on heteronormativity above any other form of sexuality). In order to address this, organisations and environments have to reorganise and put in place structural and cultural change plans (Young, 2009). The second element of oppression, according to Young (2009), is that of marginalisation. She considers this one of the most dangerous forms of oppression as the marginalised group is unjustly deprived of any participation in the organisation or environment. Marginalisation can be seen by the invisible and silent ways in which LGBTQ individuals need to negotiate a school environment where there is no recognition in policy or curriculum. There is an acknowledgement that while our society may value ideas of individualism, self-reliance and competition, all humans are dependent on the social structures that exist and thus need to be seen and valued. The third aspect of oppression that she describes is powerlessness (Young, 2009). The idea of powerlessness can be seen through the lack of authority or status that the oppressed group occupies and often goes hand in hand with a lack of a strong sense of self. This powerlessness has an impact on who can plan and implement new strategies and visions for an organisation like a school. Those who are powerless are often unable to contribute and to drive change or influence decisions (Young, 2009). The final two ‘faces of oppression’ that Young (2009) describes are cultural imperialism and violence.

Young (2009) considers cultural imperialism to be the dominant, hegemonic culture that exists in an environment. It impacts the ways individuals create meaning and impose order when trying to establish norms. In the LGBTQ context, those norms are often seen as heteronormative ones which pervade environments and education spaces. Any group that goes counter to those norms
is perceived as deviant or inferior and often then rendered invisible to the dominant cultural group. It is seen as their role to try to fit in and adopt the mores and behaviours of the dominant group, while their own experiences and identity are never included (Young, 2009). The final form of oppression that is described by Young (2009) is violence. This violence can take the form of threats, physical or mental attacks that are intended to damage, humiliate or devastate someone. Members of the oppressed group live with the knowledge that this violence may be inflicted on them at any time, and it is always on the edges of their imagination (Young, 2009). In order to address violence in the most common school cases, bullying, schools need to consider the social practices that exist and the reproduction of systems of dominance in their school environments (Young, 2009). The five forms of oppression above relate to the asymmetrical relations of power that exist in an organisation.

While Iris Marion Young exposes the different forms of oppression that can exist, Paulo Freire forces us to confront oppression slightly differently. He considers it from the point of view of the oppressor and the emotional effects on those being oppressed. Freire (1996) makes the point that there can be no oppressed without an oppressor. In considering the oppressor consciousness, Freire describes it as one which seeks to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination (Freire, 1996). For the oppressor, their position of privilege means that they dehumanise others and themselves. bell hooks (2014) supports this thinking and states that the way that oppressors can shape and inhabit an environment in order to set limits and definitions of what is acceptable causes shame, pain and humiliation to those being oppressed. The effect of this dehumanisation is that those being oppressed cannot fully realise their humanity (hooks, 2014). In considering this is in the context of education, one has to wonder about the struggle of the LGBTQ individual to fully realise their educational potential in a space that Freire (1996) might contend, continually sees them as 'less than'.

With regards to the emotional aspects of oppression on the oppressed, Freire (1996) points to four critical effects of oppression. First, to the fatalism or docility that exist in particular historical or sociological situations. Within the school context, this could be read as someone, realising
their oppressed situation and the need for change, but then asking themselves; ‘What can I do?
I am only a student.’ (Freire, 1996). Self-deprecation, as a result of marginalisation and feelings
of powerlessness, is also visible in those who are oppressed. Their internalised view of
themselves based on the opinion of the oppressors, tells them that they are less than the others
in the environment and incapable of learning anything or being fully-fledged members of the
group (Freire, 1996). The oppressed also manifest signs of horizontal violence through lashing
out at their comrades or allies, behaviour that only serves the interests of the oppressor. Freire
(1996) considers this horizontal violence within the context of the existential duality that exists
inside the oppressed. This duality is described as the existence of both oppressed and oppressor
within those individuals. He states that, ‘in their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to
resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow’ (Freire, 1996, p. 44). A further
characteristic of the oppressed is the emotional dependence which begins to exist as the
oppressed seek not only to resemble their oppressor but also to depend on them. All of these
characteristics described above are important elements for analysis when one considers them
within the school context, as we think about LGBTQ youth or teachers seeking to ‘fit in' or
maintain the status quo, thereby increasing dependence on those in charge.

In order to start to emerge from, or resist oppression, Freire (1996) argues that it first needs to
be recognised and named. Freire (1996) states that ‘it is only when the oppressed find the
oppressor out and become involved in the organised struggle for the liberation that they begin to
believe in themselves’ (p. 47). Thus, the liberating and critical dialogue that presupposes action
can only happen once the oppression is recognised and named (Freire, 1996). This thesis
examines individual narratives from schools that have named and recognised that oppression
and that have spent time reflecting and acting on the oppression that LGBTQ individuals faced.

Culture

Culture and its impact on society is a crucial element of any critical theorist’s thinking and
certainly an important part of this thesis. This dissertation will seek to understand the
experiences of the participants investigated with regards to their ‘school culture' and to
understand how it has influenced them and how they have influenced and change the culture in their school. Bronner (2011) claims that in order for an activist to begin to analyse ‘long-standing beliefs in a rational manner and [speculate] about a different future or something other than the existing order’ (p. 1), they first need to understand the underlying culture of the environment in which they operate.

Giroux (2009b) makes the argument that culture and power are interrelated when considering them from a critical theorist’s perspective, as the culture of a space provides the different groups multiple ways to define their aspirations, legitimise their struggles or experiences and strive for meaning. Some critical theorists connect the idea of culture with how social relationships are structured within formations of race, gender, age, or sexuality and see them as ways that different groups make sense of their circumstances and conditions in life (Giroux, 2009b; McLaren, 2009). There is also an acknowledgement that culture exists in a field of struggle that produces, values, and circulates particular forms of knowledge and relationships (Giroux, 2009b; McLaren, 2009). Bhabha (2012) maintains that the struggle between culture and power can be considered as a point where people who feel culturally different start to challenge the status quo and where those who are feeling ‘othered’ in a perceived homogenous culture, seek new forms of meanings and identity. This struggle is particularly important in the context of this thesis when considering how dominant culture can affirm particular values and interests and how subcultures may seek to contest the status quo (Bhabha, 2012).

Anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973) understood culture as patterns and messages that could be implicit or explicit and that are transmitted historically through language and symbols that provide meaning within an environment. Some of the elements that could be considered part of the culture of a school are the traditions, ceremonies and norms perpetuated by a particular group of people (Geertz, 1973; Giroux, 2009b; McLaren, 2009; Stolp & Smith, 1995). Stolp and Smith (1995) state that these can be seen and expressed in a school environment in classrooms, staff meetings and even on the walls of the passages. They say that cultural norms and values are often foreign to an outsider but can be observed during the social interactions and behaviours of
the participants of the group. To the outsider actions, stories, events, meetings can begin to
‘describe the indescribable’ (Stolp & Smith, 1995, p. 1).

The short description above can in no way capture the full breadth of the meaning of the term
‘culture’, but it is an attempt to focus the discussion on those ideas and occurrences in a school
which can have an impact on the individual’s experience at that school. Stolp and Smith (1995)
contend that one of the dangers of trying to define culture or measure it relates to the subjective
nature of beliefs, values, symbolic expressions or feelings. These are often difficult for an outsider
to understand fully, but there is an opportunity for researchers to consider the broader patterns,
relationships and roles of leaders that exist and to understand how a well-articulated school
culture is able to ‘tell people in the school what it truly important and how they are to act’ (Stolp

There are two further points that are important to make regarding the importance of school
culture. First is its impact on individuals and second the ability of leadership to shape and change
a culture. With regard to the impact of culture on individuals, it is useful to consider the
importance of the social context on any social actions that take place. Reicher (2004) maintains
that on an individual basis, school culture can explain how individuals begin to think about
themselves, their relationships with others, their goals and their desires. Individual behaviour
stems from the symbolic and non-symbolic aspects of the system of culture in which we exist
(Reicher, 2004). In this regard culture becomes an essential element to consider when one thinks
about LGBTQ individuals in a school, and we need to think about how those symbolic and non-
symbolic actions and events impact their behaviour and self-belief. As Geertz (1973) contends
‘we are, in sum incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through
culture’ (p. 12).

The second important point to make regarding culture is its relationship with leadership. Crossley
(2005) reasons that in some cultures, there exists ‘instances where particular groups are
systematically denied the degree of recognition enjoyed by others, that is, instances where they
are devalued and stigmatised’ (p. 319). In the case of LGBTQ individuals at schools, there are stories of victimisation and discrimination that exist throughout the literature and which were described in the previous chapter (Hillier et al., 2010). Freire (1996) maintains that in order for social change to occur, the powerful and those in the dominant culture and positions of leadership should rethink and examine their actions as perpetrators of an unfair system and instigators of oppression. He goes on to say that leaders must however not be seen to rush in to be the saviour of those who are marginalised. Freire (1996) argues that they should instead be seen to be enabling and assisting those marginalised and ‘powerless' groups in society to regain their sense of humanity and dignity by providing opportunities for them to be examples and role models to others as they struggle for change, thus illustrating their own capacity and agency (Freire, 1996).

Repressive Tolerance

One concept that is related to the discussion of culture is that of ‘tolerance'. There is a discourse that strives to create a ‘culture of tolerance', which includes ideas that the aim of a school should be to teach tolerance of LGBTQ individuals (or indeed any person who is perceived as ‘other’). On the surface that does sound like a noble aim, but the use of the term is problematic; one tolerates a trip to the dentist, one should not strive to just tolerate a fellow human being.

Individuals and organisations who have not fully reflected on the experience of being ‘other’ (in this case LGBTQ), may ask the question; ‘if LGBTQ activists are allowed to keep criticising and challenging the status quo, would that not indicate that the Australian society is tolerant of difference?’ In an essay written in 1965, Herbert Marcuse (1968) sought to address this apparent contradiction and ideas of ‘tolerance’, by espousing the idea of ‘repressive tolerance'. Marcuse (1968) contends that if we claim to be tolerant of all ideas and all views, we are misusing the idea and that the opposite effect will emerge. Through this stance, Marcuse (1968) asserts that this societal practice of ‘tolerance for all’ perpetuates the status quo. Consider the difference between statements like ‘all lives matter’, as opposed to ‘black lives matter’. The first statement proclaims to be tolerant for all but could be seen as repressive in that it perpetuates a status quo
which ignores the specific conditions and lived experiences of a particular community reaching out for help. Saulius (2013) makes the point that while being tolerant is a hallmark of our democratic state, it does bring into question the difference between allowing for firm views and values to be expressed and allowing for fundamentalist oppression to be perpetuated. Marcuse (1968) claims that that oppression of people, ideas and values begins to take hold when a society is extending tolerance toward ‘policies, conditions, and modes of behaviour which should not be tolerated because they are impeding, if not destroying, the chances of creating an existence without fear and misery’ (p. 1). Mass media and the culture industry are examples of industries that have become complicit in supporting intolerance, under the guise of wanting to hear ‘all sides of the story’ and ‘all perspectives’. As Bronner (2011) asserts; ‘now it is not just beauty, but truth that lies in the eye of the beholder’ (p. 68).

Freire (1996) further develops this notion of the repressive nature of tolerance, by pointing out that not only is tolerance vital to an individual’s ability to strive for enlightenment, but that it is a concept that is far more than just politely trying to coexist with something one finds unbearable (Freire, 1996). Darder (2009) supports this idea and says that the essential and critical components of tolerance are found when there is a development of ‘respect, discipline, dignity and ethical responsibility’ (p. 576). However, even with some of those key components, Marcuse (1968) notes that repressive tolerance exists in a corrupt system. The system is rigged in order to perpetuate the economic and political interests of the few (Marcuse, 1968). This rigged system is due to a social structure which needs to appear democratic and tolerant, but which effectively weakens the dissenting voices, by setting narrow limits of tolerance (Marcuse, 1968). The question that he raises is that in a system that espouses the idea of democracy and perceptions of freedom, how does transformation take hold if the same powers and methods of controls are continually perpetuated and institutionalised? As Marcuse (1968) famously contends in his book, The One-Dimensional Man, the ‘free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves’ (p. 10).
This concept of repressive tolerance is essential to the understanding of the status quo in most schools and how the schools are looking at changing and adapting within the current cultural landscape. Zaoui (2008) states that tolerance is a concept that could be seen as conditional or limited and is something that depends on those in power or those dominating the culture of the school or space. When a principal or leadership board says that the school should be tolerant, the implication is that some people will remain tolerant for only so long as they are told to, implicitly or explicitly (Zaoui, 2008). Mayo (2009) insists that it is no longer good enough to make discrimination and bullying of minorities against the rules in a school and not part of the curricula (Mayo, 2009). The official silence or the polite veneer that exists in schools when they try to treat all students the same way minimises the representation of minority students and staff and contributes to further oppression (Mayo, 2009).

Alienation and Reification

Another concept that critical theorists explore is ‘alienation’. This concept is particularly relevant as it considers the impact of oppression on those within the cultural space and how those subjects engage in that space. Crossley (2005) and Bronner (2011) point out that Karl Marx offered a very detailed description of this concept wherein he believed that labour (those activities that humans engage in to transform their world) experience their environment through what is being produced. Marx posited that the capitalist economic system restricts and prevents labour from fully engaging in the product of their work and inhibits initiative and engagement in producing new products and therefore ultimately in their innate possibilities as humans (Bronner, 2011; Crossley, 2005; Thompson, 2013b).

Crossley (2005) declares that alienation focuses on ‘the separation of human beings from each other, from their own life or self, or from society’ (p. 3). Bronner (2011) claims that society has created artificial barriers to connect through, for example, mass consumption or dominant media narratives, and thus the essential elements of the human experience such as decency, kindness, generosity and honesty are rare. Rush (2004) argues that there is a belief that alienation estranges us from being mindful of the here and now and we must reconcile our striving for
achievement and purpose with our genuine lived reality, in other words, we ‘must be bodies as well as intellects, simple enjoyers as well as purposeful doers’ (p. 61). Understanding alienation helps in our understanding of the urgency in which schools should be thinking about LGBTQ inclusive practices, as it illuminates the lack of connection to schooling and environment that can be felt by LGBTQ individuals.

Linked to the concept of alienation is one of reification. Crossley (2005) states that the term reification relates to the situation that exists when emotional or mental labour is being undertaken by individuals, and there is nothing in the environment reflecting the value of their work at them. In other words, the environment or context in which individuals find themselves could reinforce the notion that they are nothing more than an object or commodity to be used, but not recognised or appreciated. An example of this might be when it is always the same, out LGBTQ student or staff member at the school who is constantly being asked to make the speeches about inclusivity at LGBTQ celebrations. Young (2009) echoes this idea in her considerations of exploitation as described in the section about oppression above. Held (1980) makes the point that this environment, in turn, is a crucial barrier in developing a ‘revolutionary consciousness’ (p. 22) that is required for transformation. This consciousness lies with individuals whose social position is unique in that they can drive change, take action and understand what oppression is taking place (Held, 1980). Reification is a barrier to the capability of people to understand their abilities to change and for humans to subjectively understand themselves, and what they like or what they love, through their work and deeds (Crossley, 2005; Held, 1980).

Peter McLaren (2009) links the concepts of reification to the idea of the erasure of LGBTQ curriculum content. He argues that one of the ways in which reification is seen playing out in our society today is the call for the national curriculum and the study of so-called ‘important’ books or ‘significant’ historical events (McLaren, 2009). The erasure of significant information leads to a situation where the dominant culture can impose a higher status on some knowledge above others. By reifying some ideas above others, students and other members of a society are removed from the environment because their narratives and their experience of the political
sphere are negated. Only specific prescribed values and behaviours are inculcated into the mainstream schooling environment, and for this thesis, those values and behaviours are ones that are predominantly heteronormative (McLaren, 2009).

One of the theorists who sought to address ways of emerging from the grip of alienation and reification is Axel Honneth. He recognises that the suffering that is experienced by individuals in society leads to a desire for liberation and healing (Honneth, 2004). Alongside Noddings (1988), Honneth (2004) developed the idea of a socially conscious and empathetic society by considering the ability of individuals to ‘care’. The theory of care and recognition has already been described in the literature review and will be used again later in the analysis chapters.

**The Dialectic of Enlightenment**

Coupled to the ideas of alienation and oppression, is the concept of enlightenment and the need for individuals to strive towards some form of self-actualisation. The Dialectic of Enlightenment refers to both the period and philosophy in the 17th and 18th Centuries where scientific and rational theories of knowledge clashed with ideology and the idea that civilisation is continually striving to challenge superstition and myth in order to become ‘enlightened’ (Bronner, 2011; Held, 1980).

Held (1980) points out that this theoretical idea seeks to prepare a path that would release individuals from situations of domination that may have arisen through historical and systemic factors that have been imposed on society. There is a desire to break free from any system of thought which appears to claim ultimate and complete knowledge over people and environment and a desire to encourage critical viewing of structures in society (Held, 1980). An example of this school of thought would be the situation that exists in a belief system such as Christianity or Judaism or Islam. The dogma and relatively fixed ideas and structures do not easily enable or welcome an objective analysis. Those who are privileged within that system ensure that any dissenting thoughts or constructs are deemed unsuitable (Held, 1980). The important concern here is that as our historically closed structures of thought persist, it prevents individuals from...
living a more enlightened life and leads instead to an increase in administered society and less autonomy (Held, 1980).

Bronner (2011) asserts that there is a danger that exists with the growth of reason and scientific rationality being seen in some parts of our current society as the universal standard for pure and dispassionate decision making. One might consider the seemingly enlightened idea that scientific rationality should banish superstitions and ideological decisions and that this should lead to individuals being more autonomous and free, however, it this process of scientific rationality can also lead to a decrease in critical reasoning by filtering our moral consciousness and moral autonomy (Bronner, 2011). Bringing this concept to the thesis, allows me to consider the impact of a fixed system of thought or a dispassionate, scientifically rational curriculum that tries to produce students who master specific tasks, but who Aronowitz (2009) would claim do not question social organisation, or consider different values or criticise the status quo.

The Dialectic of Enlightenment, according to Bronner (2011), does not suggest that humans have no choice, but rather that our autonomy is limited or distorted. Greene (2009) supports that idea and states that as individuals strive toward elusive autonomy and individuality and allow their voices to emerge from any ‘anachronistic and unjust restraints’ (p. 86) then new, rational and engaged dialogue begins to emerge in the public sphere. As individuals begin to pursue their path and liberty, unencumbered by the figures of authority, they can strive for the enlightenment that has been denied them (Greene, 2009).

The Dialectic of Enlightenment is an interesting critical theory concept to consider as a lens for examining the data in this thesis. It is closely linked to the decision-making and power structures that exist in schools, and the acknowledgement that these structures, while seemingly rational and scientifically based can perpetuate oppression and prejudice.
Leadership and Critical Theory

An important part of this thesis centres on the ability and engagement of leadership in the change process. This section starts by considering the broad idea of ‘leadership’ and its connection with critical theory. Leadership is a vast topic; this section briefly considers some perspectives that have been developed by leading thinkers in the fields of management and change. It is essential to acknowledge that there are a variety of different types of leaders, however, this thesis focuses on those leaders who seek to create and drive change in spaces of oppression or prejudice. Once leadership has been examined, this section moves on to consider the interplay between leaders and their environment and then on to how critical theory considers their ability to effect change.

Freire (1996) contends that one of the fundamental roles of a leader is that they should work with people and not just for them. This idea emphasises the fact that leaders cannot be seen as thinkers, while others are merely assigned the role of the doers (Freire, 1996). Freire’s (1996) concept of leadership is embodied by the idea that ‘revolutionary leaders cannot think without the people, nor for the people, but only with the people’ (p. 112). He draws an important distinction between what he calls ‘dominant elites’ and ‘revolutionary leaders’ (Freire, 1996, p. 113). Dominant leaders only think about the people who follow them in order to understand how to dominate them further, or how to maintain their positions of power as the dominant elite. They seek to maintain a hierarchy, limited dissent, manage speech, and to use their power in order to guide, order, and command others. Revolutionary leaders, on the other hand, do not see their followers and allies as ignorant. They work best in communion with their colleagues. Freire (1996) maintains that these leaders ‘[think] about the people in order to liberate (rather than dominate) them, the leaders give of themselves to the thinking of the people’ (p. 113). Bringing people together and striving to change school culture and environments collaboratively is an integral part of this thesis.

Leadership has also been conceptualised as a conduit for understanding the environment. DePree (1998) states that leaders are those people that are responsible for ‘defining reality’ (p.
130) within their environments. Leaders have power, and more importantly, they have the power to influence and change a culture or to continue with the status quo. In his work on defining leadership, DePree (1998) states that leaders of organisations should leave a legacy, provide momentum, be effective and develop, express and defend the organisation’s values. This definition may be problematic when considered under a critical theory lens, as it speaks to the defence of values and legacy. This could be interpreted as means to maintain the status quo or to continue to perpetuate oppression in a space. However, there is also an imperative for a leader to ‘provide momentum’, and this is the type of leadership that critical theorists such as Freire (1996), would more readily espouse as it speaks to transformation of the space.

A different perspective of the interplay between leadership and environments and one that is more focused on transformation is presented by MacGregor Burns (2010) in his seminal work on leadership. While MacGregor Burns is an academic focused on change management and not critical theory, he moves to a definition that concentrates on the ability of leaders to use their positions of power to promote change in spaces where they may see the need. MacGregor Burns (2010) makes the point that leaders are those that can induce their followers to move toward organisational goals that represent the values, aspirations and expectations of both the leader and the follower. He goes on to describe transformational leadership as a situation in which ‘both leader and follower raise one another to a higher purpose’ (MacGregor Burns, 2010, p. 20). This sort of participative change aligns strongly with the ideas of the critical theorists. It is a view of leadership that is based on consultation which directly targets the values, attitudes and skills of employees. Dunphy and Griffiths (1996) contend that the purpose of this leadership strategy is to build employee support for the change and develop ownership for the change.

This focus on the relationship between leader and follower is an important link between those theorists in the organisational leadership field and the ideas of critical theorists. Leading on from this discussion of leadership is how critical theory would see leaders act and move forward in a space of oppression, that is, through dialogue and praxis.
Praxis and Dialogue

Flowing out of the discussion of leadership, is an understanding of how critical theorists see that process occurring. When considering how to change and transform a school environment to one that is more inclusive, it is crucial that there must be both ‘words’ and ‘action’. Felluga (2015) argues that there must be something more than just simple theorising about what should happen. Freire (1996) states that leadership need to become actively engaged in what he would describe as both ‘praxis’ and ‘dialogue’.

Praxis

Praxis is an important element in critical theory. Praxis can be viewed as being fluid interplay between action and reflection (Freire, 1996). Felluga (2015) states that there should be critique and reflection of all of your ideas and theories, not just of the ones you are seeking to change. Gramsci (2014) makes the point that while most philosophies aim to reconcile opposing interests and contradictory perspectives so that the oppressors can continue to exercise their hegemony, the idea of praxis seeks to address those contradictions in ideologies in order to see change. Transformation will only happen if there is both an understanding of those contradictions and action to address them (Gramsci, 2014). Both action and reflection must be present when considering ideas, because in any struggle for liberation if there is action only, it turns into an activist campaign, often with only a few, passionate followers, who are unable to engage mass participation. Darder et al. (2009) state that striving for change without being able to fully articulate or theorise about the need and direction of that change, leads to an inability to fully engage all of the oppressed, or to change the hearts and minds of the oppressors. If, as was explained above, action only, leads to activism, then what of reflection only? Some critical theorists posit that if there is only reflection and theorising, the struggle is doomed to remain in the walls of academia and intellectual imagination (Darder et al., 2009; Freire, 1996). There will be no change seen or felt due to the inability to move beyond the theoretical debates and wishing for change.
Praxis is an integral facet of any revolution and change. For Freire (1996), ‘true reflection leads to action’ and ‘when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection’ (p. 48). Darder (2009) argues that the reason this link between action and reflection is essential is that true critical reflection in enables those leading change to understand and perceive the authentic historical, political and economic causes of their reality and illuminate it for others. Honneth (2004) makes the point that any successful form of social transformation arises where the common goals are put into action. According to Freire (1996), praxis enables organised, thorough, and meticulous action because without it, action would be directionless and in the end meaningless.

It is important to remember that praxis should not be seen as a situation where, for example, action can only occur once critical reflection has taken place or vice versa. Freire (1996) states that for authentic praxis to exist, ‘action and reflection must occur simultaneously’ (p. 109). This may be seen as a daunting challenge for those seeking to drive change (or challenge a school’s status quo), but when we consider that reflection may deem a certain course of action inadvisable at a particular point in time or that a seemingly spontaneous action could be as a result of subconscious reflection and previous knowledge or experience, then the challenge seems less frightening.

**Dialogue**

Dialogue is placed in this section alongside praxis because without dialogue; there can be neither clear reflection nor well-planned actions for change. Dialogue is an important tool for understanding how leaders of change can accomplish a successful and long-lasting change process.

Darder et al. (2009) claim that dialogue speaks to a process that provides emancipation and empowerment, through its ability to make those who have felt marginalised and oppressed, become leaders of their own salvation. Honest and open dialogue are seen as imperative for honest transformation, but it is often not an easy step to take (Darder et al., 2009). Freire (1996)
draws an important distinction between a ‘dialogue’ and a ‘coup’. Where the first one draws people together and develops a jointly negotiated process for change and revolution, the second tries to enact change through force or deceit. There is an element of courage that is expected from leaders who engage in dialogue, and this courage is linked to the honesty that is required of all the participants. Freire makes the argument that;

‘Sooner or later, a true revolution must initiate a courageous dialogue with the people. Its very legitimacy lies in that dialogue. It cannot fear the people, their expression, their effective participation in power. It must be accountable to them, must speak frankly to them of its achievements, its mistakes, its miscalculations, and its difficulties’ (Freire, 1996, p. 109).

bell hooks (2014) makes the important point that sincere dialogue carries with it a sense of danger, as it may open wounds and expose certain truths. It also brings with it an opportunity to cross boundaries and dismantle barriers that have been erected through difference and othering (hooks, 2014). For Freire (1996), any attempt to limit dialogue or impede communication reduces not only the chance for success for change but also the engagement of those being oppressed, as they are being reduced to simple objects in the change process and not active subjects anymore.

Dialogue cannot exist between one party who wants to name the world for another or when one party is denied access to the dialogue. Dialogue consists of encounters between people with the aim of changing and naming the world (Freire, 1996). According to hooks (2014), dialogue can show that solidarity between the two parties can exist and that when the boundaries are crossed and confronted, a new paradigm emerges. Freire (1996) states that dialogue and engagement is an act of creation and a way for us to achieve significance as human beings. This creation of a new space and a new way of doing things is one of the key focus areas of this thesis and it is therefore vital to understand one of the tools that critical theory would recommend.
Conclusion

Apple (2013) reasons that critical theory helps to expose how oppression is prevalent in the school system and to uncover ways in which counter-hegemonic actions have taken place in order to form a foundation of hope for the future. The end goal of a thesis such as this one, would be to understand and describe a social movement that drives change and to communicate the research in such a way that others could learn from it and follow it (Apple, 2013). This goal is a daunting and exciting challenge to try to live up to for any critical education researcher. Transformational social change will only be successful at school where the principal and a leadership team see the role of education as one that promotes democratic ideals and strives to enable all participants to realise their full potential. The role of the researcher in this process is to analyse the actions and stories of the individuals critically, to shine a light on their successes and to contemplate their trials, in order enable more to follow this path – critical theory is an important and useful tool in accomplishing this goal.

There is an important connection between the critical theory framework and the methodology that has been used. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015) the use of critical theory and qualitative research enables the researcher to understand the power structures that exist and how these structures might favour one group over another. This connection will be explored in the next chapter. Through the use of critical theory alongside a robust qualitative methodology, the research was able to not only expose the culture of oppression, but also to consider and highlight ways in which a more just and fair society could emerge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
Chapter 4 - Methodology

Introduction

The methodology for this project was designed to uncover the complex and intricate behaviours and actions that are involved in leading LGBTQ inclusive practice at schools. The focus of the this chapter is to describe the methodology, and to explore the semi-structured interview method that will help to answer the key research question of; ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ The methodology is also focused on uncovering data to answer the sub-questions that flow from that research question - What is the role of school leadership? What is the role of teachers? What are the significant forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?

The design of the research has been based on understanding, uncovering and illustrating the diverse experiences of teachers and leaders in two secondary schools in Melbourne that have successfully implemented and developed a range of policies and procedures that have created a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ school stakeholders. The individuals that were chosen to participate, worked at two government high schools with years 7 to 12 (generally consisting of young people aged 13 to 18 years of age). The schools were members of the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria (SSCV). The research design which has been chosen for this thesis is qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with Principals, Teachers and Wellbeing staff who have implemented a positive change for the LGBTQ members of their school environment.

The next section in this chapter will explain why the choice of qualitative research and narrative inquiry using semi-structured interviews for this thesis was adopted and some of the benefits and limitations of this choice. The section that follows will elaborate on the research design and then move to explain the method that was used to collect data. The final sections in this chapter
describe the concerns surrounding the ethics in collecting the data and using it, and then the validity of the data. The section considering and explaining the limitations of this work is necessary to bear in mind when thinking about ways it will be used in the future and what other work might need to be done. The final section in this chapter describes how the data was analysed and which themes emerged from the work.

**Qualitative research**

**What is qualitative research and why use it?**

Qualitative research seeks to understand the realities of the situation and the interactions between individuals (Bryman, 2012). It is a research approach that strives to understand the social phenomenon that occur within specific environments and how people interpret and provide meaning to experiences related to those phenomenon (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okley, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In doing qualitative research, one is less concerned with finding objective measures and statistics and more focused on trying to understand the environment and its implicit and explicit rules (Kervin et al., 2006).

Qualitative research constructs knowledge through the interpretation of the social world by seeking to understand the emotions, actions and motives of the participants of that world (Bryman, 2012; Kervin et al., 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The use of qualitative research enables a description of the context and a reflection of the realities that exist. Qualitative research ensures that data collected is confined, specific and constructed by the individuals or groups that hold that knowledge (Bryman, 2012; Kervin et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2013). This links with the topic and will help to improve the understandings of those factors that drive individuals to change school environments for their LGBTQ students and stakeholders.
What are the benefits and limitations of qualitative research?

Qualitative research has benefits that are appropriate for this study. Kervin et al. (2007) state that qualitative research allows for the *exploration of the unexpected* (p. 37) which is difficult to do in a quantitative study. Miles and Huberman (1994) claim that qualitative research often leads to surprising findings and to in-depth interrogations of data that often go beyond the initial idea or framework. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) add to that idea, by saying that qualitative research seeks to understand and uncover the meaning that people ascribe to their own experiences, work and environment. This understanding and reflection on the actions taken and the environment are linked to the purpose and focus of this thesis.

One of its key benefits, particularly in the context of this work, is that qualitative research generally adopts a more narrative approach which is often considered to be more accessible and therefore likely to have an impact on teaching practice (Kervin et al., 2006). Qualitative analysis also provides the researcher with the ability to attempt to capture the chronological flow of events in order to create a narrative that can provide a distinct and evocative picture to the reader (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994), assert that the emphasis on trying to collect data that reflects peoples’ lived experience makes qualitative research particularly useful when trying to discern the meanings of certain events, processes and structures. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), add that it allows for a detailed description of those experiences and events that enable researchers to use inductive thinking to build themes and develop findings. For this study connecting those experiences and their meanings with the social world and the current state of LGBTQ politics is a particularly exciting challenge and opportunity.

Qualitative research is not without its limitations and critics often point to the fact that because of the small sample sizes, fewer participants and lack of standardized measurement, qualitative studies lack validity, reliability, and generalisability (Kervin et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).
There have also been claims that qualitative research lacks rigour (Kervin et al., 2006). In order to address these concerns, it is imperative that the data collection, analysis and reporting is exemplary. While it may not be as easy to achieve research rigour as a quantitative study, it can be achieved by detailing the procedures and decisions as explicitly as possible so that the reader trusts the findings (Kervin et al., 2006). It is also significant to note that with regard to generalisability, Bryman (2012) maintains that qualitative research does not seek to generalise to a whole population group, rather, the researcher seeks to use the data to make quality theoretical inferences.

Qualitative research has also been claimed to be too subjective and difficult to replicate. The subjectivity associated with the research stems from the fact that the researcher may form personal relationships with the participants and that there is an unsystematic approach to determining what is important and what could or should be left out (Bryman, 2012; Kervin et al., 2006). The inability to replicate the research is another factor to consider when doing qualitative research. Being unable to replicate the study could be due to the choices made by the researcher and the focus that they might have in the data collection (Bryman, 2012).

Kervin et al. (2006) contend that the arguments surrounding the lack of subjectivity and replication in qualitative research can be countered by the fact that no research can be genuinely objective. They point out that in every study, researchers have to make decisions and assumptions in their analysis and in coming to conclusions. A further way to address these two issues is if the researcher acknowledges any bias and subjectivity throughout their writings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is important to recognise that knowledge and social processes are always constructed in particular ways by those people who are witnessing them or experiencing them. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that while things like language, conflict, power relationships can exist objectively, they are interpreted subjectively through the use of theory and lived experience.
Narrative Method

This qualitative research narrative inquiry is being conducted using semi-structured interviews. Finding answers to the research question lends itself toward what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) would consider being a traditional narrative inquiry. This is where there are conversations and discourse between the researcher and with teachers and leaders who explore the change they have brought to schools and tell their stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The method being used within this inquiry is the use of semi-structured interviews. Bryman (2012) argues that narrative inquiry considers not only ‘what happened’, but also ‘how people make sense of what happened and to what effect?’ (p. 582). Using this type of research method, that is narrative inquiry, means that there is a recognition that individuals perceive their lives in terms of processes, relationships, and connection (Bryman, 2011). It makes it possible to consider not only the longitudinal story, but also the smaller episodes and the interconnections between those episodes (Bryman, 2012).

Riessman (2002) contends that narrative inquiry has an important purpose and that these inquiries are strategic, functional, and that they accomplish essential goals. Riessman (2011) considers the language used and the stories told, to be ‘containers of meaning’ (p.312). This means that researchers can use this methodology to expand on and problematise the narrative in order to achieve the goal of understanding why stories were told, what their purpose was, and what other readings or understandings might exist (Riessman, 2011). This research aims to gain an understanding of how the participants understood the processes they implemented and how their perspectives and points of view could contribute to further change. Bryman (2012) states that a process such as this one, aims to elicit the participants ‘reconstructed accounts’ (p.584) of the connections between events and the contexts in which they happened. The interviews with the participants need to be interpreted, and Reissman (2002) reflects that ‘narratives are interpretive and in turn, require interpretation’ (p236). The act of interpretation is inherently political, and herein lies a danger.
Chase (2011) makes the point that a narrative is a distinctive form of discourse, and this unique form allows for the creation of meaning;

‘... through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or others’ actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time’ (p421).

Chase (2011) insists that when striving to find meaningful narratives, it is important to identify both the smaller, nuanced stories, as well as the overarching ones, for it is in these smaller stories where values, ideals and attitudes may become clear. Chase (2011) claims that any research that uses narrative methodology should realise that the stories and insights that will emerge are going to be ‘multiple and layered’ (p430). According to Punch (2013), stories, and in this case narrative inquiry through semi-structured interviews, are going to be filled with metaphors, and that these are useful ways for connecting the research findings with theory.

All of these factors are in keeping with the intention of the research that has been conducted in this thesis as it is a method that provides an opportunity to understand the social meaning of what people do in their everyday lives in their environments (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using a narrative inquiry, through semi-structured interviews, has offered the opportunity to explore the understanding and meaning of the participant's experiences in order to elicit themes for analysis.

Using semi-structured interviews in this research enabled a description of an authentic story of the journey of LGBTQ inclusive practice and change that has taken place at schools. The participants were forthcoming in telling their own stories about being involved in leading the process as well as discussing the challenges they had. Using a narrative method to develop the data has proven particularly effective in the educational environment. A narrative method, using semi-structured interviews, not only sought to furnish complex descriptions of individual experiences (Geertz, 1973), but also to describe common features of those experiences. This method and strategy have been particularly effective in capturing the actions and interactions, the behaviours, settings and events that the participants experienced in their school spaces.
What are the benefits and limitations of a narrative method?

An important benefit of adopting a narrative approach is that this has been shown to benefit the participants in the research (Cohler, 1982). Cohler (1982) makes the point that when individuals reflect on their own experiences and construct narratives, that person benefits from the opportunity to tell the story and it impacts their personal wellbeing. Narratives can therefore make a particularly strong contribution to the work and understanding of the participants themselves (Cohler, 1982). Punch (2013) asserts that the participant's stories can describe the situations and the complicated processes that have taken place in a way that enhances both the readers and their own understanding of the situations. This is an important element of this thesis as those who drove and lead the change process, indicated that they had not had the time and resources available for thorough evaluations of the programs and processes at their school, and as per the point made by Cohler (1982), this process has helped them make sense of the role they played.

Riessman (2008) notes that one of the dangers of using narratives, and in this case semi-structured interviews, is that long periods might have elapsed between the events described and the interview. Bryman (2012) raises the concern that perspectives and memory might have changed, which would lead to competing narratives between participants. This is coupled with the concern that researchers using narrative methods tend to treat the narratives uncritically, as the researcher is fully engaged in the construction of the narrative (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) also maintains narrative research in organisations can be complicated as the participant's perspectives and understandings of the underlying structure or contexts will vary.

Punch (2013) argues that narratives are valuable in studying lived experiences and particularly where the research is concerned with empowerment. In this research, participants' stories and reflections have been coupled together with other individuals in that same school, who experienced the same events in order to provide clarity and a reliable picture of how LGBTQ inclusive practice was led and driven at those sites. By combining and layering individual
narratives and stories of the same situation and process, a larger meta-narrative began to emerge and from that themes were drawn and analysed. The process enabled the discovery of patterns of experiences that all of the participants spoke about or highlighted, these, in turn, informed the research findings.

**Research design for this study**

This thesis has explored and examined the semi-structured interviews of participants at two secondary schools in Melbourne, Victoria in order to illustrate the complex, diverse and ultimately rewarding experiences of engaging in LGBTQ practice. Yin (2014) points out that a multiple school site approach provides the opportunity to strengthen findings and analytic conclusions. By using participant narratives from two different sites, it also offers the opportunity to focus both within and across spaces, this way the data collected is more robust (Yin, 2014). Punch (2013) makes the point that this approach enabled an opportunity to draw insight into particular issues and narratives at particular sites. Not only did this happen in the collection of the data, it also created a means through which to learn more about the general phenomenon and conditions of an LGBTQ inclusion process.

When setting up the research, the aim was to collect participant data through semi-structured interviews, that would characterise different environments, context, circumstances and processes, in order to build a body of qualitative information that fully described how those schools and the participants within the schools dealt with the challenge of providing visibility to the LGBTQ community, policy development and inclusion. Punch (2013) contends that the choice of a qualitative research design and of interviewing key role players allows for a richer and more varied insight. Other researchers point out that this design is useful due to the non-random sampling, the emphasis on social process over outcome, the multiplicity of viewpoints and the holistic enquiry into a natural setting (Kervin et al., 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

The teachers and leaders at the sites have provided an opportunity to examine the social process that has taken place, as well as provided the necessary context to answer the broader questions
posed by this study (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2014). Through an analysis of the data, details emerged about the strategies of the stakeholders to implement LGBTQ inclusive policies, the changes that took place, and the experiences of those involved. The aim of this analysis was to provide educators with research that would have an impact on the overall practice of education within schools.

**Recruitment**

The selection of suitable participants is an important aspect of any research design. It was important that the interview participants at each school had their own story to tell and that those stories of change were significant and compelling. When recruiting interview participants at these schools, there was the thought about whether other teachers at other schools would recognize these complex issues and would the research be able to span the distance between academic research and educational practice (Freebody, 2003).

**Recruiting school sites**

Finding sites that would provide participants with interesting and rich data was approached by adopting two different sampling methods. The first method, suggested by Bryman (2012), was a sampling of context. This entailed finding schools that fit into five specific criteria (described below) and where the context and environment of the school could be understood and described. This would entail being able to consider the culture, atmosphere, and social setting in which any change process took place (Bryman, 2012). The second recruitment concern, also discussed by Bryman (2012), was the sampling of participants. Once the schools were identified, it was important to find participants to provide information about their LGBTQ initiatives (Bryman, 2012). It was imperative that the principal of the school was involved and participated in the data collection. The school principal agreed to assist in providing access to the staff at the school, in order that they could be invited to participate and bring information to the study. The following section describes this recruitment process in more detail.
The first step was to find the right schools to approach. They had to be schools that would allow for a variety of information and experiences with regard to LGBTQ inclusion and environmental change. They could, therefore, not be selected through random sampling. For cases like these, Bryman (2012) suggests that one use purposive sampling as it is a sampling method that provides a direct connection to the research questions that are being posed. He describes it as a non-probability form of sampling that carefully and thoughtfully selects participants to recruit for a study. There are naturally drawbacks to purposive sampling. Yin (2014) is concerned that the term ‘sampling’ may lead the reader to think that the case comes from a large population of similar situations. It may lead to confusion about the potential generalisation of the data. In this research, care has been taken to point out that the sites do not reflect the whole population while at the same time, they do allow for the production of valid and reliable data.

There were five key criteria used in the selection of the schools for the school sites: they had to be government schools; they had to be secondary schools with years 7 to 12; they had to be members of the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria; they needed to be at different stages in the LGBTQ inclusion journey; and if possible, they needed to have different catalyst stories of change.

Each of these criteria had a specific purpose:

The research was limited to a search for government schools. This was done because these schools comprise the largest group within the Victorian schooling system. It was also essential that stories from government schools got highlighted as the purpose of this thesis is to drive changes in education practice. Searching for schools that describe the majority of educational experiences in Australia was thought to be the most effective way to drive this change.

It was also important to limit the search to Secondary Schools with Years 7-12. This group was selected as the vast number of schools who are listed on the Safe Schools website and who have attempted to create a more welcoming environment for their LGBTQ community members fall into this category (DET, 2016). These were the schools that were dealing most overtly with young
people ‘coming out’ or young people questioning their sexuality. These were also the spaces where the discussions, debates and dialogue about sexuality and gender identity were taking place in classrooms and amongst staff and students. This is not to negate the importance of doing this work in Primary or Middle school, but this Secondary School environment was seen as being at the ‘coal face’ of this issue, and the researcher’s familiarity with this environment made the choice more sensible.

It was also important to make sure that the schools that were chosen were members of the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria (SSCV). This was the program in place at the time that data was being collected and that pre-dated the Australian Safe Schools Coalition. Being considered a ‘safe school’ was an indication that there was a will and drive to engage in this process of LGBTQ inclusion. It also meant that the schools had begun to think about these issues and had already participated in some training and professional development around the LGBTQ experience at schools. This criterion was included to ensure that the issues were recognizable to the staff and leadership of the schools and that they have developed their thoughts about the process and would be willing and able to articulate their own feelings and ideas.

There was a strategic decision made to find schools that were at different points in the LGBTQ change and inclusion process. The reason behind this decision was to enable the data to tell different parts of the story of change. There was a focused attempt to find a school that had recently started to implement LGBTQ inclusion, and which had started to create a more welcoming environment for those staff and students. This was done in order to have access to people directly involved with the change process who could describe the full history of the events. This also allowed me to obtain accurate and authentic versions of the events as they unfolded. The other type of school that was targeted was one that had been engaged in LGBTQ issues for a longer period. This type of school provided insight into the benefits and challenges that exist once this change journey had been undertaken. It also allowed for those staff and leaders who had driven this process to reflect on the success stories and to objectively consider some of the failures that had occurred.
The final criterion was to try to find schools that had a different catalyst story - that is, schools that had distinctive reasons for initiating LGBTQ inclusion. While this was a difficult criterion to apply, as one only found out what the catalyst was after collecting the data, it did help to maintain the focus on why the schools started this process. The question of ‘why the process was started' was considered an important one, particularly as it was a way to convince other schools to understand the initial impetus for change and to, therefore, join the movement to more inclusive education. The question of why get involved and drive the change process was asked of the school leaders in order to best answer the research question.

*Site recruitment data*

Table 1 on page 93, provides more information about the sites in this study where the participants were recruited and describes the schools. This table illustrates how the schools fit the search criteria and provides socio-demographic information and information on the number of students and staff.

**Recruiting the interview participants**

Time was spent exploring the website of Safe Schools of Victoria. This site included a list of schools in the government, private and Catholic school systems, that had taken the Safe Schools training and had signed up to be recognised as LGBTQ Safe Schools. There were also discussions with work colleagues, university colleagues and parents of school students in the Melbourne system about their knowledge of different schools and different school experiences.

These discussions were done on an ad hoc and casual basis and were able to inform the understanding of the variety of school choices and perceived school cultures that exist in this area. Once schools that fulfilled the criteria had been identified a letter of invitation to participate in the research was sent to the principals of those schools (Appendix 1). The purpose of this letter was to introduce the research and request a meeting to discuss potential future steps to be taken.
Once the meetings had been set up, there was a discussion with the principals about the focus of the research. This meeting was an opportunity to address the expectations and requests that were pertinent to the principals. Any concerns or questions that they may have had after receiving the Principal’s Information Statement (Appendix 2) were also answered in this meeting. The site recruitment was formalised at that meeting as it also provided an opportunity for the principal to sign a consent form that indicated that they were satisfied for the school to be a site to interview participants in this research (Appendix 3). The two sites have been named Lakeview College and Greenwich Secondary in order to maintain their confidentiality.

At the meeting with the principals, their help was requested in recruiting members of their staff. They were asked to assist the researcher by allowing a poster or flyer about the study to be put up in the staff room and on any appropriate staff notice board. There was also a request made by the researcher for an opportunity to speak to the staff at a meeting. In discussions with the principal, it was decided that is was also permissible to send all of the staff an email detailing the research (Appendix 4). The principals indicated that they would take responsibility for forwarding this email on to their whole staff. The research design had been set up to interview the principal and at least two other key role players who were involved in the development of the school’s LGBTQ inclusivity initiatives. The initial design sought to ensure that participants, at the very least, included the student well-being coordinator, school council members, and staff members who were engaged in the implementation and continued development of the LGBTQ policies and procedures. Once the email had been sent out by the principal, the presentation made to the staff and the flyer put up on the notice board (Appendix 5), it quickly became apparent that there were a far larger variety of individuals that wanted to provide their input and data into the project.
Table 1: School site information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITES</th>
<th>SIZE OF SCHOOL</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>GENDER EXPRESSION</th>
<th>SEXUALITY (reported)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL SITE 1: Lakeview College</strong></td>
<td>+/- 700 students</td>
<td>+/- 70 teaching staff</td>
<td>- Multi-cultural</td>
<td>1 x Principal 1 x Student Wellbeing Coordinator 6 x Staff Members 1 x Support staff 1 x School Health Nurse</td>
<td>10 total participants</td>
<td>3 Male identified 7 Female identified</td>
<td>1 x Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Government school</td>
<td>- ICSEA score* – 969 (below national average)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Secondary School with grades 7 – 12</td>
<td>- Students - 56% boys / 44% girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Member of SSCV</td>
<td>- 7% Indigenous Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Recent implementation of LGBTQ change program</td>
<td>- 55% Language other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lower socio-economic area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ACARA, 2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL SITE 2: Greenwich Secondary</strong></td>
<td>+/- 1300 students</td>
<td>+/- 120 teaching staff</td>
<td>- ICSEA score* – 1081 (above national average)</td>
<td>1 x Principal 1 x Student Wellbeing Coordinator 1 x Ex-Student Wellbeing Coordinator 4 x Teaching staff 1 x Past-pupil 1 x Parent</td>
<td>9 total participants</td>
<td>3 Male identified 6 Female identified</td>
<td>1 x Bisexual participant 1 x Gay participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Government school</td>
<td>- Students - 54% boys / 46% girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Secondary School with grades 7 – 12</td>
<td>- 1% Indigenous Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Member of SSCV</td>
<td>- 4% Language other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Been engaged in LGBTQ issues for more than 5 years.</td>
<td>- Middle to Upper-income brackets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ACARA, 2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*ICSEA - Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
Participants data

Obtaining participants was achieved through email, a presentation at a full staff meeting and a flyer that was put up in the Staff Common Room of each of the sites. Through consultation with the supervisors of this thesis and an understanding of the time constraints, it was decided to seek around ten people per site and to limit the study to two different schools.

Table 1 captures some of the necessary participant information. As a large focus of this thesis is on leadership and influence, some information about their positions of responsibility within the schools has been included. The gender expression reported in the table has been inferred as they had not indicated that their preferred pronouns were contrary to the gender-binary. Where the participant offered the information, their reported sexuality has also been included. While this is of course slightly problematic as sexuality is often fluid, incorrectly provided to researchers or not fully understood, it has been kept in here as it does speak to the participants position and perhaps understanding of the issues facing LGBTQ individuals at schools. It is also important to bear the high rate of cis-gendered and presumed heterosexual participants in this thesis, as it may have contributed to some of their understandings and explanations of change or school experience. It is interesting that there were not more LGBTQ staff who chose to participate, despite being reported to be at the school by those participants that were interviewed.

The methods used to collect data

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The qualitative research that is being envisioned aims to gather the evidence that presents a holistic overview of the culture, environment, relationships, and contexts in which schools engaged in the inclusion of LGBTQ members of their community. In seeking to gain this information it was important to try to capture data that reflects the everyday life and reality of the individuals. This information could be used to explain why they made certain decisions or took particular actions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The choice of semi-structured interviews as a method for research collection is described.
below and evaluated in terms of the opportunities to construct evidence, reasons for choosing it and the limitations.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The method used in the construction of the narratives was the semi-structured interviews. These not only provided a better understanding of the purpose and intention behind some of the internal school documents that were created, they also provided the participants with an opportunity to express their point of view and to discuss and describe how they saw and experienced the LGBTQ inclusion process developing at their school. One of the key functions of the interviews was to allow the respondents to consider those things that they felt were important, to ramble, and to provide insight into what they deemed as important or relevant in the process (Bryman, 2012).

It was important to this research that the interviewees were able to provide a diverse set of ideas and focal points to ensure that the process that the school had undergone was investigated from a variety of perspectives. The initial individuals earmarked for interviews were the principal, the head of student well-being, management team members, and staff who were engaged in the LGBTQ environment at the school. As the research progressed, however, it was interesting and exciting to discover that there was an even greater assortment of individuals who felt that they wanted to contribute.

All of the interviews, except for two, were held at the school site in a private office. It was felt that the familiarity with the environment in which the interview was conducted would help elicit more location specific and thoughtful responses, rather than adding to their interview anxiety by being interviewed in an unfamiliar location. One of the interviews that was not conducted at the school was at the request of the participant due to them working remotely at that time. The other participant felt that it was vital for her data to be included, but that she was under immense family pressure and she therefore answered all the questions in writing and submitted them as a scripted interview.
These semi-structured interviews enabled the collection and construction of a large amount of interesting, rich and exciting data. They were specifically designed to not only address the key research question but to also bring information to the fore about the sub-questions on which this research is focused. This research method provided the fundamental perspectives on the motivations of leaders and school staff to seek LGBTQ social change. The interviews addressed questions like; ‘why did the change take place?’, ‘what were the benefits and challenges of this LGBTQ inclusion program?’, ‘how is it currently enacted?’ and ‘how have those resistant to change been included?’. A full list of the interview questions is found in Appendix 8.

Benefits and Limitations of semi-structured interviews

The interviews had the important benefit that they not only allow for a more targeted focus on the issues and the key themes, but they also enabled the opportunity for the researcher and for the participants engaged in the interview to form a relationship to unpack and discuss particular issues of relevance or concern. One of the great advantages of this qualitative research through semi-structured interviewing was that there was an opportunity to have a discussion about the attitudes, relationships, perceptions and personal views that elicited a more rich and vibrant data, and that are often missing from methods such as document analysis or quantitative research methodology (Yin, 2014).

This research also benefits from the use of semi-structured interviews because they allowed for a personal reconstruction of events and of the change process. Allowing for that to be understood in relation to the interviewees' position in the organisation and their social understanding of the topic. It enabled the researcher to include a variety of aspects into the analysis, such as their title, their position of power, their perceived objectives for the interview and the relationship formed within the interview. This once again provided the opportunity to capture the broader perspective and framework in which the discussion is being formed (Punch, 2013).
Care was taken to consider the limitations of the data collected. The data collected through these interviews was viewed sceptically and critically as it was situated in a particular context and was garnered in response to particular questions. The interactions that took place were grounded in the relationship that existed between the interviewer and interviewee and could potentially have been influenced by not only the context but also the gender, ethnicity or sexuality of the interviewer (Punch, 2009). It was interesting to note in most cases the sexuality of the interviewee was never discussed, but in those cases where it was, there were at times, what seemed to be more frank and open discussions.

A final drawback of the interview process, which had the potential to lead to a distortion of some of the evidence collected was that many of the events or meetings had taken place years earlier. Recalling the detail of discussions or events was problematic for many of the participants. While this was an area of concern, the variety of participants and the large amount of knowledge that was gathered may have offset this drawback.

**Ethics**

One of the critical considerations in this thesis has been ensuring the human subjects participating and their input have been treated as ethically as possible. Punch (2013) points out that the study of the real world with human participants obligates the researcher to follow and format strong ethical practices, particularly in this sort of narrative method, in a space where the topic under investigation could be seen as both an emotional and politically sensitive one.

This research study obtained ethics approval from the University of Melbourne's Human Ethics Committee and permission to conduct research in government schools by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. There was great care taken to ensure that this study complied with the ethical requirements laid out by the University of Melbourne and the Department of Education training. The steps that were taken are described and discussed in the following paragraphs.
The schools were sent a letter of invitation that included the aim of the study, along with information explaining why their school was chosen as a potential site (Appendix 1). This letter requested an explanatory interview with the Principal and contained preliminary information about how the school would be required to contribute to the study and that this research had been approved by the University and the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The principal also received a Principal's Information Statement about the research expectations (Appendix 2), and once all was agreed, the principal was asked to sign a consent form for research to proceed (Appendix 3).

In order to obtain informed consent, clear, detailed Plain Language Statements were developed (Appendix 6). These documents were provided to participants before the interviews. They described the purpose of the research and provided an indication as to the type of data that would be requested. It was also made clear that the data was to be recorded digitally and a transcription would be provided to the participants so that they could verify the information that had been collated. This statement also made it clear that the participants were able to stop or pause on any questions they did not feel comfortable with and that they were able to withdraw any data that they did not feel comfortable having provided. Once the participants had read the plain language statements, they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 7) indicating that they understood and agreed to being involved in this process.

Every participant who indicated that they were comfortable being interviewed received a proposed set of questions that may be asked throughout the interview (Appendix 8). It was made very clear that due to the nature of a semi-structured interview that most of the questions may not be asked, but the email containing these proposed questions served as a prompt for the respondents and as a way for them to collect their thoughts, ideas, and memories in order to come to the interview prepared and comfortable with the proposed direction.

As this was going to be an analysis consisting of two sites and many participants, one of the key concerns was confidentiality and protection of privacy. All of the participants were assured both
verbally and through the Plain Language Statements that every effort would be made to maintain both the school’s privacy and the individual’s confidentiality. This was going to be done through the use of pseudonyms and by de-identifying all data. The participants were alerted to the fact that the sample size was very small and that it may be possible for someone to identify them or the school. It was also stipulated that the data would be kept securely at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) in accordance with the University's guidelines, for five years before being destroyed. When the data was to be disposed of, it would be done with the assistance of the University, by using IT support for secure file deletion from the computers and using confidential document recycling bins.

There was also an imperative to ensure the participants experienced no harm during the data collection. All of the participants were over 18 years of age and had agreed to participate knowing the full details and purpose of this study, but there was still an ethical imperative that the interviews should anticipate and guard against any predictable consequences that could flow from the questions and data collection (Bryman, 2012). There were situations during the interview process in which the participants critically reflected on their actions, and this resulted in some emotional reactions to the topic and to the events that had taken place. There was also some indicators of stress and anxiety when talking about these sensitive LGBTQ issues and these were particularly evident when critically viewing the actions of the school. In order to counter this anxiety and the emotional stress of the interview process, the participants were sent a list of potential interview questions and interview themes, enabling them to prepare for the interview. Interview strategies were developed in conjunction with peers and supervisors, which included first asking relationship building, objective questions that put the participant at ease and which allowed them to objectively state facts about the events that occurred from their perspective, and to then allow the participant to highlight those matters that they felt more comfortable speaking about in an open and secure space. At the conclusion of each interview, each participant was provided a debriefing statement (Appendix 9) and time was spent explaining that if they had felt uncomfortable or if they needed to discuss these subjects further, information and contact details were available for groups such as the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria, The Victorian Gay
and Lesbian Rights Lobby, The Gay Families network, Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, Minus 18. Every participant was also provided with the contact details of the supervisors for this research should they have any concerns about the process.

One of the drawbacks of researching schools is the impact that the interview may have on a teaching day and on a teacher's time commitments. In the initial meeting with the principal, discussions were held on how to minimize the extra pressures and inconvenience of conducting the interviews during the school day. There was an attempt to establish practical solutions to this problem and participants were given a variety of time options that best suit them. The interviews were held either during free lessons or directly after the school day, once a participant indicated their interest in being involved none pulled out due to increased time pressures or indicated hesitance due to time constraints. The interviews were held in private, quiet offices or spaces in the schools (except for one, where the participant was working in the city). All of the interviews were held during a workday, i.e. 9 am – 5 pm, and none were conducted in the evenings.

Validity

One of the concerns about qualitative research, outlined above, is to what degree the data collection and analysis truly represents the phenomenon that is being measured or described (Bryman, 2012). One of the ways to achieve this was to ensure the research methods and design had been developed in order to answer the research questions. Additionally, it was important that the reader could scrutinise the design in order to see the link between the data and the theories being proposed.

The help and guidance of research supervisors were used in order to ensure the design, recruitment, data collection, and reporting were sound and well monitored. There were regular meetings with these supervisors to discuss project planning and the analysis of the data throughout this work. The supervisors were familiar with the University and the National
Statement guidelines for qualitative research and had access to any data and documents throughout the project.

To a limited extent, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue out that the choice of using multiple sites adds to the confidence and validity of the work as it provided more points of reference from which to understand the situations that were being described and which were occurring within schools. There was also a considered attempt to ensure there are a variety of participants within each interview site, each bringing a different perspective to the answers of ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘where’. This enabled an analysis that featured ideas, emotions, observations and input from many different sources. The participants and the schools were also chosen because they were relevant to the research questions and could be considered to be believable representatives of some other school, or teachers and leadership in similar situations. This allowed for a recognition of the situations and issues by the readers in similar positions in other education spaces (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The imperative to understand the validity and reliability of the data that was collected through the semi-structured interview process, was an important consideration. Yin (2014) and Bryman (2012), both point out, that while the interviews and narratives obtained might offer an important source of evidence, one of the key concerns in interviews was bias and the fact that the interviewer was part of the construction of the data. The mutual and subtle influences and subjectivities that exist between interviewer and participant could ultimately affect the responses and the line of inquiry that developed within an interview (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2014). There was care taken not to let bias or subjectivity creep in through poorly articulated questioning, but there was some evidence of it being prevalent through the responses provided by the interviewee. The area under discussion, LGBTQ inclusivity, tempted some of those interviewed to provide the ‘politically correct’ answer to the questions posed. Where their information is used in the analysis that follows, every effort is made to consider, comment on and discuss that data and the way it has been obtained.
Limitations

Many of the theoretical limitations to qualitative research and narrative inquiry have been discussed in an earlier section of this chapter. Issues such as the difficulty in generalizing the recommendations, the subjectivity and inherent biases that may exist in the researcher, the small sample size and difficulty replication of these types of research projects all are still relevant when considering the limitations of this thesis.

In addition to those general and theoretical constraints, one of the great limitations to this work was that of time. In constructing this research, it was important to be cognisant that not only was there a time pressure within the schools and for the participants themselves but also that the research had to have an endpoint. While it would have been beneficial to spend more time at the schools and interview more teachers and find more school sites the practicalities of that sorts of time commitment made it impossible. An attempt was made to mitigate some of the time issues by offering the option of doing focus groups. It was the intention of this researcher to have focus groups consisting of 4 – 5 staff members who would discuss the change management and the policies at the school; however, there was only one respondent who claimed that they would be willing to be in a focus group. In the end, that respondent gladly participated in the semi-structured interview and there were no focus groups held throughout this research.

A further limitation of this study was the fact that all the participants were supportive of LGBTQ change. The recruiting strategy was one that enticed respondents to participate and tell their story and their understanding of the situation. While this provided rich and interesting information, it did mean that, in general, it was predominantly those with positive and supportive views who agreed to participate. It was more challenging to access information and recruits who had negative stories to tell or who were disaffected by the change process and even angry that was happening at all. It would also have been interesting to find schools that had not embarked on any LGBTQ inclusion and to contrast them in order to understand more about the impediments to change.
Linked to the issue of time, it would have been an interesting opportunity to find a variety of schools in a variety of different socioeconomic areas of the state and even across the country. This study is limited in the fact that it considers only two schools within a relatively close geographic area of greater Melbourne. While they are good representations of government, secondary schools in Australia, the inclusion of a school in country Australia (or rural Australia), would have provided a very different perspective regarding the progress of LGBTQ rights and acceptance in the community.

Finally, an important liability has been the inability to conduct research with students at the schools and to obtain their perceptions and experiences. The discussion about the changes at the schools and the drivers of that inclusion process have been seen through the eyes of the staff and the leaders involved. At one point in the initial construction of the research, there had been the intention to source participants who were students at the school and who had experienced the LGBTQ school environment. It was quickly decided that there would be two problems with that approach. First, that the study's primary focus is looking at how and why the change occurred. It is interested in looking at those decision-makers who were either directly involved in changing school procedures, or who were involved in maintaining an inclusive environment. While in some cases, students could be helping in these endeavours, they were predominantly seen as the beneficiaries of a more inclusive environment and not the change-makers. A further study and an interesting addition to this thesis would be to launch an investigation using students to describe and discuss the impact of pro-active LGBTQ policy. The second problem in recruiting under 18-year-old students, was one of ethics approval. Getting students to talk about curriculum, or classroom practices that impact them is one thing, but unfortunately getting access to students to talk about sexuality and gender issues is a far more complex process, and in considering the focus of the question, one that was felt to be outside the scope of this thesis.

**Data analysis**

In order to ensure that the research was able to fit into the time constraints and that the results and analysis were trustworthy, the research plan was developed in a very structured manner
(Miles & Huberman, 1994). This research outline in effect provided a shell and the boundary from which to consider the cases and a lens through which to constantly revise the data always bearing the key research question and sub-questions in mind (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Table 2 illustrates the data analysis process and research journey in more detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

There were four stages in the chronology of the data analysis and the ideas for these stages were adapted from the ‘Ladder of Analytical Abstraction’ developed by Carney and cited in Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 93). The first stage was the development of the research question, and sub-questions. These questions drove the focus of the data collection and subsequent analysis. The questions were developed in conjunction with the thesis supervisors, deliberations with peers and the understanding of what information would be necessary for future change and of what was practically possible for this thesis. An important part of this first step was to consider the theoretical approach. After initially considering queer theory, it was determined that the focus on change was suited to critical theory. The ideas of oppression, power, repressive tolerance and school culture, were seen as critical lenses through which to consider the data. Once the research question and theoretical framework had been articulated, an ethics request was submitted and approved, and the search for school sites and participants commenced.

The second stage in the analysis process was to summarise the information. The transcripts of interviews were read, and the data from each interview was initially coded and grouped. The data from the transcripts was broken down into different elements and codes in order to illuminate the general direction of the research and to understand the information that had been collected. The next step was to identify the gaps in the data and the areas of unanticipated information that warranted further investigation. This involved reading the transcripts and identifying areas that linked to the key research question and sub-questions. Throughout this process, notes were also taken about any other matters, ideas, or concepts that were related to the topic. The initial codes and concepts were considered and were linked to not only the
research questions but also the critical theory constructs that were discussed in the previous chapter. Ideas such as oppression, the use of dialogue and the descriptions of leadership engaged in change emerged from the data and were used to move to step three.

The data analysis process then allowed for a movement onto stage three that included identifying broad trends across the data and the exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the data. This was done by considering what other participants of the schools had said and how those themes could be considered to develop a narrative that would best encapsulate what had happened at these sites. A good example of this would be considering the theme of ‘visible leadership’. In both schools, one of the key drivers of change mentioned consistently was the role and impact of the leaders and principals at the school. Another example would be the theme of ‘fear’ that emerged when considering the challenges to this change.

The fourth and final stage involved the testing of the analysis and developing the structure for revealing a strong narrative. This interrogation of the analysis and trends was done with the help of peers and supervisors who asked important questions and were vital in their ability to clearly articulate a persuasive explanation for why these narratives were important and what they had to say. These discussions were also crucial in helping to synthesise the data and for developing the final chapter's recommendations.
Table 2: Data Analysis and Research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage One</th>
<th>Stage Two</th>
<th>Stage Three</th>
<th>Stage Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question and sub-questions**

- **Research Question**: "What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?"

- **Sub-Questions**:
  - What is the role of school leadership?
  - What is the role of teachers?
  - What are the significant forces and factors that help drive change?
  - What are the significant forces and factors that hinder the drive for change?

**Theoretical Framework**

- An investigation into different theoretical frameworks – searching for ideas on change and action
- Critical theory and theorists emerge as key framework for the thesis.
- Concepts researched:
  - Power
  - Oppression
  - Hegemony
  - Tolerance
  - Culture
  - Leadership
  - Change
  - Dialogue
  - Praxis

**Data Collection**

- Ethics Approval obtained
- Semi-structured interviewees at different schools sought.
- Research into different schools, website analysis
- Application requests to principals and participants
- Interviews conducted.
- Interview questions that were developed are in Appendix 8 at the end of the thesis

**Summary and initial data categories**

- Transcription of interviews
- Summarising and packaging the participant data
- Linking the participant data to ideas that flowed from the research questions

**Coding of the data**

- Coding the data into a variety of different and unique categories
- Writing analytical notes linking or cross-referencing different codes and categories.
- Some initial coding categories were:
  - Catalyst moments
  - Participants support of change
  - Barriers identified
  - Factors that aided change

**Identifying broad trends**

- Repackaging and re-thinking the coding and categories
- Looking for links, gaps and where to emphasise some information.
- Stronger themes and trends began to emerge.
- New trends and themes included:
  - Visible leadership
  - Fear of change
  - Culture
  - Power and who had the power to make change
  - Organisational barriers
  - Care for students and colleagues
  - Dialogue

**Analysis of data**

- Using the semi-structured interviews and the critical theory framework
- The analysis was conducted and tested.

**Synthesis of the data**

- Synthesise and connect data into a framework for the thesis.
- Test the findings through collaborative work with supervisors.
Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the methodology and the methods used to collect the data and to analyse it. There has been a concerted effort made to convey the reasons for the choice of qualitative research and narrative inquiry using semi-structured interviews for this thesis, and the recruitment of both the sites and the participants was fully described. There has also been a consideration of the ethics and validity of the analysis that has emerged and the limitations of this research. The data analysis section at the end of this chapter describes the different steps and stages in the research process.

By understanding the purpose of the research, the literature that informs it, the conceptual concepts that underpin analysis and the methodology, it is now possible to commence the process of analysis and understanding participant perspectives. The next five chapters focus on the data that was collected and the analysis of the participants' responses using a critical theory framework. The following chapters consider and reflect upon the data that has been collected throughout this thesis. Four distinct themes emerged to address the question; ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ Those themes are the importance of school culture, visible and engaged leadership, factors that enable change and resistors or hurdles to change.

Chapter 5 explores the impact of school culture on LGBTQ inclusive practice. The chapter theme considers the school as a whole and looks at a variety of different influences and relationships that impact how change is led and driven.
Chapter 5 - Culture and Environment

Introduction

This chapter investigates the importance of school culture and the impact of culture on the development of a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ staff and students. I have divided it into five sections. The first section examines the impact of an inclusive school culture and why it is an important driving force and facilitator of further change in the school. The next section considers the interplay between culture and power. An analysis of the link between socio-economic demographics in a space and its impact on the cultural space follows in the next section. I will then look at the interview narratives about how one of the school sites went about adapting their previously heteronormative culture into one that was more accepting of LGBTQ individuals. The third section will consider narratives about how the other school sites have worked to keep their culture inclusive and to embed the gains that they have made.

Impact of school inclusive culture

This chapter explores how culture can be developed and how an inclusive culture can be maintained, but I believe that it is important to start the chapter by describing why having a school culture that is inclusive and recognises LGBTQ staff and students is essential. By starting at this point, it also provides the reader with an opportunity to better understand the two schools, the environment in which they exist or created, and the teachers that were part of this data collection process.

Using the critical theory framework, and the writings of theorists on culture, we can begin to understand how social relationships within a school, which rely on the development of ideas of race, gender, age, and sexuality, are essential to individuals who are striving to make sense of their own identities, values and forms of knowledge (Giroux, 2009a; McLaren, 2009). The Student Wellbeing Coordinator at Greenwich secondary school discusses how a space that recognises and
makes room for discussions about the ‘other’ (in this case an LGBTQ+ health class), can impact individuals in those spaces, to the point where they still remember them more than 15 years later.

> I do recall getting a letter from a man who was in his thirties, ... and he wrote to say that when he was in Year 8, and [his Health teacher] made everybody shut up and she did a double period on what it meant to be gay, and he said, until then he thought he had two heads. And that made all the difference to him, in you know, he thought oh well there is a life out there, and there are other people who feel like me, because that has been the whole isolating experience (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2; Student Wellbeing Coordinator).

It is interesting to consider why this young person felt like he had ‘two heads’ for such a long period. Within a school system, the effects of LGBTQ discrimination can stem from campaigns by outside forces enforcing the purity of school children and moral panic at the thought of discussing ideas of gender or sexuality (Lugg & Adelman, 2015). They could stem from everyday discrimination and stigmatisation of queer identities flowing into the school system and culture, or they could flow from the regulations and societal expectations that develop a systemic form of invisibility for LGBTQ people in a space (Lugg & Adelman, 2015).

Critical theorists such as Young (2009) and Freire (1996) would describe the oppression that has been taking place in this young person’s life as being examples of fatalism or a docility that inhibits them from even wanting to try. It appears as though the young person has, up until this point, felt themselves to be invisible, unable or powerless to affect change. The teacher in question, who felt that they were able to present a lesson on ‘what it meant to be gay’, affected how that person saw themselves within the school environment. Freire (1996) or Held (1980) might use critical theory to describe the teacher as revolutionary, in that they were able to use their positions of power to take action and to transform a space into one where oppression is seen, and the individual’s value and identity is recognised.
In this example above, we witness the critical theory concepts of ‘reification’ and ‘dialectic of enlightenment’ at work. The student had not up to this point seen or experienced anything of themselves in the space, the dominant culture had kept discussion about different sexualities at bay, until that point (Crossley, 2005; Held, 1980). As in the example above, when a socially conscious educator, felt empowered, in this case through the health curriculum, to be able to present LGBTQ content, it led to an opportunity for the student to self-actualise. It also enabled the student to see and understand that they were not alone and not bound by one perspective within that school environment (Bronner, 2011; Held, 1980).

Wimberly (2015) argues that as public discourse slowly changes and as LGBTQ individuals in schools become more visible, there is a cultural shift in how individuals begin to understand LGBTQ identities and therefore include this thinking in their own actions. An inclusive culture can change minds and hearts and can open up new realms of thinking for those interacting in the school. The story below was told by a lesbian staff member at Lakeview College. This teacher had been an active part of bringing an LGBTQ inclusive curriculum to the school and implementing it. In this anecdote, the teacher describes the first ‘Wear it Purple’ day at the school. It occurred after the school had started down the path to greater LGBTQ inclusive practice, with visible support from the Principal and other key staff members. ‘Wear it Purple’ is a multinational day of visible support for inclusion and raising awareness for issues of gender and sexuality (Wearitpurple.org, 2019).

And something amazing happened on that day as well – a whole group of [vocational learning] boys, who you normally see as perhaps not the kinds of kids who would really get involved in something like a day against homophobia and transphobia, all came to school with their faces painted in purple. [They] were hanging around the table that we had set up giving out information and that kind of thing on the day, and were really in support of us and the day, and it was just ... it was beautiful... I think it’s that, little things like that... it’s hard to sort of get a grip on how things have changed... I don’t think boys like that would have been that open in support of something like this years ago. I mean
yeah, sure it’s fun putting paint on your face and coming to school and being silly but they were not... they did not have a problem at all in identifying themselves as people in support of that day, and we took their photo. Yeah. It was wonderful, and we also got all the kids...to make you know a pledge that our school would be free from homophobia and transphobia (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and staff member)

The impact of this vocal and visible support of LGBTQ initiatives on those individuals who felt like they had those ‘two heads’ was that the school’s culture had begun to include them and recognise their experiences. Using critical theory, we can point to the importance of cultural practices such as uniforms, assemblies, ‘Wear it Purple’ days, speeches, symbols and classroom methodology. These all influence and impact the construction of different school values and social relations (Giroux, 2009a; McLaren, 2009). It is important to bear in mind that schools or school leaders should never see these cultural practices or symbolic events as simply things to ‘tick off a list’, as this will devalue the importance of them all and the authenticity of their desire for change could be challenged.

All of these cultural practices form important parts of the experience of the LGBTQ members of a school community. School culture impacts the social relations and way of life within the school. McLaren (2009) argues that culture is an area that not only legitimises certain knowledge, behaviour and experiences, but it also raises important questions about how privilege or oppression is consolidated or challenged within a school. Page (2007) states that culture impacts not only our perspectives and identity, but also suggests that we hold onto our cultural perspectives and traits when connecting with people who share them.

Kumashiro (2002) contends that the impact of an inclusive and LGBTQ friendly school culture is that they become spaces where they welcome, embrace and address the needs of the LGBTQ ‘other’ and where those who are feeling marginalised and oppressed can find help, support or advocacy. One teacher described their school culture with regards to a young transgender person who had recently transferred to the school;
But, probably one great you know case study is that we’ve had a student who’s come from another school last year, is male and identifies as female going through hormone treatment, and she is just happy, you know and the parents can’t be happier because she continues to be happy,... and she’s just made lots of friends, and you know no-one turns a blind eye... There’s no repercussions is probably what I’m trying to say. There’s no repercussions in any negative way for that student whatsoever, yeah (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 7; Staff member)

While some of the language regarding transgender individuals is problematic in the sense of fully understanding issues of gender and referring to the student as ‘male and identifies as female’, there is a picture of the cultural space that exists at the school for LGBTQ students and where these students are accepted, and seen within the environment.

In the first quote of this section above, I am illustrating the impact on an individual level of school culture, where the student felt seen and perhaps empowered. In the second one, we see a school culture that has enabled educators to expose the differences in the school population and to celebrate them, with the young students being able to espouse and incorporate values that were not previously ascribed to them. The third statement considers how the environment and existing school culture can impact feelings of connection and acceptance and thus improved school enjoyment and participation.

The research in this thesis would suggest that schools and educators in Australia begin to identify the role their school culture plays in silencing or marginalising LGBTQ people and issues. Peter McLaren (2009) asserts that ‘critical theorists begin with the premise that man and woman are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege’ (p. 61). McLaren (2009) goes on to point out how imperative it is that the critical educator recognise these discrepancies and understand their school culture and its impact on maintaining those asymmetries of power. Further, McLaren (2009) makes the important point that the problems in society and schooling are not merely isolated occurrences or as a result of
individual or structural deficiencies, but rather that these problems ‘form part of the interactive context between individual and society’ (p. 61). Change exists within this interactive context (between school culture and the individuals), and the impact of that culture has far-reaching effects on organisations and the stakeholders.

**Power and Culture**

The next section of this chapter will consider the impact of power on the culture of a school and the impact of the culture and environment of a school on power. Critical theorists have often considered this relationship between power and culture. Giroux (2011) states that culture is considered by theorists to be a factor that not only reflects the larger forces in an environment, but also constitutes and constructs those forces, the link between those in power and culture is, therefore, a complex one. Giroux (2011), links the concepts of power and culture in his thinking when he states that ‘power is a central element of culture just as culture is a crucial element of power (p. 138).’ I will now explore this idea further by considering the responses of the two principals in the school sites. Their positional power provides an interesting perspective on the relationship between power and culture.

The Principal at Lakeview College discussed how his position as a new Principal at the school could provide the opportunity to start to address some elements of the school culture. Lakeview College had at that point, recently adopted more inclusive LGBTQ policies and thinking, and they had been working with an independent government body to embed and create space for leadership to engage in this work.

*I didn’t have a] grand vision, I [just] wanted to change the culture of the school, which was not putting down kids that were gay, or any person because they were different and that was an issue here, as it was at my last school and probably at the majority of schools. (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)*

The statement above acknowledges a key element of this section; that the Principal was both affected by the prevailing negative culture of the school that ‘puts down' students and at the
same time recognised his ability to change the culture. The result was, the culture of the school affected his decision-making and his decision-making, therefore, affected the culture of the school.

Using a critical theory framework, it is evident that even in the complex educational environment, we can be both subjects of and subjects to the hegemonies that exist and the relationships of power (Giroux, 2011; Gramsci, 2014). Gramsci (2014) makes the point that every hegemonic relationship is an educational one, where the cultural environment acts upon the person seeking to change it, by providing them with opportunities to reflect on their disposition and ways of doing things. In the case above, the culture at the new school acts as a space for the Principal to work on and to recognise problems of oppression, marginalisation and cultural hegemony and to solve them through his actions.

While this Principal acknowledged later in his interview that it was imperative that he use other members of staff to help drive and implement the change process, I was struck by the use of the personal pronoun in this statement above where he says; ‘I just want to change the culture…’. It recognises the importance that his vision and ideals played in setting a direction for school change and cultural change. His leadership in this area was dependent on not only the environment and culture but as Gini (1998) argues, also on his ability to develop consensus and influence the other members of the school, and their ability to affect his leadership.

An interesting point to consider regarding the impact of power on culture is that there is often an unequal balance of power between those in the dominant culture and those seeing to impose change on the cultural space. While leaders at schools could impose and direct changes to impact the school culture, a responsible and democratically minded leader will recognise the importance of consensus, shared goals, and community participation, and will set democratic mechanisms in place for change to happen (Gini, 1998). This idea harkens back to the idea of Freire (1996) that, ‘revolutionary leaders cannot think without the people, nor for the people, but only with the people’ (p. 112).
The principals recognised their position and opportunities to change society; in this case, the school environment, to recognise power and oppression. Freire (1996) states that there is an opportunity that is offered to change society when those in power recognise their position and the oppression that is taking place. The people in positions of power at this school had the opportunity and determination to rethink and examine their actions as perpetuators of a system that had quietly marginalised a group within the school. As one of those powerful role-players at the school, who was sanctioned by the school community to make judgements and drive change, the Principal was able to use his position to challenge the cultural status quo.

The interplay of power and culture was slightly different at Greenwich Secondary as they had been engaged in fostering a more inclusive LGBTQ culture at the school for several years. In this school, it was interesting to consider the way that the culture of the school impacted the power structure and the institutional actions within the environment. The Principal described the induction programs and the professional staff development at the school;

*We have a fairly extensive induction [and Professional Development] programme for all of our staff. It runs for the whole of Term 1, and there are a range of things that we put our staff through, you know in terms of getting them more in tune with the school and understanding what this school is about. So the [school] values is one [aspect], and we make sure that they are really part of those you know [from] day one. At assemblies ... they hear from our senior students how they interpret the school values you know, and what they put to those values, and how they’ve grown up with those values and how they’ve culminated for them in terms of being part of this community* (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal).

This school made professional development and induction of new staff an essential part of its school structure. While there are many reasons to do so, in the context of this thesis, it important in that it includes informing and reaffirming commitment to the prescribed school values of equality, inclusion and fairness that include LGBTQ staff and students. These scheduled meetings,
driven by leadership and by school practice, became a way in which the culture of the school was perpetuated. Individuals at the school understood decisions and dialogue within the context of these school values and within the context of the school culture (Giroux, 2011). Any shared discourse or transformation discussions were framed in the commonly understood and agreed values of the school. These values and the school culture thus enabled a site where the political and social aspects of these complicated relationship discussions could take place and be affirmed (Giroux, 2011).

It is important to remember that power is not in itself something to be feared or negative, but rather the use of power is what is important. Hooks (2014) argues that if power is used to maintain a position of dominance or an oppressive school culture, then it is negative, but the opposite is also true. Both of the examples above contain different perspectives on the relationship between culture and power, while at the same time underscoring the vital idea that in order for certain groups, in this case, LGBTQ staff and students, to express their unique culture, values and ideals, there has to be a recognition of that group in the social order and they have to have some power to engage in discussions and the space they are in (McLaren, 2009).

By explicitly naming and recognising the LGBTQ staff and students at staff meetings or assemblies, and by having school policy documents linked to the school's ideals, motto or values, there was a transfer of power from those who previously were able to silence or oppress this group, to the group itself. If one concurs with the idea that culture is a 'field of struggle in which the production, legitimation and circulation of particular forms of knowledge and experience are central areas of conflict' (McLaren, 2009, p. 65), then one can start to understand the importance of the actions of the management and leadership of the school. In both cases the power that is exerted and flexed within the school environment is important; in the first case, the school leadership was challenging the inequality that existed, and in the second the leadership was making sure that the equality of LGBTQ individuals was perpetuated.
Socio-Economic context and Culture

Both of the school sites referenced have engaged in LGBTQ inclusive practice. Both of them sought to recognise the oppression or marginalisation that could be taking place and put into practice ways to counter that narrative. This being the case, I was intrigued by how participants indicated that their schools were different from others when implementing this work, or that this LGBTQ inclusive practice was successful because of the socio-economic demographics of the school. There was a perception that this LGBTQ work was successful because of the culture and socio-economic space that the schools operated in. This was interesting as both school sites operated in very different suburbs.

This presents an interesting challenge when analysing the decisions about LGBTQ policy and procedures in different organisations. The two school sites in this investigation had students that came from distinctly different socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, we could assume their different cultural norms, due to the varied social, economic, and historical contexts. This section considers the narratives of participants at the different schools, and the cultural overlay of social and economic difference. The analysis can be considered within the themes of socio-economic context and school culture.

In an Australian context, ‘class’, is a particularly contested part of social vernacular. To McLaren (2009) class is the ‘economic, social, and political relationships that govern life in a given social order’ (p. 65) and it reflects the constraints that are placed on individuals and groups as a result of things like income level, demographics and occupation. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) considers the practices and unconscious ways in which our actions and behaviours are entrenched to be our ‘class habitus’. He contends that it is the interplay and structure of the relations between an individual’s different social and innate properties (e.g. sex, age, social origin, income levels, position of power) that governs and entrenches our practices (Bourdieu, 1984; Felluga, 2015).

Consider the case of Greenwich Secondary. In this space and environment there was a well-constructed narrative about the school, that ran through many participants interviews about the
historical importance of the school within that space in Melbourne. It was a school that has only 4% of the approximately 1300 students speaking a home language other than English, and it had been assessed as having an Index of Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) that is higher than the national average (ACARA, 2018). The ICSEA rating considers factors such as parents' occupation, parents' education, a school's geographical location and the proportion of Indigenous students, providing an index rating the students' educational advantage while attending that school. One of the participants summed up the space as follows;

Well I’d describe it as an area of historical significance... in terms of education as well... It is kind of urban fringe with a bit of a rural tinge. I think for some reason that’s created a really strong sense of belonging. So, we have a lot of families... so for example, I work quite a lot with young people whose parents went to school here and even their grandparents went to school here. So, you feel... I don’t know... I think people who move to this area, they feel drawn to this area because of the cultural significance, the art community or because of the environmental aspect of it (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 3, Student Services Coordinator)

The participant emphasised the history of the area and the continued presence of families who are sending their young people to the school. This school site was also one where there was generational attendance. There was a cultural significance to the area that they believed was important to decision making for individuals moving there, and which can be argued influenced the decision making once they had invested in the area. Giroux (2009) and McLaren (2009) make the point that ‘culture’ could be viewed as the different ways in which individuals and groups make sense of their situation and the conditions in their lives. Culture is often seen through the lens of communal social practices, beliefs and values (Giroux, 2009b; McLaren, 2009). It can be postulated that this historical space brings with it the shared beliefs and values of those generations. In this school site, nearly every participant mentioned the ‘art’ and ‘artistic values’ that embody the environment. The school’s culture has been affected by the majority of the people speaking one home-language and having lived in the space for a long time. The multi-generational culture and their views of being ‘artistic’ continue to affect the school.
The dominant relationship, values, norms and practices that exist affect the everyday lives of the staff and students in the school sites (Giroux, 2009b). In this school, it appeared as though that dominant discourse and culture affected the LGBTQ individuals at the school in a positive manner. Gramsci (2014) would argue that the cultural hegemony has thus embedded a culture of tolerance, acceptance and understanding for the marginalised ‘other’. It is not difficult to imagine a different school in a different socio-economic demographic space (perhaps an overtly religious one), where historical forms of oppression or repression existed and maintained the position of hegemonic power over decision making at the school with regards to LGBTQ practice and inclusion.

In considering that alternative non-homogenous culture and socio-economic space, interviews from the other school site provides an opportunity to understand how the LGBTQ inclusive culture of the space might be affected. Lakeview College had an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating that was below the national average. This indicates that when looking at certain factors for the students and the school, the index calculated that they had a below average educational advantage (ACARA, 2018). The school prided itself on the diversity that existed within its walls and approximately 55% of the student population spoke a language other than English at home. This school was far more multi-cultural and diverse than Greenwich College and one of the staff members described working there as follows;

We have students from 43 different language groups. I guess you could say that we’re a low socioeconomic school in the north, but the kids here are awesome. I think they’re generally very caring toward each other and respectful towards each other and staff and it’s just such a dynamic place. There’s just so much going on all the time – so much student and staff involvement in so many different things. It’s a wonderful place to work (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and staff member)

In analysing and considering this quote about the varied people and cultures within that space, Giroux (2009b) points out that it is important to consider that within different cultures, there are
different emphasis placed on ideas such as race, gender, age and class and the social relations between these groups leads to asymmetrical positions of power. As different groups within a culture are able to take up positions of power, it inevitably leads to situations of oppression or dependency (Giroux, 2009b). This is further illustrated by the data below. When asked if the students at the school understood the feeling of being ‘othered’, the respondent replied;

Yeah, exactly. Whether it’s sexual, cultural, religious, you know whatever, they understand that. A lot of them are fascinated…. So when you come to school and you’re accepted by your school community, it’s great... and I think for many of them, that’s why we do have success because diversity is part of the school culture and will accept them. (Lakeview College: Participant 5, School Nurse and Staff Member)

Many of the students in this school were first- or second-generation Australians, as indicated by the participants and the vast numbers of students whose home language is something other than English. Each of these cultural groups in this socio-economically diverse space bring with them their own perceptions, values and thoughts about LGBTQ+ individuals and inclusion. In this school, I was struck by the idea that the principal and people in positions of leadership used the cultural understanding of being ‘other’ or ‘different’ to help facilitate LGBTQ understandings.

Freire’s (1996) work would support the manner in which the leadership considered their roles and the ways in which they could assist in helping those individuals who were marginalised across this socio-economic group. The school understood and had worked with students from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures, and were able to connect the dialogue about LGBTQ inclusive practice with feelings of hegemonic oppression in a broader Australian cultural system. Gramsci’s (2014) thinking about change in a critical theory framework emphasised the importance of this way to bring about change. He highlighted the idea of changing systems in a manner that organically address the important philosophical issues at hand and that offer a sense of genuineness and predictability to the entire process (Gramsci, 2014).
When considering and analysing how the socio-economic demographics of an environment affect the culture, it is important to understand not only the environment and the stakeholders, but also who ultimately has risen to positions of power and thus which values the school communities focus on. Bourdieu (1998) makes the point that there exists a place of difference and social space between different classes. These differences can relate to what Bourdieu calls their ‘Doxa' and he describes that as those beliefs that the group will take for granted, those practices they may want to defend and those they may want to rally against (Bourdieu, 1977; Crossley, 2005; Felluga, 2015). The two groups in this study, were driven to make LGBTQ inclusive practice a reality. It can be argued that in spaces where there are other leadership or other hegemonic practices, this change might not have occurred at all (Freire, 1996). This thesis seeks to understand that exact perspective about why in some areas and spaces leadership emerges to drive change, or the culture embeds the values of inclusion. Bronner (2011) would contend that in order for an activist to begin to analyse ‘long-standing beliefs in a rational manner and [speculate] about a different future or something other than the existing order’ (p. 1), they first need to understand the underlying culture of the environment in which they operate and that the socio-economic context of that culture is an important element to incorporate into that thinking.

In the sections above, I considered culture from a broad and overarching perspective. I articulated how culture can impact a school space and the individuals within it and the relationship between power and culture and the socio-economic demographics of a space and culture. I will now move on to consider the data collected from the two sites and will analyse it in order to describe how the culture of the schools was affected by the leadership decision-making process and how they changed or embedded LGBTQ inclusive practice at their sites.

**Adapting culture**

Schools have the opportunity to consider the power that exists in their environment and culture to shape individual’s understandings of themselves and their place in the greater social context, providing help and spaces for individuals who are targets of oppression (Gramsci, 2014;
Kumashiro, 2002). This section considers just such a process and use data from Lakeview College to analyse how and why they chose to adapt their school culture in order to be seen as more supportive of LGBTQ staff and students. The reason I have chosen to focus on Lakeview College is that the data collected at this site, focused on the steps and processes of changing the culture. The analysis of the interview data regarding embedded cultures will focus on Greenwich Secondary.

It is important to acknowledge from the onset that a conflict that exists between those who see schools as potential sites for change and those who do not. Theorists, such as Bourdieu (1998), see schools as efficient mechanisms to maintain the status quo. Critical theory contends that the dominant hegemonic culture maintains its benefits to the detriment of ‘the other’ by continually transmitting and legitimising only the dominant beliefs and values (Azaola, 2012; Bourdieu, 1998). However, in keeping with the critical theory framework, this thesis considers schools as potential sites to drive social change and as sites of struggle (Apple, 2013). Apple (2013) makes the point that there are ‘multiple and contradictory dynamics of power and social movements that make education such a site of conflict and struggle, [that make] schools ... possible sites of counter-hegemonic knowledge production and identity formation (p. 30).’

The question therefore arises, how do schools use that struggle to change the prevailing culture that exists. In answer to that, I am going to cite three examples of ideas that participants highlighted, that deal with using the school language that exists, the speed of change implementation and the important use of symbols.

**Using familiar language and concepts**

In the critical theory framework, I touched on the work by Gramsci (2014) that for there to be philosophical and politico-social advances, the subaltern group needs to work through existing structures, cultures, norms that exist. The participants in the study connected to the idea of using existing norms, standards, and structures when they made the important point that in order to change the school culture to one that was visibly inclusive of LGBTQ staff and students, they used
ideas and language that already existed. This allowed them to broaden the perspectives of the stakeholders and individuals. There was an overt link to the school’s policies and ideas surrounding racial inclusiveness described in the following statement;

> And I think someone said, look you know... [we have] done a lot of our [own work on] racial issues, because we had such a high indigenous population... I felt really... I feel really lucky to be in this school and to see that sort of diversity working, and I just wanted to... and I felt that was an area [LGBTQ inclusion] that we hadn’t addressed you know. (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)

Through their efforts to link the LGBTQ work with their previous work on racism, it enabled the school to bring about cultural change that was connected to a variety of oppressions and marginalised communities. The strength of this approach was that it educated and informed all students and staff about different ways of being, as they could connect their understandings to other stigmatised communities or their own experiences of being ostracised (Kumashiro, 2002). It encouraged all the stakeholders to consider broader perspectives and to reconsider the ‘us vs. them’ binaries that exist (Kumashiro, 2002).

The participant further developed this school of thought when they spoke about the small things that they did that many people did not even realise were important steps on the change journey. As described above, the school leadership linked their actions to the existing bullying policy that the school had already all agreed to;

> So, we chose you know about ten of those [school bullying policy statements] that we wanted to highlight. So small things that other people mightn’t realise, but we did all of that (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)

By taking the time to observe and understand the school’s history and existing culture, the principal and the leadership team began to foreground this issue. They spent time striving to understand their school culture and to understand how all the role players could play a part in
shaping and changing the status quo. This time they spent on developing their knowledge enabled them to avoid some of the pitfalls often associated with cultural change (Deal & Peterson, 1990b). Stolp and Smith (1995) draw attention to the fear that exists when school stakeholders become attached to the ‘traditions and rituals’ that make up everyday school life. They see any attempt to modify or change the way a culture has been operating as a point of resistance and apprehension, in keeping with the critical theory perspective of hegemonic oppression, where the desire is to maintain a status quo. Kotter (1998), an organisational change theorist, might argue that the leaders of this cultural change process recognised that anxiety when planning their way forward; they did not start by striving for a huge re-engineering of the whole school and they anchored the process in the school’s existing culture.

Kotter (1998), using organisational change theory, argues that instituting the process of culture change is often difficult and there is a need to be creative in deciding how it is to be rolled out. These two examples show how the leadership at the school extended the original vision of the school and built on initiatives that already existed in order to adapt the thinking and discourse at the school. While there were other strategies and action plans that were put in place, by energising the staff and students at the school, the leadership made sure that they were not alienated, they created a space where everyone was able to think about, talk about, and debate the way forward in a non-threatening or overly bureaucratic way (Kotter, 1998).

This is not to say that this process does not come without weaknesses, and there are two key challenges. First, how individuals begin to see, hear or understand the narratives put forward by marginalised groups. This also includes thinking about how to practically find the time and resources to not only adequately teach about the ‘other’ in the school system but provide visible and vocal support. It leads to a normalisation of different identities and groups, and this is an essential role of anti-hegemonic education (Kumashiro, 2002). Second, using the existing vocabulary, norms, structures and thinking comes with a word of caution from queer feminist author Audre Lorde (1983). Lorde (1983) made a speech entitled, ‘The Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house’ in which they noted that by using these existing and allowable
customs and patterns, the change would often be limited and narrowed by what was deemed allowable by those in positions of power.

Collaborative, community focus

As discussed in Chapter 2 ‘war of position’ is a battle for hegemonic supremacy wherein the oppressed group operates within the culture of domination and speaks to society in the language it understands (Gramsci, 2014). This war can be seen in a situation that emerges when seeking to act counter hegemonically (Crossley, 2005; Gramsci, 2014). It entails working with groups to persuade and engage with the stakeholders en masse to claim a hegemonic position (Crossley, 2005; Gramsci, 2014). The Principal used time in the first meeting of the year to discuss the issue of LGBTQ visibility at the school and to have an LGBTQ speaker come in to address the staff as a whole;

There was some anxiety associated with it... because there were some concerns as to how well staff would receive the topic. Why are we talking about this on the first day of the academic year, there’s more important things to talk about?

(Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

One of the success factors in the initial implementation of this process at Lakeview College was that the leadership and the new Principal realised how carefully they would need to consider any actions that affected school climate and culture. They also realised that they needed to have the support of marginalised groups and organisations when trying to convince the staff and school that change was important. Linking this work back to the ‘war of position’ concept highlights the importance of working across different groups and identities in order to engage as a larger group to claim the hegemonic positions (Crossley, 2005; Gramsci, 2014).

In the cultural change processes, individuals have to confront their misgivings or misunderstandings and there is a tension when their own biases are exposed (hooks, 2014). In continuing their war of position, this principal provided the opportunity for staff to do that. An
essential tool in this slow and steady process was the establishment of the working group that spent time seeking to understand why the change needed to happen and what it may look like.

[We set up a working group] and the staff came from quite diverse groups within the school. They all came from a different perspective and a different angle, and they were in the group to work together, but there was no secret agenda, they just felt that there needed to be a change because it was important for kids to see that no matter who you are, you must be accepted, and it’s not right that you’re discriminated against because you’re different.

(Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

By striving to develop a shared understanding of the world, through its development of common values and ideals, and to forge what Gramsci (2014) called ‘cultural-social unity’ (p. 349), I would contend that this school developed both the emotional and intellectual roots to both initiate and maintain this way of inclusive thinking.

Kotter (1998) states that trying to implement a new cultural transformation initiative in an environment where there has been insular thinking or excessive bureaucracy in the past often leads to resentment and resistance. This resistance is detailed in a later chapter. However, the vision and focus of the leadership team, the outside experts and LGBTQ speakers and teachers enabled and encouraged the school staff to recognise ‘difference’. Once that was understood and elucidated, using critical theory it could be argued that, there is a realisation that there must also be a change in the way they have to teach and conduct themselves in the classroom, and thus the school culture (hooks, 2014).

**Power of symbolic representation**

A third element of implementing cultural change that emerged from the data was the importance of the symbols and cultural artefacts within a cultural space. Consider the statement below within the context of the different ways in which the participant described things like the naming of
sports day, webpage acknowledgement, and the visibility of supportive LGBTQ signage and the impact of these on those people within the school.

[As a result of this group] I think all the kids now don’t call it Athletics Sport, they call it [Rainbow] Sport. The school website has some information about Rainbow Sport project. We [also] used to have a little sign from the Safe Schools Coalition to say we were a Safe Schools Coalition school. I had it on the front door... because I think it’s important that the parents know, and you know for them to ask the question – what is a safe school? (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

The interview participants in the school sites were adamant that their schools be seen to have visible and consistent support for the students and staff and that they not be afraid to fly the metaphorical ‘rainbow flag of inclusion’. It is clear that through these actions, the school culture was giving meaning to this organisation. The school culture was changed through this symbolic support in different spaces. Schein (1984) suggests that there are three levels of culture which could be affected by school leadership; first was the artefacts level where the daily rituals, ceremonies, visible cultural icons and symbols that would be readily apparent to a first time visitor to the school and which evoke a particular mood or feeling about the physical place. The second level is the values and beliefs level which considers that social relationships and behaviours are guided by the implicit and explicit environmental beliefs, language and values. The final level of culture that could be affected by a leader in an organisation, as suggested by Schein (1984), is the assumptions level, where the norms and expectations that are unconscious and taken for granted ways of operating in the environment. He makes the point that conspicuous artefacts can move from the explicit visual representation to the implicit assumption levels and become part of the fabric and culture of the organisation (Schein, 1984).

The critical theory points again to the fact that when the inner world of individuals, who in this case have not been recognised previously, is displayed prominently in their outer-world, there is a neurological response to the sight of those symbols of inclusion (Shanafelt, 2008). Other researchers make that point that in a school setting and within a particular culture, the act of
flying the flag or of having posters could define, validate, encourage and justify the individual’s rightful place in that community (Becker, Enders-Comberg, Wagner, Christ, & Butz, 2011; Wiltgren, 2014). The symbol becomes a mechanism whereby a person is empowered to construct a positive social identity and at the same time, these artefacts and symbols affect and change the school culture (Becker et al., 2011; Wiltgren, 2014). The power of symbols and artefacts stem from how they are observed and interpreted by the school body. This data shows how they create important change within the school culture and shift the culture to a more inclusive one.

Both of the school sites discussed how they often had students and student leadership teams present information on the school’s values and inclusive practices at assemblies or meetings with parents. One of the participants from Lakeview College described how they launched and announced their LGBTQ sports program to the school and whom they got to announce it;

“*So that’s how we launched it. They, [the other students on the LGBTQ action planning group], came and they stood behind one boy who was a Year 11 boy, very popular, football[er], known throughout, and he said this is what we’re doing. And basically, just said, ‘we’re [making sport and PE more LGBTQ inclusive]. We think all kids should feel free and able to participate in sport no matter who you are, no matter your gender, no matter your gender identity, etc, etc, etc.’ And it was very simple because he wasn’t a great orator (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)*

The use of this student to visibly illustrate the school's support of this issue was not only a potent symbol to the other students, but also helped to galvanise the coalition of LGBTQ supporters behind the initiative. Bolman and Deal (2008) emphasise the importance of focussing directly on the stories and symbols which make up the organisation and that can propel cultural change. Through the use of student leaders and student voices, the participants at the schools sought to cultivate shared values and meaning. Organisations and schools can be thought to be akin to tribes or theatre and the culture that they operate in is based on ceremonies, rituals, rules, myths, stories, heroes and managerial authority. Everyone in the organization is an actor who is playing a prescribed role (Bolman & Deal, 2008). By using school heroes or ceremonies with
cultural significance (such as an assembly), the stakeholders understood the importance and value of the LGBTQ discussion.

What is important is not just standing up and voicing support, but rather understanding that there is a vital element of care and concern that accompanies any visible show of support for those school stakeholders who are feeling as though they do not fit into the culture. Research would indicate that the conscious decisions that have been made within these school sites in order to illustrate the values and beliefs of the school community can improve relationships in the school in that they impact the delivery of education to students, initiate change and develop and sustain a school vision, particularly for those who have felt invisible and powerless (Conley, 1993).

Symbols, artefacts and symbolic representation are observed and noted by parents, students and the whole school community. They are seen as signals to the school as to the shared beliefs and values that may exist in that culture and express and expose the importance of cultural artefacts (touchstones) to the community, who in turn consider their own position in the environment (Deal & Peterson, 1990a)

**Maintaining an inclusive school culture**

Creating an inclusive culture that values difference and otherness is only part of the process, the next step is making sure that the culture is maintained and embedded for the future benefit of all those in the environment. In this section, I use excerpts from the interview data of Greenwich Secondary, as this was a school that had had a long history of engaging in LGBTQ discussion and a reputation as one of the schools in Melbourne that recognised the importance of LGBTQ inclusive practices.

This section has been divided into two smaller sub-sections to address first, the way in which the participants described how LGBTQ practice was embedded within the school and second, to
consider the impact of public and continually stated school values on the behaviours and actions within the school.

An embedded dominant and inclusive culture

Understanding how different people viewed the school culture at Greenwich Secondary and how they described it was a very interesting part of this thesis. The participants valued different aspects of the nature of their school culture and its treatment of those staff and students who are LGBTQ.

The Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing understood and described the inclusive culture at the school as one which was safe for everyone regardless of gender, sexuality, race etc. and that was pervasive across the whole school. What they described is a culture where LGBTQ (and other marginalised individuals) inclusive practice was the hegemonic norm. Accepting others and rejecting oppressive practices had become entrenched as the cultural norm.

It’s really understanding what that [being a ‘LGBTQ safe school’] means, and really understanding that to actually develop a culture, it has to be at a whole school level. It’s not about a particular group of kids. So, you know I suppose what I’m saying is, we haven’t gone out to meet [only] the same sex attracted kids. We’ve gone out to actually create an environment where everybody feels safe to be themselves (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing)

I was particularly struck by the use of the phrase ‘whole school level’ when this participant was describing the culture at the school and the dominant value being one of acceptance. While the phrase ‘whole school’ is a term that is becoming somewhat ubiquitous, it is still one that is understood in many different ways and used for different purposes, particularly as it relates to schooling and education systems (Thomson, 2010). This school has achieved what Freire (1996) and Kumashiro (2002) would consider raised consciousness, where action has been, and
continues to be taken, against oppressive elements of the social reality, particularly as it may exist outside the school grounds.

Thompson (2010) states that whole school change is a complex idea and ranges from changes in infrastructure and processes to the changes in education outcomes and the transference of processes and practices to external institutions. While this is a complicated and nuanced discussion, I believe that the ‘whole school level’ that this participant is alluding to is the change that has taken place to the dominant culture in the school. I postulate that the when this participant is speaking about developing a culture at a ‘whole school level’, they are reflecting on the idea that LGBTQ individuals and their concerns and interests are no longer relegated to a fringe group or the subaltern group within the greater school environment.

To support this position of a dominant, inclusive culture at Greenwich Secondary, a different participant’s data points to their understanding that an inclusive culture at the school is one that is rooted in easy assimilation into the space and that describes the supportive nature of the community. They described the school’s culture and environment for LGBTQ individuals in terms of relationships and connectedness;

Like you can actually feel that there’s a genuine connectedness. I would like to think that that includes all our kids who identify as a something... whatever that happens to be whether it’s cultural or sexual or whatever. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5, Staff Member)

‘Inclusive schooling’ has been a term that is near impossible to define as it means so many different things to so many different people. Morrish and O’Mara (2011) state that terms such as ‘inclusive education’ or ‘diversity’ have become so prevalent in all aspects of education policy and curriculum that they are losing their impact to affect change. However, as McMaster (2013) points out, this lack of clear definition or consensus of understanding can also be seen as a strength as it enables more discourse and discussion about their meanings and the school's values.
These participants see a culture at the school, which is welcoming, safe, connected and free of repercussions for being same-sex attracted or gender diverse. By describing the school culture in these different terms, it starts to paint a picture of an inclusive environment. Within this environment, the participants acknowledge that the school management has created a space that affirms and recognises the concerns, interests and values of those who are LGBTQ (McLaren, 2009). The dominant culture, as seen by these participants, is one of acceptance and safety for those who may be perceived as ‘other’ in a different space. This participant does not appear to see the LGBTQ individuals as ‘othered’ and who constantly have to negotiate their position or who cause a crisis in the dominant culture regarding their identity or space, rather that the dominant culture includes them (McLaren, 2009).

The dominant culture at the school versus the sub-cultures at the school is an interesting position to consider. It may not be quite as dichotomous as the LGBTQ individuals being in the dominant culture or the sub-culture in an environment. There is constantly a struggle that exists when different groups are participating in creating, legitimising and circulating particular forms of knowledge and being (Giroux, 2009b; McLaren, 2009). Kumashiro (2002) states that cultures are constantly changing and redefining their own values and norms, but it is worth noting that without the sense of belonging and visibility that this school offers to LGBTQ individuals, the culture struggle would look very different (and I would argue, it would look more like those schools that fail to acknowledge their LGBTQ staff and students).

Gramsci (2014) makes the point that the outcome of this struggle for dominance within a cultural space is often dependent on the individuals and their relationships. It hinges on their common understanding of expression and purpose (Gramsci, 2014). I will conclude this sub-section by noting that while it is wonderful that there is a perception of immediate safety for all in the space, using critical theory, we might also consider that there is a fragility in the idea that the culture will always be safe and welcoming all in perpetuity. This inclusive culture is something that must be tended and constantly reinforced over time. The ways the school would continually reinforce this inclusive culture are going to be based on the experiences that the school has had and their
reflections on the value of those experiences (McMaster, 2013). Sustainable change is embedded when school stakeholders and the leadership allow for learning opportunities and understanding (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008), which is what the school appears to be doing through some of their other initiatives such as the re-formation of the Gay-Straight Alliance and the use of inclusive values discussions in assemblies.

Creating a dominant culture leads neatly into the next sub-section in this chapter. One of the strengths of Greenwich Secondary is their use of ‘school values' to discuss and promote new initiatives and embed old ones.

**Prescribed values and understandings**

One of the key distinguishing features about the participants at both Greenwich Secondary and Lakeview College was the often-repeated discussion about the importance of the school’s values and how using these well publicised and oft-referenced values helps to further embed and support the inclusive LGBTQ practices at the school. The list of key school values includes things such as ‘individuality', ‘social responsibility' and ‘respect for diversity'. While I do not feel that the school’s values themselves are particularly unique and they could be found in similar forms at many public schools in Victoria, what is important is the way those values are constantly referred to and used in the daily running of the school, its assemblies and decision making.

The Principal of the Greenwich Secondary made the following important point about the criticality of the school’s values and how they were used to guide thinking and actions at the school. I have included the full quote as it was a powerful testimony to his dedication to those values and to his view on the importance of continually referencing them;

*There’s a very community feel around the place, and we work very hard to keep that community essence strong within the school. We’ve got some fairly set and strong values, and we work on those values consistently, and they’re values that have come through the school from very early on, you know and through the changes have only strengthened, and we use those values as the basis of*
everything that we do in the school. So, we try and anchor our work and what we’re about around those values. So, you know, the pursuit of excellence, respect for diversity, individuality, social and environmental responsibility, creativity and integrity – they’re our six core values, and ultimately that’s what guides us in terms of what we do, the way we behave, and ultimately the changes that we implement within the school, and there have been many changes (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal).

Collins and Porras (1998) state that having a set of core values and beliefs provide the stakeholders with an understanding of how their work should be conducted, how the school views individuals, how the school connects with the broader society, and what the school stands for. In this case, it was clear that the leader of the school believed deeply in those values, and that it was important to him that these values were passed on to the rest of the organisation through his own words and behaviour. These values span across a multitude of situations and incorporate a variety of individuals and actions, but they are clear and they are authentic to this school, which contributes to their success in this space (Collins & Porras, 1998). They drive cultural understanding and hence reinforce the cultural norms of the space.

An example of how these values are continually referenced was provided by one of the staff members at the school. The quote provides a useful insight to how the inclusive culture of this school has been perpetuated and how there is a concerted effort to maintain ideas such as ‘inclusion’ and ‘diversity’ as parts of the dominant culture discussed above.

I think if you have a school value, a whole school value of respect for diversity, then you have to keep on looking at it, and looking at what that means to the students. Well we have an assembly representing each of the school values, and that’s an opportunity to highlight a particular value and bring everyone’s attention back to it. But what I see is teachers living the values (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 3, Student Services Coordinator)
It is important to consider the impacts of these different strategies that the school has used to embed an understanding of these inclusive values. The school has the values printed on the diaries and has stickers for all members of the school community so that they can stick them on journals or pencil cases in order to remind them of the school values. Kincheloe (2008) points to the critical idea that schools are not just neutral sites waiting for staff and leadership to input decision making and structure, but that they are somewhat dependent on all previous decisions and values that have shaped the school ideology and cultural beliefs (Kincheloe, 2008). This school and its culture were shaped by its history, its location, socio-political changes in the broader Australian environment and all the individuals who were there then and who have come before – and this is evidenced by the actions that they took to promote their culture through assemblies or through teacher and parent induction programs (Kincheloe, 2008).

There is a concerted effort to see those values in a variety of different spaces and spheres and one of the participants described the pervasiveness of this thinking:

*It is pervasive, yeah. I think the students are a conduit because they take it home with them either visually or by the way they talk and behave and act, or... when they have conversations with parents about the way teachers or coordinators have interacted with them, and more formally it is in school magazines and in stickers and things like that.* (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)

This may be one of the key factors in how these values were used to shape the culture at the school. There is no avoiding the language or behaviours that are expected as the school did more than mention them once or twice a year. The school and the leadership were constantly challenging staff, students and parents to consider the importance of these ideas. The school stakeholders were confronted with the ideas that race, class, sexuality, gender identity were all parts of the full education spectrum at the school and that they shaped the type of education that was provided at Greenwich Secondary.
A final point about the successful use of the values-driven culture at Greenwich Secondary is that they appeared to be strategically linked to the values of the community in which the school was situated, and they were reflecting the dominant values of this area in Victoria, Australia.

I think the values also represent the community too. So, in developing those values, we have picked up on what this very middle class, Anglo pure, community values ... So, it’s not that different to the values that they may have at home for the majority of students. So, most families would have very similar values to those I would say... a lot of educated, aspirant parents. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)

This statement is an interesting one as it presents some opportunities for other schools to use the community mores and values to inform their own, but it also presents a challenge to schools in areas where there may not be similar ideas for inclusive education practices. Collins and Porras (1998) make the interesting point that values need to be authentic or else they will result in cynicism. They argue that the question to ask when coming up with authentic values is ‘What values and beliefs do we actually hold in our gut?’ and not ask the more traditional question of, ‘What values and beliefs should we have?’ (Collins & Porras, 1998, p. 238).

In his seminal work on leadership, Macgregor Burns (2010) argues that successful leadership should be judged by the social change that it leaves behind and Critical Theorists such as Apple (2013) add to that by challenging educators to play a role in the process of changing social, cultural and ideological structures that perpetuate negative dominant ideas. (Apple, 2013; MacGregor Burns, 2010; Shields, 2016). In order to transform and embed a culture of inclusiveness takes courage and commitment, however, once stakeholders have seen the benefits and the extent of the impact, that moral courage becomes even more prevalent within the organisation (Shields, 2016). By having or developing a set of authentic and common values that drive school culture, it enables an opportunity to reflect on one’s own beliefs, biases, and prejudices and to start to change the way we think or do things (Shields, 2016).
This final statement perhaps best sums up the point that I have been making regarding those who may not initially appear to be on board with new values and ideas;  

*I wouldn’t have initiated it and had the strength of character to say let’s do this. But the moment someone suggested it, and it was people I respected and loved... – they’re so high principled and they’re willing to say what they think that I go yeah, and I can see that.* (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 6, Staff Member)

The participant points to the importance of seeing and hearing those who feel confident to state their beliefs and lead on this issue. There are many ways to bring people along the road to social justice in school settings and having the ability to stand up and present your ‘gut' feelings openly and honestly may be an important way to have the school values articulated and to embed the school culture.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the importance of school culture on the journey toward LGBTQ inclusive practice. Using critical theory helped to understand and analyse the theme of culture, as a way to enable a better understanding of how meanings and values are expressed in particular walks of life and spaces (Storey, 2006). Storey (2006) states that it is important to remember that the cultural space is always one that is both shared and contested as a means to understand ourselves and our relationships with others. This chapter uses the data to understand where culture can be shared and celebrated.

The way participants understood the meaning and value of making their school spaces inclusive of LGBTQ individuals and issues, had an impact on both themselves and the students in at the school. Staff opened up to the opportunity to create a less oppressive space and engage in discourse that made the marginalised and invisible LGBTQ population see themselves in the space, that there was a cultural shift toward a more enlightened school population, and one where those who had been previously marginalised, could help to engage in the change process.
The chapter analysed the relationship between power and culture. It was put forward that school culture is often driven from the top down. The way that leaders act and speak are important indicators in how the rest of the stakeholders are going to react and behave. There is an important symbolic element that exists in this complex work around culture (Lee G Bolman & Deal, 2008). This can be seen in the way that the schools now confront and discuss same-sex attracted and gender diverse individuals. Using critical theory, it is possible to consider the concepts of power and hegemony as vital elements in the understanding of why the oppressed or invisible members of a culture seek to break free and transform spaces (Giroux, 2011; Gramsci, 2014). This data illustrates the impact that people in positions of power, who act from a space of love and understanding of the oppressed, can impose change or drive values of LGBTQ inclusive teaching practice, and that the best way to do so is through working collaboratively in order to embed that practice (Freire, 1996; Gini, 1998; hooks, 2014)

One of the interesting themes to emerge from the data, and over which participants disagreed, was the impact of the socio-economic and demographic spaces in which the schools operate. Individuals at Greenwich Secondary believed that their program was successful due to the homogenous nature of the school population and the socio-economic environment in which it operates. While staff at Lakeview College, presented the opposite perspective, in other words, that their program was only successful due to the multi-cultural, diverse mix of students and people at the school. The important element to draw from this section is the way critical theory could be used to understand the impact of dominant discourse and how this enables different groups to take up space and have access to power (Gramsci, 2014; Hall, 2002). The data indicates that socio-economic spaces are not as important as the people who are driving and leading any change process or who are in power. One of the important areas for further investigation would be schools which have a non-LGBTQ inclusive religious overlay, or which are still operating in a cultural space in which some leaders refuse to engage in LGBTQ issues or discourse.
I have considered the different ways in which the schools had and have to engage in developing, adapting and maintaining their unique cultures due to their own situations and journey along this path. I have used Greenwich Secondary as the example of a space where work was being done on embedding and maintaining an inclusive culture, and Lakeview College as an example of adapting and initiating culture change. The themes of adapting culture and embedding it, do overlap. Symbolic leadership actions, the use of community focused and inclusive values and the use of familiar language to shape the vision are all essential elements that critical theorists would emphasise as tools for transforming culture.

The most important element of this chapter is the ‘so what' factor. The stories that the participants have provided that prove the impact of safe, inclusive schooling are the real reason that this work is essential. To be able to change a life, save a life, or open up a mind, should be work all schools and teachers want to be doing. Consider the final piece of data that once again speaks to the idea of the impact of an inclusive culture and how it can impact far more than just the individuals on which it is focused:

[At] the Pride March, over the years there has been [a] mother [who] has come [often], even though her son doesn’t come [anymore]. And there was one teacher here, [Ms X], who was just so good to him [the mother’s child] when he came out, and the mother still says – she saved my son’s life. [And that mother] she still comes with the sister, even though that boy has now moved to the other side of the world, she still comes. And I think that’s a real tribute (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 6, Staff member)

The next chapter will delve into a topic that was alluded to in this chapter. The importance of strong leadership in creating and driving any LGBTQ inclusive process at a school. This is an essential element of this thesis. Understanding the complex theoretical concept of culture means that we now have to consider not only how culture affects leadership (as described above), but look at more in-depth into ways in which leadership affects culture.
Chapter 6 – Visible Leadership

Introduction

This chapter explores what school leaders did to initiate and maintain the LGBTQ inclusion process at their schools. The way in which school leadership can drive the inclusion process for LGBTQ policies and programs in a school is a key element of this thesis. In the previous chapter I analysed not only school culture, but also how visible leadership could support, contribute to or change the school culture. This chapter will use the data collected to describe how school leaders managed the LGBTQ inclusion process at their schools and how they continue to strive for even greater social change at their school.

The chapter starts by considering what this research suggests are the best ways to lead a school with purpose and create change. The first section considers the role of a leader in LGBTQ inclusive practice and the importance of symbolic leadership. The next section focuses on how to lead, motivate and inspire groups of people. There is an analysis of the need of leaders to create a revolutionary consciousness, the importance of building support, enabling a dialectic of enlightenment. The final section describes and analyses the impact of authentic dialogue as it emerged from the participants’ experiences.

It is important to point out from the onset that one of the most important themes emerging in this section is the importance of leaders understanding relationships and that change in spaces can only be accomplished through others. As Nanus (1992) argues;

‘Good leaders change organisations; great leaders change people. People are the heart of any organization, particularly a school and it is only through changing people – nurturing and challenging them, helping them grow and develop, creating a culture in which they all learn – that an organization can flourish... a leader listens, understands, motivates, reinforces and makes the tough decisions... leadership is about relationships’ (Nanus, 1992, p. 7).
The next section illustrates how complex it is for leaders to maintain and develop relationships that lead to change. Bolman and Deal (2008) make the point that, ‘organisations are filled with people who have their own interpretations of what is and should be happening. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker’ (p. 19). Leaders are required to act with other people in order to establish the situations that enable real progress. Using critical theory, we understand that leaders should use their relationships to influence the thoughts, beliefs and actions of other persons. This influence could be used to assist colleagues in achieving a small, specific task, or it could be broad and focused on systemic, organisational change (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

**Leading with purpose**

Kotter (2007), one of the leading authors on corporate change, wrote the following in an article about managing change through an organisation:

‘Guiding change may be the ultimate test of a leader – no business survives over the long term if it can’t reinvent itself. But human nature being what it is, fundamental change is often resisted mightily by the people it most affects: those in the trenches of the business. Thus, leading change is both absolutely essential and incredibly difficult’ (Kotter, 2007, p. 96).

This first section of the chapter considers the data collected with regards to leadership. It examines leadership through the critical theory lens and with the perspective of the roles of the leader and the importance of their participation in the LGBTQ process as powerful symbols of support and change.

**The role of the leader**

The role of the school leader (in this case the principal) has been recognised as a complex and difficult one, particularly when it comes to trying to lead change in the environment. Senge (1990) states that they are constantly facing new dilemmas and challenges – they need to help the school stakeholders to understand the reality in which the school exists (be a teacher), they
need to be seen as leading both the school community and the school’s drive towards its mission (be a steward), and they need to be able to see when change needs to occur and to make it possible (be a designer). The role of recognising change and understanding how to lead change, or design change, so that it is anti-oppressive and inclusive of all, is one of the most important roles they can play in spaces. One of the teachers at Lakeview College talked about the role of the principal as a leader to create change:

So, there was a sense for quite a while that it [the school] didn’t feel safe. It wasn’t a happy place, people didn’t feel supported by admin, and that has just completely changed. I was just having coffee with [the Lakeview College Principal], and I was just saying I am still quite gobsmacked by the way this school has turned around, because it was awful, it was really, really awful and yeah, it was just funny, but I think it was very good leadership,… and good decisions, and the principal. (Lakeview College: Participant 6, Staff member)

The critical theory framework highlights how oppression, alienation, repression, fear, or privilege may be some of the philosophical imperatives for striving for social justice. In this case the school did not feel safe for staff and students alike. The role that this principal and the leadership team adopted was one that recognised the need for change. The framework of this thesis focuses on the importance of leading and driving change and a key element of this is the school leadership team. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) defined leadership as ‘those persons, occupying various roles in the school, who work with others to provide direction and who exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the school’s goals’ (pg. 9). Their study states that, ‘leadership functions can be carried out in many different ways, depending on the individual leader, the context, and the nature of the goals being pursued’ (K. Leithwood & C. Riehl, 2003, p. 9). In this particular situation, the principal and their leadership at the school appear to have understood the un-safe environment and context, and have made decisions that affected the culture of the school and created a space with less oppression, alienation and fear.

A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the participants at Greenwich Secondary, when they described how they saw leadership affecting the school culture and how they understood
leadership to be fulfilling their role in the change process. This participant was juxtaposing the views of staff who understood the role of teachers to be simply knowledge transfer, with the way they saw the leadership team fulfil their roles of care and relationship building.

…and I think you know there would be teachers who would say I’m just here to teach. But you know I think the whole ethos of the school, particularly in [the Greenwich Principal’s] time has been that we’re responsible for the whole person, that some children do not lead comfortable, middle class lives, there are traumas and that we need to be all aware of how … they’re guided and protected and educated at the same time, (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing)

The leadership team and principal of the school recognised that their role was to create a space that was free from oppression and marginalisation for the young people in their care and the staff members who work there. The responsibility for creating the change in both of these cases was felt by the leadership team. This is much in keeping with the critical theory philosophy of taking action and that without action, oppression and marginalisation would persist.

Thompson (2013a) claims that critical theorists broke away from the classical Marxist thinking when considering the concept of change. Marx contended that through struggle, tension and conscious action, the ruling class could be overthrown and that the history of the materialist class struggle would follow a clear historical process in which the proletariat would free themselves from oppression in an almost preordained and inevitable manner (Thompson, 2013a). Critical theory scholars disagreed with the idea proposed by Marx that each age inevitably marches toward something positive and greater than itself (Thompson, 2013a). Adorno (1973) proposed that there is no pre-given endpoint and that the sum of the previous ages and parts could in fact lead to something negative. Held (1980) claims that they were adamant that Marxist doctrine appeared to have dismissed the idea that ‘men make their own history’ (p. 20). In this study one of the emerging themes is that the people leading these schools, understood their role and responsibilities to make the space safe for all members of the community and to strive for a positive outcome. While the school could have continued with the oppressive status quo, this is
an example of how the arc of change is starting to bend toward a more inclusive and positive outcome for LGBTQ individuals at the school through the actions of these leaders. In keeping with the idea that there is no end point or no pre-ordained positive outcome, as described in the section above, these leaders recognise the importance of embedding the change they have initiated.

The role of leaders, as conceptualised by critical theorists such as Kincheloe and McLaren (2002), is to be that force that helps to facilitate a change in the culture or environment of a space from a dominant hegemonic culture of oppression, to one that is open to the ‘other’. Organisations such as schools operate under conditions of hegemonic power structures, with the various social and political groups within the school all operating with a variety of different agendas (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Freire (1996) recognises, as described above, that these spaces where a dominant culture has existed for a long time, will not voluntarily change to one where those in positions of dominance willingly give up their power or position (Freire, 1996). It is the role of educators and leaders within these schools to drive, maintain and embed the necessary change, and in the case of this thesis, to work to make the schools safer and more inclusive spaces for their LGBTQ stakeholders.

This section has considered what role leadership has to play in schools, particularly when trying to institute LGBTQ policies and practices. The next sub-section builds on this by looking at the symbolic importance and impetus that leadership can bring to the change process.

**Symbolic leadership and action**

In considering how to lead this complicated process, one of the themes that emerged a number of times was the important visual impetus that comes when school leadership is seen to be engaged and involved. In Chapter 5, the importance of symbols, artefacts and using particular individuals was analysed, and this highlighted how these could be used to adapt and change a cultural space. This section examines the importance of the leadership of the principal - a person who is seen as a symbol of power in both of these schools.
The Lakeview College Principal discussed how they saw their role in changing the hearts and minds at the school;

*I mean if principals don’t get involved in this sort of cultural change, then it’s not going to work, I think you need the principal’s support, otherwise it’s just one of those add-ons that won’t filter down.* *(Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)*

The encouragement and visible backing of the Principal enabled those involved in the change to understand that they could use their leadership position to support the staff and students driving change, and to show the others what he stood for. Freire (1996) highlights the power of revolutionary leaders acting with those who are oppressed or seeking to drive change and not for them in a paternalistic manner.

By setting a course of action, directing the school’s goals in this process, being immersed in the entire process on the LGBTQ working group, and developing his own personal understanding, this principal began to change other staff and stakeholder understandings of the importance of the cause (Fullan et al., 2005; Stolp & Smith, 1995). A different example of the importance of the symbolic frame was described by the principal at Lakeview College;

*‘The other thing I always do on a school tour is [take parents past] the poster which says, “Some boys like boys and some girls like girls, get over it” that is in the corridors, and I always talk about Rainbow Sport. [Parents] wanted to know why we’ve got this poster, so I’d go through the whole story, and link it to student voice and say that it came from the kids and how we value their input.’* *(Lakeview College: Participant 1 Principal)*

In this situation, the principal has used the power that exists in the title of ‘principal’ in order to engage in discussions and thinking about the underlying assumptions that underpin school culture. This symbolic act of the leader of the school being next to an LGBTQ inclusive poster and
articulating the position of the school visibly define his leadership vision and style. This visual verbally and implicitly tells parents, staff and students what they value and stand for.

This principal also used his power as spokesperson for the school to write regular ‘principal’s reports’ (newsletters) that were sent to the entire school body explaining the purpose for appropriate language use, development of the LGBTQ programme and just talking about the variety of students at the school and the importance to recognise those that were same-sex attracted and gender diverse in those discussions. The principal stayed visible and a vocal proponent of this process. By setting a course of action, directing the school’s goals in this process, being immersed in the entire process on the working group and developing his own personal understanding, he began to change other staff and stakeholder understanding of the importance of the cause.

Consider the following part of the discussion with the principal of Greenwich Secondary who was reflecting on the important aspects of his own role in relation to the promotion of same-sex attracted and gender diverse staff and students at his school;

... it’s about the symbolic leadership, that’s the most important thing, and really making sure that people are really clear and understand that my role is to actually support the school and the community to meet the purpose that we’ve set for ourselves, and that comes through hard yakka, but it also comes through the symbolic gestures. So you know every year that I’ve been here, you know I’ve marched in the Gay Pride March... I’ve got better things to do on a Sunday afternoon. I could be spending that Sunday afternoon with my family you know having a picnic somewhere, but it’s really important to be able to say – this school really values these kids, and it values not just the kids, but it values the right of kids to be who they are and to feel safe to be who they are... so I march in the Gay Pride March because it demonstrates that you know this school values that, but it’s also about giving the message on what this value is about – it’s about me standing up and saying, well I actually believe that you, as a
Muslim kid, have a right to feel safe here. That you as an ‘emo’ have a right to be who you are as well, and I will defend that right. So it’s about that symbolic leadership. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1 Principal)

I was struck by the intensity of this discussion and have kept much of it intact so as to maintain its integrity important focus. It also highlights the complexity of symbolic leadership. There is an acknowledgment of three important things in this discussion. The first is the principal’s understanding of the importance of his students, parents and staff seeing him be involved and visible in promoting inclusion. He clearly sees this as a very important part of his job and this meant other stakeholders took note. The second part of this discussion that struck me was the sacrifices and ‘hard yakka’ (Australian slang for ‘hard work’). This might be the key difference between the principals that I have experienced who only paid lip service to LGBTQ inclusive teaching practice, and the principals of these two schools. They were both prepared to invest time, energy and committed attendance to events and programs. That hard work and those sacrifices provided the participants, stakeholders and spectators with a clear understanding of what they value at the school. The third important element of this participant’s discussion was his own clear understanding of why he was doing this work. He speaks about the impact it had and the message it sends to those students or staff who may have been ‘othered’ in the school community, be they LGBTQ, Muslim or any other minority group. He understands the importance for those in situations of oppression to see an ally standing up for them in a consistent, committed and sincere manner.

School leaders need to make the decision to understand the issues involved in LGBTQ social justice work and to stay at the forefront of the change movement. The research of Stolp and Smith (1995) reinforces the need for this principal level, visible and articulated support and the importance of allocating time and energy to the environment. They state that:

‘Actions speak loudest. The most effective and efficient way to change cultures is to model the behaviours, beliefs, and values important to the institution. A principal who acts with care and concern for all will most likely encourage similar behaviour in those around him or her. Likewise, a principal who has little
time for staff or students will participate in creating a selfish culture’ (Stolp & Smith, 1995, p. 76)

There is staff discussion that I have often been part of about principals at schools only ‘paying lip service’ or ‘saying what they think people want to hear’, but that their actual views are different. Those staff room discussions happen often in my experience and when they do, the program or new initiative is doomed to failure. However, the data in this study points to the idea that leadership recognises the impact of being seen to play visible roles, and provide visible support, and more importantly, so did the staff and teams involved. The Head of Student Wellbeing at Lakeview described the importance of the principal’s leadership;

... and really that was the first time I’d worked with [the new Principal] in any big way..., but he was quite exceptional in that he was prepared to just be one of the mob too, so that was interesting just to see the new principal in that role. He was quite prepared to sit back and just be a participant as much as anyone else, but his being there was a big deal I think. And he never ever missed a single meeting, he never said, well you go off and do it, or... so that gave a big stamp to us, you can imagine, huge.... and I think we rose to the occasion. It was big for us. (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)

The school principals understood the importance of their own symbolic position when leading a school tour or assembly or writing newsletters or being in a meeting. The significance of being seen to be championing the cause for LGBTQ change is part of their using their power to adapt and change an environment that critical theorists would consider oppressive for LGBTQ folks without their actions. The principals’ actions are seen as signals to the school as to the shared beliefs and values that may exist in that culture. It could also be observed that the symbolic leadership changes the previously fixed structures of thought that parents or new stakeholders might enter the space with. Their roles as leaders expresses and expose the important cultural values and beliefs to the community, who in turn consider their own position in the environment (Deal & Peterson, 1990a).
This section has used the experiences observed to understand how leaders conceptualise and understand their own roles in the change process. Once leaders have recognised the need for change and their roles in that process, they need to begin to build up a broader understanding within the environment for transformation. The section that follows considers the impact of leadership on others, and the ways in which leaders facilitate a broader understanding and support for change.

**Leading others and building support**

It is an axiom, that in order to be a leader, there should be people who follow you, or that you should be influencing others. Unless leaders have people who believe in them, their cause, and their vision and choose to follow them, support them, or be influenced by them, then there is no leadership. This section considers how leadership built that base of support, in this case for LGBTQ inclusive work at the school sites.

I have broken this section into three sub-sections which each consider the different ways in which the leadership of the school sites worked with their teams and their stakeholders. Using critical theory ideas from Apple (2013) and Arendt (2006), it is possible to recognise that in any environment, there are people in positions of power who are able to influence and persuade others, be that through formal structures or informal ones. Through their strategic leadership decisions, relationships with staff or their reactions to resistance, the leadership of the schools provided data about how they lead (and continue to lead) their schools through this process (Arendt, 2006). This section considers ways in which the leaders created an understanding of why there needed to be LGBTQ understanding and inclusive practice, how they empowered their stakeholders to break free from a fixed, hegemonic system of thinking, and how they used and created coalitions to embed and drive the change forward.
Creating a revolutionary consciousness

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) point out that an important element of any change process is that there must be well developed understanding of why change needs to take place, before starting to unpack and plan how that change should take place. Held (1980) would call that development of understanding a ‘revolutionary consciousness’ (p. 22), that leaders need to imbue in both themselves and those that are driving the change and seeking to understand what action is required. This section of the chapter looks at ways in which leaders were able to instil an understanding of why the schools needed to change and why individuals might follow and buy into the change process.

The principal at Lakeview College explained how a staff member in his team created the sense of urgency and purpose that he needed in order to step up to lead change;

... [She] was significant in that, I think without [her] initially, I’m not sure... it probably would have taken us a lot longer, and I don’t know whether the issue would have come up so soon in my time as principal, because as a new principal, you wouldn’t bring... that wouldn’t be the first thing on your agenda to introduce to a new school. So [she] was certainly instrumental in it. (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

The principal describes his initial reluctance to be seen championing LGBTQ inclusion as his first major issue at his new school, but acknowledges the importance of hearing his staff’s stories and of using those to spur on his leadership of the process. Upon hearing the lived experience of a staff member at the school and incorporating his teaching history and experience, he understands the urgency and the need for action – in other words, his consciousness has been raised.
He goes on to explain that not only was this an opportunity to help colleagues, but also an opportunity to create an understanding in the minds of the staff about what he stood for and what his belief in the role of education was.

_This issue came up, or this opportunity, rather, came up, and I saw that as an opportunity to get to know the kids, get to know the staff, and to be seen as ... and to act in the way in which I wanted to act in my term as principal. It was probably the first issue-based thing that I became involved in, and the staff could see me as someone that wanted to be involved in that sort of stuff._

_(Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)_

This principal appears to have understood the practical elements of the theory of oppression as described by Freire (1996) who explained that the issue of someone (in this case LGBTQ individuals) feeling ‘othered’, offered the opportunity for social change to occur. Not only was the principal influenced to consider his own actions, but this quote points to the way in which the principal sought to influence the staff through his position and by articulating his own stance in a public forum.

The principal and his staff, who were in positions of power, could explore and examine their actions or lack of actions which helped perpetuate a system that had quietly marginalised a group within the school. They were able to elevate their consciousness to include an understanding of the hurt and damage caused by that marginalisation. As one of those powerful role-players, who was sanctioned by the school community to make judgements and drive change, he was able to use his position to challenge the status quo, illuminate the moral issues at hand and to initiate change. Once the moral purpose is understood, it makes the other elements of change merely the drivers to achieve the desired outcome (Fullan et al., 2005; Held, 1980).

One of the other staff members at Lakeview College described the imperative to bring people along and create that understanding of oppression and acceptable practice for the students and staff regarding LGBTQ issues as follows:
So I think it’s just been really good leadership and getting people onboard, and everyone’s very clear about what’s acceptable and what’s not and people are prepared to stand up for things that they don’t think are acceptable, and the kids are just as much... now they’re no, no, that’s not acceptable. (Lakeview College: Participant 6, Staff member)

This statement points out two important things; first, that leaders have a responsibility to drive inclusive practice and they must be seen at the forefront of anti-oppressive thinking. Individuals are looking to take their cues from their leaders on how to act or react in particular situations. It is incumbent on leaders to understand that the position they occupy enables them to drive new thinking and ways of doing in their organisations. They are able to bring inclusive change to a space and ensure that through their words and actions, others recognise and begin to engage in that change. Second, that the influence that is being exerted by the leadership when ‘getting people on board’, has changed the previous hegemonic discourse in the school to one where there is a broader understanding of what is ‘acceptable’. The critical theory lens that I have used in this thesis speaks to the importance of individuals being mindful of others, and of breaking through dominant narratives that keep people alienated from each other (Bronner, 2011; Crossley, 2005). In this school, the purpose of this raised consciousness among staff and students alike was targeted at helping people to accomplish something specific, i.e. make the school a place that welcomes and accepts LGBTQ individuals. Alienation arises from the lack of connection and relationships that occur when schools marginalise and oppress and by considering what individuals see as acceptable practice, this school began to address this alienation in the LGBTQ community (Crossley, 2005). It has enabled those who have understood the message of LGBTQ inclusion to stand up for their peers who may be being marginalised or be feeling powerless.

Thompson (2013a) states that critical theorists acknowledge and embrace the condition of constant change that the world is in and understand that through the process of flux and change we seek to ‘become’ and liberate ourselves. Held (1980) adds that part of that flux is developing an understanding for why that change must happen and a consciousness within those who could and should drive change that action is imperative. Freire (1996) states that it is also possible to
emphasise the importance of socially active and engaged educators (the ‘humanist, revolutionary educators’ (p. 56)) to continue to engage in work that helps others become more self-actualised and enlightened.

This section above has considered the importance of leaders when creating an understanding or consciousness that opens people and the environment up to being less oppressive and to one where there is less alienation of the ‘other’. The next section further develops this analysis into the idea of enlightenment as it pertains to how this contributes and facilitates change.

**Enabling enlightenment and empowerment**

The section above used the interview process to provide insight into how school leadership got individuals to engage in a process of LGBTQ understanding and inclusion. This section considers ways in which individuals began to re-consider and change their fixed structures of thought in order to develop independent thought and better understand their LGBTQ colleagues and students and thus become enlightened (Felluga, 2015; Held, 1980). The concept of enlightenment considers the ways in which individuals strive to break free from systems of thought and begin to critically analyse and understand the world (Aronowitz, 2009; Held, 1980). This section speaks to the further development of an understanding of why change needs to take place, but in this section, I am focusing on the individuals understanding instead of the whole school or stakeholders.

In order to illustrate some of the ways in which the individuals identified the need for learning and in a sense, empowerment and enlightenment, I have chosen to consider two examples at Greenwich Secondary. The first revolved around a discussion with a member of staff about two students at the school who were in the process of affirming their gender and of ‘transitioning’:

*We, [the staff], had a Professional Development session... as well as student services often sending out information. Lots of information around those areas, because it’s prominent in our community really.... But again, as much as parents from our community know that they’ve got someone that they can go to, as do*
I as a staff member know that if I’m a bit confused or not quite sure, I would happily, any time, go to the Head of student services and say I'm not quite sure yeah absolutely and I wouldn’t feel unsupported or strange in asking a question, or you know anything like that. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 7, Staff member)

Both of the sites had school values that included learning and diversity, as both of these school sites had this stated in their mission statements and documentation. Within these environments, the development of a learning culture where individuals are able to learn from each other (especially those who are further along in the process) and to become collectively committed to improving is important (Fullan et al., 2005). It is clear from this statement that the staff member felt that there was an attempt to increase education and understanding around the issue of transgender students at the school. Staff and students alike had received documentation and, in some cases, professional development. The school could also have provided more education and training sessions, further data dissemination, increased development of action plans and discussions of the process of including transgender students (or more broadly, all queer individuals) in order to encourage the institutional change (Fullan et al., 2005). Importantly, there is an understanding that there is a place to go for further information if they need it. This statement illustrates that time and resources have been provided to address this issue, that staff understand their accountability in finding out more if they are unsure. An effort has been made to provide the information from a reliable source i.e. the student services department, and that they and the staff have the authority to work with the students and the information in a manner that is in keeping with the school’s ethos. Most importantly, in seeking to learn more about a young transgender person in their classroom and break their fixed system of thinking through reaching out to another (the Head of student services) and thus becoming more understanding or enlightened about the social environment around them and the student.

It was also clear that the school values and ethos played a very important role in enabling the staff to develop a sense of authority around decision making. This once again speaks to the Dialectic of Enlightenment as described in the critical theory framework and by Gramsci (2014),
and it is a lens through which this thesis is being understood. It considers how intellectual and moral leadership can affect the actions of individuals in the system (Gramsci, 2014). The leadership in power at the schools encouraged critical thinking about the environment and about systems that had previously been unquestioned.

A tool that both schools used to promote this critical thinking and to change the perception of there being only one school of thought, was to link the work that staff and students were doing to a values-based system. The leadership of the school devoted time and resources to making sure that the vision and values of an equitable, fair and inclusive space were understood and that the staff were able to hold both themselves and the students accountable to those ideals. The following is an excerpt from a discussion I had with the principal of Greenwich Secondary:

_We have a fairly extensive induction programme of all of our staff, and usually it begins with a day during December the year before they actually start, and it continues through a programme that we run throughout Term 1 during lunchtime or after school. Professional Development... runs for the whole of Term 1, and there’s a range of things that we put our staff through, you know in terms of getting them more in tune with the school and understanding what this school is about. So, the values is one, and we make sure that they are really part of those you know. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1 Principal)_

Through a calculated and strategic development of the staff’s understanding of the school values, the principal and his leadership team have enabled the staff to use these values to confront and address the issues that they and the students have to face, in the case of this thesis – an understanding of inclusive practice for LGBTQ individuals. Howard (1998) states that through professional development sessions and induction programs, staff are able to become motivated, learn more about the issues and the organisation, and they are able to control and understand how to respond to stressful or difficult issues that they may face, these are just some of the benefits of striving for an empowered workforce. Using the critical theory lens, it is evident that the leadership at this school used their positions of power to instil in individuals who are taking on staff positions at the school, and who will thus have an impact on the culture at the school,
what the dominant discourse is – i.e. one that values inclusive and relationship based practice and that discourages any forms of LGBTQ marginalisation.

This research also indicates that there is a further advantage to the leaders of organisations if they enable staff to take up the cudgels of change through empowered enlightenment, in that through a greater sense of satisfaction that their colleagues understand similar imperatives for change, there is less work for the leader to do as far as driving the process, and there is increased clarity about where the organisation is heading (Howard, 1998).

When discussing how the school instilled a sense of understanding and cohesion among staff about LGBTQ inclusive practice, one of the participants at Lakeview College described how individuals who were initially unsure, and who critical theorists would argue wanted to perpetuate the status quo and system of oppression, began to understand the purpose and vision surrounding the new work.

*There were staff who were like ‘yes’ we do need [Professional Development] on this,... we’re not confident when we’re talking to kids that maybe are saying they’re same sex attracted... or questioning their gender identity and that sort of thing, so we need help with that, and I remember one staff member sort of thought or made noises about you know what do I do if someone comes to me and says that, and how do I fix them sort of thing?*

*And it was like, no, that’s not what we’re doing here. And so to have someone as eloquent and engaging as [the Head of Safe Schools Coalition] to come out and speak with the staff and present not just you know the facts and statistics, there were ideas that really challenged people’s thinking, and... when they’re presented with all that, there is no other way of thinking, you know you have to get onboard with this because it’s about everyone’s wellbeing (Lakeview College: Participant 7, Staff Member)*
This interaction highlights the key elements of this section and brings into focus the critical theory framework that has shaped my understanding of the schools. There is a clear description of staff striving to break out of their fixed perceptions and thinking by understanding their own limitations and lack of confidence in these issues of marginalisation, along with the impact of leadership empowering staff to improved understanding and enlightenment through opportunities for development. The final part of the sentence in this piece of data, ‘it’s about everyone’s wellbeing,’ is perhaps the clearest indication of not only what the school is striving for, but also the importance of knowing the role of education and the breaking down of a hegemonic system that only sees education and the education space in one way.

It is important to note that while both schools worked very hard to create learning environments, the full extent of their ability to empower staff, students and parents is yet to be determined, this process is ongoing but acknowledgement should be given to the work done thus far. Fisher (1998) states that empowering individuals is complicated and is a function of the authority that they are given; the resources that they have access to (e.g. time, budget, training); the accurate information they are provided with and their own personal sense of accountability. One of the ways in which the process gets reinforced and embedded in a school is for leadership to facilitate the building of teams and coalitions that will help perpetuate this inclusive narrative and understanding.

Under the heading of leading others and building support, this section has considered how leaders use their power to help to create a consciousness and imperative for change, and then how individuals can be brought to that consciousness through opportunities for enlightenment and understanding. These opportunities could and should be provided and made available in a variety of different and accessible means. The next section uses the data to highlight how leaders embed and enable change through the building of coalitions of allies and supporters.
Building coalitions

Once a sense of purpose and revolutionary consciousness has been established among the stakeholders, and there is a broader understanding of the issues at hand, then change theorists would argue that the logical next step is to use that momentum and purpose to get a focused and educated group of individuals together to start driving the change process (Fullan et al., 2005).

It is important to note that the participant stories at both of the schools contain examples of where they received targeted external help. In the Greenwich Secondary study, they had help in the facilitation and development of their school values and in the case of Lakeview College, they had focused help on driving and developing a LGBTQ inclusive sport and PE department.

The example that I have chosen to use is one from Lakeview College. The school leadership, with the help of the external organisation, very strategically and purposefully created a structured and collaborative committee of stakeholders to help the school with its LGBTQ inclusive work. The committee was set up to establish direction and actions that needed to take place. A facilitator from the organisation piloting this program came to help and there was an acknowledgment of the importance of not only that dedicated and directed aid, but also of the important collaboration between the school staff and the students and how they formed a guiding coalition to enable the change. Consider the description below:

They, [the external facilitating organisation], made us [have both staff and students at our meetings], and they really pushed that right from the beginning, but they facilitated it as well. They made that possible in a number of ways. I think the way they designed those early workshops that there was always that insistence on there has to be this high degree of collaboration you know and equality. ... [So] we became the key people with [the LGBTQ inclusive sport program] - that didn’t faze any of us. (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)
Throughout my meetings with those staff who drove the program at Lakeview College, there was an acknowledgement that by working together and supporting each other, they were able to make progress. The input and impact of the student voices was also emphasised by the staff members who participated. One of the strategic ways in which their voices were used was to co-opt students and staff into the group who had a particular social cache amongst others in the school.

We’ve got [LGBTQ Inclusion] ambassadors. So, they’re a group of students that were selected for their sort of sportiness, but also their strong sense of social justice I guess, and they were diverse in their backgrounds, and they were you know seen as leaders in the school. So they weren’t sort of quiet kids – they were outspoken, they were respected in the school population, and had no qualms whatsoever of taking on the role of ambassador, and then that was sort of ... with [the Staff GSA Coordinator] and [the] wellbeing group, and also [a Staff member who was the] student year level co-ordinator, and [the Principal] and... another teacher involved. So getting those sort of sports-aligned teachers involved as well, particularly the male ones I think was important (Lakeview College: Participant 7, Staff Member)

Some organisational change research points to the importance of having a group of supporters who champion the message of change and who can work together to take this message of change out into the rest of the environment (Fullan et al., 2005; Kotter, 1996). Using critical theory it is possible to speak to the impact on both the oppressed and the group of allies who are involved in creating and driving the change, Freire (1996) contends that there is a development of a belief in self and belief in the actions that are being undertaken when you see others with you.

Forming coalitions not only ensures that the burden does not fall on just one or two individuals to try to promote the cause, but that those who have not understood the urgency for change or sought out ways in which to become enlightened to the need for change, can see that a group of their colleagues and / or students have concerns about it, thus prompting either a re-think of the issue, and a desire to find out more. Of course, it must be acknowledged that it could also cement
possible resistance to the issue due to the misunderstanding of its intent, this is addressed in Chapter 8.

The process of collaboration that these schools followed ended up enhancing the change programs and changing the previously oppressive structures in the schools. It provided opportunities for staff, students, leaders and parents to participate in decision making about this issue that affect them. It also allowed them to contribute crucial knowledge when being a member of a coalition. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) point out; ‘such involvement contributes to members’ beliefs that they are able to shape the organizational context to meet their own needs relative to goal accomplishment’ (p. 10). This data collected in these schools emphasises the point made by critical theorists that within each school and environment there exists a web of connections and those social networks can be used to achieve a desired result in a social context, and across multiple internal and external social networks (K. Leithwood & C. Riehl, 2003).

In these schools, there is a clear sense of understanding the need for key role players and key drivers of change. Kotter (1996) states that having the right people, with enough social and political power to lead the effort and to encourage others was identified as vital. Added to that, actions and resources were put in place to increase the collective capacity of the staff and drive the process forward (Fullan et al., 2005).

This section examined related to ways in which leaders led their teams and ways in which they built support and engagement in the process for LGBTQ inclusive practice at their sites. I have used a critical theory lens to understand how they created an understanding of the steps they were taking, how they enabled individuals in their teams to build their own understanding and desire to become involved, and the imperative of building a team of support to help the change process. The next part of the visible leadership chapter is going to use the data to understand and analyse how the leaders used careful, considered dialogue to make sure that the process of change was sustainable and inclusive of different thoughts and ideas.
Dialogue

Using critical theory, it is possible to emphasise the point that authentic dialogue is crucial to enacting and driving a process of change. It is the ability to enter dialogue and discussion with those who either need to know more about the process, or those who are feeling unsure or unconvinced about the need for the change in the first place, that creates spaces that are inclusive of different identities (Darder et al., 2009; Freire, 1996). They also contend that dialogue that speaks to emancipation and freedom will enhance and illustrate the interconnectedness between the environment and the people that exist within it.

The ability to engage in dialogue and improve understanding in the environment was captured by the principal at Greenwich Secondary in the following short story:

‘The mother sent an email directly to me and basically, I was glad that it came straight to me because what I did then was, I said; “okay, I understand that you have a view of the meaning of valuing diversity that hasn’t been expressed before and what I’d like to do is to actually have the opportunity to talk with you, to actually clarify what the school [believes], or where the school is coming from with this value, and how your point of view in relation to this value actually contravenes the value, not uses the value as a supportive measure’ (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1)

Both of the principals indicated that they were open to frank and honest discussion with the parents about the important elements of the school values and about their position on LGBTQ inclusion. In this case, the principal was proactive in inviting the discussion and in encouraging the parent to be open about their concerns. What is important in this piece of data is that there is an indication that the dialogue that was held with the parent was a significant action that needed to take place. It helped the principal articulate the mission of the school and focused on clarifying the reason for the change process and envisioned outcome. Freire (1996) contends that
naive thinking perpetuates the status quo, normalises current actions, and accommodates current behaviours; whereas critical thinking transforms the future.

However, there were situations described in my experiences with the schools where during discussions, there was an acknowledgement that the parties were at an impasse. The principal at Lakeview College recollects an encounter with a parent that did not go as planned in the following statement:

‘... but I remember [a staff member] telling me that there was a father who was quite concerned when his child, [after being a] bully and using inappropriate language towards another child, and I think the kid was suspended. [So I called the parent and] we went through the school’s policy, and they had to agree to disagree. There was no way we were going to win the father over. And that’s the case with some of the kids. We had conversations [about our Rainbow Sport] with kids who just don’t agree – well why, why are you doing this?

And the whole thing is to have the conversation. It’s not an angry conversation, it’s a conversation. And sometimes they might think twice, sometimes they’re so closed they’re not going to [change]’ (Lakeview College: Participant 1)

While the principal did not see the discussions as particularly successful, two key elements stand out, first that there was a willingness to engage and to enter dialogue and second, that there was an element of hopefulness that emerges from this story. There was an acknowledgement of the importance of being willing to start the discourse with those who are sceptical of the change process and there was, once again, a desire to explain, justify or enlighten those other stakeholders about the purpose and vision behind the processes and decision making. The element of hope being at the root of dialogue is an interesting point put forward by Freire, who contends that dialogue cannot exist without hope (Freire, 2014).

This desire to see and be the change for the school was illustrated by these two principals and their discussions. Freire (2014) states that every individual’s struggle to do better and to be more
is rooted in hope. That struggle is carried out in communion and dialogue with others and within a specific context and environment. If we see a path to a better future, then the encounter becomes exciting and even more hopeful, but if there is no hope for change, then the dialogue becomes fruitless, bureaucratic and dull (Freire, 1996). The participants in this research recognised the importance of engaging in this process of change within a spirit of hope, openness, and care. In some cases, they clearly articulated the importance of hope for a better situation at their school for LGBTQ individuals and specifically mentioned it as a key driver of actions for change. It is that hope which underpins much of the need for dialogue and discussion.

A final point to make about the importance of being open to dialogue and of fostering a trusting environment for those discussions, is the importance of care, trust and humility. Using the critical theory framework enables the consideration of the importance of engaging all of the stakeholders in a caring manner which is open to different ideas and which does not seek to impose your ideas on someone else (Freire, 1996; hooks, 2014). It is only in this ‘natural’ state of caring where both participants are energised by the relationship (Noddings, 1988). This idea of care, trust and humility in discussion and dialogue came to the fore in a discussion with a principal about the inclusion of a transgender student at the school:

‘So, there were conversations and discussions going on in the previous year, and obviously very close contact with the family and supporting the family, making sure the family [and school] was in partnership. All of that was okay until I think day 1 when the child arrived, and we thought.... what toilets do they use? Where do they feel comfortable going? And we started off with having the conversation with the child and saying, well you know we’ve supported your … transition with your friends, we now have to think about logistics – do we have an assigned gender-unassigned toilets? Is that the best way to go? And he was quite adamant that no, he was a boy, and he was going to go to the boys’ toilets you know and that’s fine. And so, we said okay, well let’s try it out and let’s see how we go, but have your friends with you know, and be
supported. Not that you’ve got to go to the toilet with your friends, but you know, be supported in that. And after a little while I think he felt uncomfortable doing that. So, we assigned a toilet down this end here as a non-gender toilet you know, and let’s see whether would you be comfortable using it? Yep, that would be fine, that was not an issue.’ (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1)

I have kept this story intact as it is such an interesting example of how the school thought that they had ticked all the boxes and then suddenly found out that even through all the discussion and dialogue that had taken place with students; staff and parents, there had been an oversight. Through the dialogue that took place, there was an acknowledgement of the engagement, of a response to needs, and a recognition of the value of the relationship (Noddings, 1988). The subsequent decisions that were able to be taken, and the openness to understanding the students’ needs is a wonderful indicator of how one cannot enter into a revolutionary discussion with feelings of arrogance, or feelings of superior knowledge or position.

In this case, the principal and the school could not and did not simply assign a toilet on the assumption that they fully understood the student’s situation. This is a situation where people are engaging in discussion and dialogue and seeking to learn from each other and enhance their own understanding (Freire, 1996). This humble approach to discussion as well as the understanding that it is far more significant to engage in liberation with the oppressed rather than for the oppressed, appear to have been key elements in making change work and enabling it to become embedded in the school culture (Freire, 1996).

Dialogue is a broad and complex component of change and of critical theory. The data in this section points to its importance in creating long lasting change and in engaging individuals in a process that might scare or perplex them. Dialogue has to consider where the other person might be struggling, engaging in a space of care and hope has been practiced by the leaders in this study.
Conclusion

This chapter has used critical theory to consider the leadership imperatives that emerged. The data has provided some insight into the complexity of leading LGBTQ change at a school’s. It has also highlighted some of the strategies that were used by the principals at the schools. While I am not arguing that this is an exhaustive list of every situation that they faced, or that this is exactly what others in similar situations may face, this chapter and the focus on the voices of the principals at the helm, provides insight into some of the complexity involved in driving this sort of change process, while at the same time, showing that there are pragmatic and sensible ways to manage inclusive LGBTQ practices.

Critical theorists emphasise the imperatives placed on people in positions of power to consider how their position might perpetuate a hegemonic space in which people are oppressed or alienated (Freire, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The data tells the story of empathetic school leaders who understand their position and who have taken action to reduce oppression of LGBTQ members of the school community. They used their position of power in order to actively participate with the LGBTQ stakeholders. The importance of that symbolic work is a theme that has emerged across many participants interviews and gets highlighted again in Chapter 8.

I suspect that both of these principals would argue, that while it is difficult at times, there is a benefit to understanding where you are wanting to lead the school and to keeping an eye on the reason that LGBTQ inclusion is important. The ideas of safety, hope and the imperative for spaces that are inclusive is perhaps best encapsulated in this quote from one of the principals:

‘They’re kids, and our purpose statement says it is about our kids, actually allowing our kids to feel safe to be themselves. Now [when a derogatory] statement [is heard] – how could that make another person feel safe to be who they are, and how could it make your child feel safe about being who [he or] she is? Think about that you know...’ (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)
If I were to broadly summarise this chapter it would be to consider the relationships that exist at the school and to use those relationships to promote change, explain it, or facilitate it. Consider this summation of the LGBTQ inclusion process as described by one of the staff members at Lakeview College:

‘What comes across to me is it’s very genuine, that it comes from a place of really caring about the kids. It’s got nothing to do with – oh my God what’s the community going to think and [public relations] nightmares and stuff. That’s all irrelevant. It’s genuine concern and care, [being willing to] help others who may be struggling, help the school to become tolerant and respectful, and it’s been a consistent thing’ (Lakeview College: Participant 6, Staff Member)

The underlying strength of the all of the different leadership approaches was to always keep the needs of the staff, students and school body at the forefront of any decision making. It may indeed come back to one’s own understanding and beliefs around the role of leadership and the purpose of education.

The first data chapter considered the broad overarching theme of culture within a critical theory framework. This chapter considered how leadership affected that culture through actions or relationships with the school stakeholders. The next chapter considers and analyses the other themes emerged from that data that helped to enabled change and which the participants described as catalysts to change.
Chapter 7 - Constraining LGBTQ inclusion

Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 have examined broad, overarching themes of culture and leadership as factors that affect and drive a process that seeks to include LGBTQ individuals within a school system. Chapters 7 and 8 consider the impact of culture and leadership on the inclusion process, how leadership and culture could adapt or improve an environment for LGBTQ stakeholders, and others and the power that exists within a particular culture or leader to bring about change. In this chapter data is analysed which pointed to why participants didn’t want to or were apprehensive to lead change. The resistance and constraints of creating a more LGBTQ inclusive school culture are explored.

This chapter uses critical theory to focus on those factors that constrain and inhibit change and inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in schools. It also highlights factors that emerged which maintain the status quo, and from which schools need to free themselves in order to move forward. Understanding the constraints to change and the situations which perpetuate an oppressive hegemony is imperative. With knowledge and analysis of what inhibits change, there can be a better understanding of the types of actions and processes that enable, facilitate and drive change.

Every person interviewed, from principal to school nurse, had their own views on the different barriers and obstacles that inhibited LGBTQ inclusion at their school. Their perspectives on these barriers helped to develop the themes that are discussed below. This chapter gathers those thoughts and thematically centres them around two key components. The first component is the fear and anxiety that comes with trying to implement policies; the second one is the resistance to change and change processes themselves. This section explores how individuals resist change and how their colleagues interpret their actions of impeding the change programs that school leaders want to implement.
Fear of engaging in LGBTQ issues

Throughout this thesis one of the themes that has emerged is how fear drives or inhibits our actions. Understanding the way in which fear is used to perpetuate a particular status quo and particularly how it plays out in an organisation such as a school, where there are a variety of staff, parents, board members and students who all have varying opinions on social justice and equity, is key to understanding how to counter it.

Before starting this section on fear, I want to consider this concept more closely. Philosopher Lars Svendsen contends that ‘fear has become an emotion that controls the public and is a culturally determined magnifying glass through which we consider the world’ (Svendsen, 2008, p. 12). He explains that old ideologies no longer motivate action as they used to. He also states that the discourse of fear in the public, media, and political sphere has become a powerful way to communicate a message that the world is dangerous, and we are right to fear the other as they could / might / may challenge our status, financial position, or our freedom (Svendsen, 2008). Subba (2014) and Svendsen (2008) talk about western society currently being dominated by a ‘culture of fear’. One only needs to think about the current reporting on the Syrian refugee crisis, or the vitriolic USA election of 2016, or the Australian Marriage Equality referendum to see this in action.

This section will consider four circumstances that have emerged which can be broadly attributed to stemming from LGBTQ conflicts or confusion. The first one will explore the fear and anxiety that came about when the schools leading teachers, management and principal had to initiate a new process and program targeting LGBTQ inclusion at their school. The second will consider the fears and trepidation that teaching staff expressed regarding the cultural factors at play in the school, the third will consider the staff who expressed anxiety and fear around their own understanding and knowledge of these issues, and the final one will look at the LGBTQ fear of freedom and the ability of someone who is LGBTQ to drive the change process.
Fear of initiating the LGBTQ change process

Lakeview College brings together a particularly important set of narratives in order to understand initiating change. The school had most recently worked on a process for initiating change and the memories and process as to how they did it was able to be obtained in the interviews. The participants were able to speak directly to the concerns and frustrations that confront school staff who are wanting to drive social change.

The four voices from Lakeview College used in this section are those who were the most actively involved in bringing LGBTQ issues to the fore and driving the policy changes at the school. Each of the participants included had very separate fears of being the leaders and the drivers of change and these will be described and analysed below. Bringing together the voices who drove and initiated an LGBTQ change process at their school is an important part of this thesis, in that it may enable other schools or teachers who read this work to recognise similar situations, taking solace in the anxieties and fears described below.

Fear of freedom

Consider this comment from one of the participants on their hesitancy to initiate the LGBTQ inclusion process at their school;

“...I guess I always felt like I wanted to do something, but I felt very overwhelmed about that, and how perhaps students and staff would react to that.” (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)

This quote from the interview participant at Lakeview College is one that opened my eyes to the fear and barriers that constrain any LGBTQ change at schools and is emblematic of the dilemma in which many of the participants found themselves. The reason I found this quote so compelling is that the sentiments in this quote highlight three important considerations that speak directly to the trouble with implementing long-lasting, effective, inclusive school change for LGBTQ individuals. It also links well to the concerns stated within the critical theory framework that consider the ways in which hegemony and oppressive spaces are maintained (Freire, 1996;
Gramsci, 2014). The first element of this quote indicates that staff and members of the school often recognise and feel the need for change and to do something to help. There is a feeling of powerlessness that comes with understanding one’s position in a system of oppression, or in a space that excludes individuals from dialogue or critique of the system (Young, 2009). The second element of the quote that is important to consider is that in the current high-pressured schooling system, staff feel overwhelmed and immobilised at the thought of adding something new to the organisation or their workload. This feeling of fatalism and immobility due to the way that the system has been maintained leads to confusion and concern as to where to start with the change process (Freire, 1996). A final observation about this quote is that there is a stated concern about the community’s reaction to any school change program that deals with issues of sexuality and gender identity. Critical theorists implore us to consider how the customs and beliefs in an environment can lead to an expectation that we might need permission from others before we consider relieving ourselves or others from oppression (Crossley, 2005; Felluga, 2015).

I have chosen to start with the participant who other subjects identified as their catalyst for involvement in the change process at Lakeview College. Before she was the Head of the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), or LGBTQ support group at Lakeview College, this participant was outed to the students through an email chain after having been at the school for a number of years. Freire (1996) contends that the struggle for liberation can be affected by the ways in which we react and organise based on our fears. Once those who have been oppressed (and their allies) have learned, or perceived, of their social, political, and economic disadvantage, Freire (1996), proposes that a ‘fear of freedom’ begins to afflict the oppressed (p. 18). He describes this as something which they may not be cognitively aware of, but which makes them seek refuge and maintain the status quo instead of striving for liberty (Freire, 1996).

Svendsen (2008) contends that fight or flight reactions are most evolutionary typical, but in certain circumstances one is incapable of any action (fright). As the data continues to indicate, it is from this initial ‘frozen’ position that the participants in this school started to address their fear. This participant described above eventually did begin to understand and recognise her fear.
of freedom. The support from a peer, as well as her own determination to do more, drove them to find out how to help staff and students in similar situations. This becomes an important example of the fact that while fear of freedom can motivate our actions, it does not necessarily determine our actions.

Participant 3 from Lakeview College was instrumental in getting the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria (SSCV) to come to the school to do some professional development and in starting the school’s GSA, or LGBTQ support group for students. However, in keeping with the tenets of the fear of freedom discourse, when she did start to drive some change through the establishment of the school’s first LGBTQ support group, she did so tentatively and slowly as if wanting to test the waters before fully committing to the process. When she eventually gets down to promoting the first LGBTQ support group meeting, even though she understands the imperative for this social club and even knowing that the leadership support was there, she indicates that there is still a fear to market it too widely and too boldly in the school environment, she said:

‘I knew who was, you know, open and interested in these kinds of issues, and so I made a little tiny flyer... a tiny, itty-bitty flyer’ (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)

Societal marginalisation causes fear in those who are oppressed. This fear can be seen when they need to examine and contemplate the risks, they are prepared to take in seeking to struggle for freedom (Freire, 1996; McLaren, 2009). Their yearning for freedom may not be echoed in the feelings of their oppressed comrades, their desire for revolution may just lead to them being new oppressors and they may ultimately prefer the security of the status quo and conformity (Freire, 1996; McLaren, 2009).

Freire speaks to the duality that exists in this drive for revolution and change;

‘The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They
are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised.’ (Freire, 1996, p. 30).

This understanding of the ‘fear of freedom’, the duality that exists within the struggle to initiate a changed system, forms an important point of reference in the analysis and helps to understand the resistance to change (Freire, 1996; McLaren, 2009). Acknowledging a fear of change and of freedom, allows the research to consider which factors lead to people overcoming their fears and taking the risks in the next chapter.

Fear of the oppressor

One of the other fears that emerged in this discussion about initiating a process of LGBTQ inclusion was the fear of what others would think, what they would say, and how they would feel about the school embarking on this work. The principal of Lakeview College had only been at the school for 2 months at the point where there was pressure from both the Head of Student Wellbeing and the eventual Head of the LGBTQ student group to send them to more professional development on LGBTQ and Queer inclusive teaching strategies, and to bring that professional development to the school. His description of staff thinking at the first staff meeting of the year, when the SSCV had come to present it an indicator of his concern:

‘...there were some concerns as to how well staff would receive the topic. First thing – why are we talking about this on the first day of the academic year, there’s more important things to talk about?’ (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

The Principal’s initial fears centred on his understanding of the heteronormative environment that he found himself in at the school and his experiences of schools in the past. Perhaps, the most concrete issue was his wariness of his own position and standing within the staff and student body, as the ‘new guy’. He did not want to be seen as ‘coming in and rearranging’ things at the school in his first few months in the job, especially with an issue so fraught with different emotions and perspectives. The idea of bringing in people who he knew could come into the
school space, point out the marginalisation or hegemonic structures in place keeping LGBTQ individuals oppressed, would have been daunting.

Freire (1996) contends that these actions would have caused fear in the oppressor, whose position of privilege is being challenged. It would cause fear for any person in a position of power, they would need to consider the risk involved in potentially seceding some of that position of privilege (Freire, 1996; McLaren, 2009). McLaren (2009) adds that coupled with that fear of losing privilege, is the fear of actually finding out more about the complex issues that are being brought to the surface and indeed, a refusal to acknowledge the pain or trauma that their oppressive actions have caused.

Rush (2004) states that it is important to remember that critical theory should not simply be ‘critical’ of social forces and of domination, there must be more to it than that. When considering the Principal and his hesitancy described above, Bronner (2011) argues that we must consider social power structures that exist in environments, and how those who are being oppressed and the oppressors in those situations understand their existence. The revelation of the struggle for change is an important element for consideration (Bronner, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011). Once individuals understand the power structures that they are living under and, in the case of the Principal, that they are perpetuating, there is an awakening to the idea that they need to change and transform these conditions, but this process is often difficult and resisted by those in power (Freire, 1996).

This sub-section has considered fear through the lens of the oppressed and the oppressor. Both of those groups have reasons for being wary of initiating and driving LGBTQ change in a school environment. The next section considers the historical structure and heteronormative perspectives that might exist in an environment and how that contributes to the fear of change.
Heteronormative fear of the ‘sexual other’

Svendsen (2008) states that while the emotion of fear does have a biological basis (i.e. adrenalin, increased heartbeat, sweaty hands), the fear described in this thesis is the social construct that is shaped by individual experiences and social norms. What we fear, and how strongly, depends on our conceptions of the world, the hegemonic power structures we perceive and the possibilities we feel we have of protecting ourselves against them, or the hope of taking action (Svendsen, 2008).

The participant data that has been collected indicates that there is this fear of the sexual or gendered other in our schools. When embarking on a process that is more inclusive of LGBTQ staff and students, there is still the impression that the school and the staff are going to be acting in a way that is seen as contrary to the norms and values that they see in the social environment and the culture of the society that they are operating in. For example, one staff member describes an interaction about parent and public support for LGBTQ individuals;

*I know one year [the principal] had a letter of complaint from a parent saying that they thought that the idea [of having a LGBTQ support group] was abhorrent.*

*I [also] had a terrible [experience]... it wasn’t from a parent, but I had a terrible experience when I was wearing the Safe Schools Coalition T-shirt, and I went into a shop in [the city], and a woman said to me – what does that mean, that T-shirt that you’ve got on? And I said, well I work in a school, and it’s about supporting gender diversity and same sex attracted students, and she said, I don’t think you should teach that in school. And I said, well it’s not a matter of teaching it, it’s a matter of supporting young people that are questioning their sexuality or you know curious about these things, and she said, I think that’s shameful. She said, I think that’s terrible. Schools should have nothing to do with that, it should be all about education. I was shocked but I guess that’s a*
community attitude for some people (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 3, Student Services Coordinator)

This is a simple example of the society’s fear of difference and of the anxiety that exists when schools want to implement change within that culture or environment. I have highlighted this particular story as it is indicative of the feelings that emerged around the time of the Australian Marriage Referendum and the Government’s clash with Safe Schools Coalition, as described in Chapter 2. This anecdote indicates that there is a desire to perpetuate a cultural hegemony on the individuals and organisations who seek to challenge the norms.

Kincheloe (2011) argues that oppression is expressed in a variety of ways. He states that it is often interconnected, so to focus on one type of oppression or situation of oppression is to preclude another (Kincheloe, 2011). This participant highlights the risks of being seen as an ally of the LGBTQ social justice movement. Through this, they emphasise the oppression that exists in everyday life for queer individuals. While this person self-identifies as an ally, it does lead one to wonder whether or not they ever wore that shirt out in public again.

Consideration should thus be given to where those ideas, beliefs and cultural norms about LGBTQ individuals come from. The anger and fear described in the story above coming from the person who felt that the t-shirt was inappropriate could be considered irrational. However, fear is a complex emotion - it can vary in intensity and in quality depending on the situation, it can manifest itself as a feeling of uncertainty and that danger (real or perceived) can strike without warning to threaten our social standing or position within a culture or environment (Zygmunt-Bauman as cited in Svendsen, 2008). I want to take a moment to consider where that fear may have emerged from and how it had been perpetuated. Modern attitudes toward the ‘sexual other’ (the ‘sexual other’ being anyone who is not heterosexual) have religious, legal, historical and medical underpinnings, and these have created the hegemonic culture of fear which educators have to navigate in order to drive change to an inclusive culture. Altman (1993, 2013) states that the earliest forms of hegemonic dominance over those who were considered sexually diverse was the church’s condemnation of homosexual acts (and other non-procreative sexual
behaviour) as ‘unnatural’. These were perpetuated through the writings of Thomas Aquinas and others from about the 12th Century onward. As society progressed, these religious teachings were incorporated into legal sanctions. An example of this is the institutionalising of colonial laws leading to colonies enforcing legal codes that enacted stiff criminal penalties for a wide variety of sexual acts that were non-procreative or non-Christian (specifically male-to-male relations). One might still see some of these sanctions in schools, amongst the rules stipulating that only heterosexual couples are able to attend the end-of-year ball. Altman (1993) claims that the fields of psychology and psychiatry also contributed to the alienation of the ‘sexual other’ by codifying it and seeing it as a problem to be solved. It was only in 1973 that ‘homosexuality’ was no longer diagnosed as a disorder and removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders used by psychologists across the globe. Yet there are still organisations that seek to ‘pray the gay away’, or where parents can send their children to be ‘cured’ of their gayness. The medical crisis of HIV/AIDS in the 1980’s and 1990’s saw gay men once again ‘othered’ and even worse, seen as diseased (Altman, 2013). With this brief and broad history in mind, some of the participants’ data begins to be understood.

Here I use sections from two different participants at different schools in order to illustrate how pervasive the impact of religion and the perceptions of religious strictures are on driving the school’s decisions and actions surrounding LGBTQ inclusion.

I just have a picture of one staff member at that curriculum meeting bringing up the subject of her concern – what will parents say? You know that was the big thing. Will we lose parent enrolment because we were... we have had issues with enrolment, and we’re trying to increase our enrolment. So that was a concern - that was raised very specifically, and particularly our Muslim Arabic parents – how will they respond? (Lakeview College: Participant 2 Head of Student Wellbeing)

... every now and then I’ll hear something [in the staff room] and go ‘wow!’, that’s very grounded in a Catholicism or an Anglicanism or something I can hear
there, and some of it’s not even in a bad way, it’s just man and woman, they create babies, on we go, that’s God’s work... whatever God’s work is, and all those kind of things. And I said, but the conversation is God made gay people too, and they can still have babies, they just do it differently, and like what’s that all about? That’s very hard for them to let go of. So really, it’s an in-ground belief. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5)

These statements not only point to religious concerns driving cultural hegemony, but also give an insight into the pressures that staff members feel to be cognisant of the parent body as a whole, as well as the tension that may exist within staff who are themselves members of religious orders whose doctrine does not allow for a more robust discussion of LGBTQ issues and concerns. Even in our current, contemporary Will and Grace, Queer Eye for the Straight guy, Ellen environment, the discourse is, as Garbacik (2013) contends, still a predominantly heteronormative one and same sex attraction or gender diversity is a deviation from the norm, perceived as something seeking to upset traditional binary gender roles in the workplace and politics.

I will conclude this section with part of the conversation that I had with a participant from Greenwich Secondary who spoke to the importance of working slowly and cautiously, but not being afraid of the opposition and fear that exists in this space:

“It’s difficult because... you have to... well... because parents could be quite uncomfortable with it. So you’ve got to be quite strong to say this is something that we really think is important, and we’re prepared to take a stand on it. ... if you’re taking a step [towards LGBTQ inclusion] from a community that hides... well it doesn’t hide it, but avoids the issue or is blinkered, then to open that up you have to go through that process of opposition or confusion or all that messy stuff that happens when people are alarmed about accepting something (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 4)
By simply being consumers of culture, rather than producers of culture (particularly evident in a capitalist system), Adorno (1973) argues that we willingly perpetuate and reproduce the alienation and oppression that exists. It can be argued that for the parents, school leaders, and students to create an ‘authentic culture’, that is inclusive of all members of its community, they should strive to resist the urge to merely accept and go along with prescribed norms and age old views. These stakeholders need to understand the need for the school to ‘be quite strong’ and why it needs to ‘take a stand on’ LGBTQ issues and inclusion.

LGBTQ students and staff who are at a school that has a heteronormative environment often face difficult experiences, as described in a review of the literature in Chapter Two. For LGBTQ individuals, heteronormative schools reinforce the culture of conformity and standardisation (Darder et al., 2009). If leaders at schools consider it rational and reasonable to strive for conformity and standardisation, then when they encounter difference, individuality and ‘otherness’ (such as in the case of LGBTQ individuals), resentment or resistance to that queerness could be manifested. This resentment emerges through preconceived, historical notions, and unconscious envy and jealousy of the outsiders whom they might perceive as being granted or seeking special privileges. They are seen to have their own collective traditions and cohesion that clash with the expected standard (Bronner, 2011; Thompson, 2013a). Thompson (2013a) points out that the rise of authoritarianism is often seen as the reaction to this clash. This further enables and emboldens the deep desires and fear that allows for a transfer of blame to ‘the other’. It is important to recognise that there is both a fear and an opportunity brought about by the ability to question and critique ideas, such as heteronormativity and the patriarchy, or to reconstruct the social politics that exist. For some people, this is a challenge, while others may see it as an opportunity for improvement.

This sub-section has considered the heteronormative environment and culture that exist within our society and our school spaces. It could be linked to the work in Chapter 5 on Culture, but it was an important element and theme that emerged when individuals spoke about their hesitancy for driving change, or that they had heard discussed by others. One of the ways in which that
culture of misunderstanding or heteronormative thinking is broken down is through education, but as the next section points out, an individual’s perception of their own knowledge on this topic is a barrier in and of itself.

**Fear of lack of knowledge and understanding**

In addition to the cultural and historically dominant ideas of the ‘fear of the sexual other’ within schools, the subject of LGBTQ sexuality and gender identity remains controversial. The fear of addressing the issues related to LGBTQ identity is often due to the flawed link society and educators make between sex and sexuality. In a discussion with one of the participants, this confusion between sex and sexuality emerged;

> [Having a conversation in a classroom about] ... *sexual orientation in any format* is just taboo. *Is it just the one you don’t talk about? I don’t know. Like I don’t know what the solution is. Hence the silence isn’t it? Like I get why some people don’t want to talk to children or young people about sexual matters, I understand that...* You know *is this about a right to privacy even for the educator? Like I’m not really sure that somebody who’s an English language teacher might... why do they have to go there?* (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5, Staff Member)

As can be seen above, she begins by talking about sexual orientation and then very quickly moves into a fear of discussing sexual matters. While both of these topics may be new to staff and schools, this statement clearly speaks to the need for better and more robust discussion and professional development to understand these issues. The point being that many teachers feel that if they are discussing being gay or lesbian, they are moving into a discussion around sex rather than thinking about it as a discussion about different ways of understanding sexuality in humans (Jeffrey D Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2013). Adding to that anxiety and fear are the ideas of Queer Theorists which are creeping into student discourse and professional development sessions and which contend that sexual orientation and gender are concepts that are flexible and flowing, rather than static and fixed binary notions (Cohen, 2013; Jagose, 1996). The problem is
therefore compounded, as ‘most pre-service and in-service teachers are woefully undereducated and underprepared by traditional teacher education programs to deal with educational issues related to sexual orientation [and gender diversity]’ (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2013, p. 74).

It is worth considering the statement by the Head of Student Wellbeing at Lakeview College regarding asking a staff member in Health and PE to conduct classes using external resources.

*And the guy that was leading health and PE at the time said, I don’t feel comfortable – not that he wouldn’t, but that he felt that he hadn’t been trained, and so didn’t feel confident perhaps to talk to kids about gender issues, about sexuality issues. So he said I’ll talk about hetero sex because it’s in the book you know, and that’s what they’ve always done, but the thought I think of fielding questions outside that very mainstream – he didn’t feel confident, and he said we’ve not been trained. So, I said, oh okay, so I took that onboard, and I think I was feeling my way at the time. (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)*

While this school did succeed in implementing a strong professional development program, there was an initial fear that existed in getting the lessons wrong and the terminology wrong and this exacerbated the institutional silence around this issue. Some of the reasons this participant gave for her inaction were her concern over parental reaction, particularly very religious ones, the need to get the curriculum committee ‘on board’, her lack of confidence in taking up the charge, and in her own knowledge of the issues. It is important therefore to add to the statement by Zacko-Smith (2013) used above, in saying that it is clearly not just the pre-service teachers who feel underprepared to deal with these issues, but also those teachers and school leaders like the ones participating in this study and described in the scenario above, who feel unable and therefore unwilling to get fully engaged in these sorts of discussions.

One of the participants who had multiple post-graduate degrees and experience, pointed to the fact that this lack of education around LGBTQ issues starts at the University level and the professional training stages:
That’s a huge gap in possibly lots of ... and in fact, I was at a [professional development] the other day for leadership, and it’s exactly what we identified, that there was a really big gap in the courses and subjects that are on offer through Honours or Master’s or Dip Eds or whatever it is that you’re doing in Victoria and Australia, across the world – I don’t know, but certainly for me, I know that I can identify with the fact that there was very little on wellbeing, and particularly then you know going into whether it be transgender or whatever it is, yeah that was taught from the pastoral care... just generally pastoral care. If you just put it in a pastoral care context, there’s very little. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 7)

It is the combination of these engrained cultural, political, and religious views that contribute to the creation of a climate and school culture that inhibits change and transformation from taking place. The fears of the principal of rocking the boat, or the concerns about not having the complete understanding of all the issues, or the perceptions of a straight man actively challenging the heteronormative stereotypes, are all different examples of the way in which individuals are subconsciously programmed to perpetuate the status quo.

Felluga (2015) points to the fact that in order to acquire knowledge and process information, one needs to consider linguistic, ideological and cultural structures that constitute the world around us. When the situation is described above, the lack of knowledge points to a culture and environment that lacks the necessary tools and ability to properly begin to engage in LGBTQ issues and thus just perpetuates old stereotypes or the heteronormative environment described in the sub-section above. There is understanding that all knowledge is created within a context and that this context creates and forms the human experience (Darder et al., 2009). Once those individuals and participants in the study felt that they had knowledge and that they understood the issues concerned, they were able to build the relationships necessary in order to drive and facilitate change.
This section has considered how different forms of fear can hamper and constrain change that is focused on LGBTQ individuals in order to make a school more inclusive. Fear of initiating the change, fear of the LGBTQ ‘other’ and lack of knowledge have been themes that emerged from the data that obstructed the change process at the schools. The next section is linked to this one, in so far as it contemplates who is best able to drive change while considering the fear of LGBTQ individuals if straight people are seen at the helm, juxtaposed by the fear of non-queer people if there is an LGBTQ person driving the agenda.

Permission to drive the change process

A very interesting discussion theme emerged with participants around the idea of whether effective LGBTQ change could be driven by school leaders who were out and openly same-sex attracted or gender diverse. I have three sub-sections wherein there is space for the Non-LGBTQ voice and then the LGBTQ voice and perspective on driving change. In both sub-sections, the answers point to a significant hurdle for any prospective change process. The final sub-section considers the idea of the non-threatening queer person leading the process and contemplates this as a barrier to change from a critical theory perspective.

Non-LGBTQ perspective

I was challenged by the perspectives of self-identified non-LGBTQ individuals when it came to stating their views on who is best suited to drive LGBTQ change within school spaces. The sentiments seemed to validate Freire’s (1996) ideas of the oppressor (in this case heterosexual staff and parents) feeling too confronted when seeing the oppressed rise up. I have used the views of the school principal in this section to emphasise the point that the status quo is maintained through people in positions of power. The participant stated that:

[There needs to be a] combination of different personalities [leading the change process]... Because I think it would be a lot harder to implement if it was a group of gay teachers who wanted to run it themselves. That would be ... for me, that would be a far greater challenge as principal – how would I manage that? And
I don’t think you would be as successful…. there’d be some person that would assume that [LGBTQ individuals working for their own self-interest] was the reason [this was being done], and there probably may be parents who would be concerned about it too – hysteria mongering – what is the real reason for doing this and all that sort of nonsense? (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

The principal is clearly understanding the situation from his own unique position of power and privilege. The position of the other heterosexual members of the community also appear to sit in a position of privilege as regards to being given thought to how they might react to seeing a LGBTQ person driving this change. Consider this quote from the perspective of how critical theorists might frame the power that the Principal ascribes to the oppressors, and the victimhood they place on the LGBTQ folks. In this quote, the Principal contends that the assumption that drives his thinking is that LGBTQ individuals would not be effective change leaders and would not be able to transform the oppressive conditions that exist. We could consider this in terms of power and the power of the non-LGBTQ individuals (oppressors), who would maintain their grip on how and when to enter into transforming the school space.

It is also interesting to note that when the Principal did begin to support the transformation process, he indicated his circumspection as being seen as too vocal a supporter early on when describing the LGBTQ support group he said:

‘It wasn’t a public group, it was a quiet group, so I never actually formally went to the group but I knew of its existence.’ (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

It could be claimed that the principal conforms to the critical theory lens that considers power. Initially he appears to subconsciously seek to maintain privilege and not be too connected to the process. He appears to consider his own understanding of who should drive the change and how he should be seen as a supporter (Felluga, 2015). Understanding the motivations of those people in positions of privilege is important. The reasons for action might differ, but an important role
for those who are striving to lead change is to point out the oppression that exists and to help free those who have simply accepted the status quo (Kincheloe et al., 2011).

**LGBTQ perspective**

One of the participants at Greenwich Secondary, a self-identified bisexual person, makes a similar point to the Lakeview Principal:

> I think that goes back to the fact that I think it’s easier if you’re going to talk about same sex, transgender, bisexual, whatever, it’s easier to be led by a straight person. It’s really sad. But I think there is a point in that. I don’t know that... the staff here would have been very... would have been accepting in the main, but I don’t know whether you would have brought the whole parent body with you... I think it was probably easier being pushed by straight teachers than gay teachers. I think the community generally would have been more suspicious then. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing)

The participant from Greenwich Secondary claims that ‘it is really sad’, and I am sure many LGBTQ individuals would concur. There is a frustration that exists when thinking about how LGBTQ individuals have to find a non-LGBTQ person to ‘legitimise’ their actions, or their desire to transform a space into one that is more inclusive. Felluga (2015) would argue that human social interaction is based on power, and that humans seek to escape from oppression and hegemonic structures in order to change society and their environment for the better. There was a theme running through the data that the escape from those hegemonic structures, was only possible with allies and a concern if it was led by LGBTQ teachers. Critical theorists would point to this as a manner in which minority groups are oppressed and how privilege is maintained through power relations and hegemony (Felluga, 2015; Lincoln et al., 2011; Storey, 2006).

While the participant above spoke to those in positions of power dictating who could and could not speak or lead in the school, one of the self-identified queer participants at Lakeview College spoke to a different concern. This participant described this fear of freedom as such:
We’re just so time poor. It sounds like a terrible excuse, and I actually have quite a lot of guilt about not starting something sooner... particularly [because] I’m... you know, I’m queer myself, and I’m out at school with staff and students...

(Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)

Her internal struggle seems clear and that tension between wanting to start something exciting and to become an activist teacher has been tempered by factors such as a ‘busy school’, ‘no time’ or perhaps even her perspective on the success in leading the charge. In a section above, the ‘fear of freedom’ was discussed (Freire, 1996) and it could be linked to this data as well. In this case the desire for freedom from oppression, liberation and transformation (Bronner, 2011).

There is also something very important in the statement above, where the participant is indicating that she had wanted to do something for a very long time, ‘particularly because I am queer myself’. Freire (1996) describes ‘freedom’ as the ‘indispensable condition for the quest for human completion’ and he maintains that it must be acquired by ‘conquest not by gift’ (p. 29). Consider the statement above in terms of the fear in one who has been oppressed, and their need to examine and contemplate the risks they are prepared to take in seeking to struggle for freedom and to transform a space by ‘conquest’. Young (2009) might point to the feeling of powerlessness that is indicated in the statement, while Freire (1996) might argue that there has been a sense of self-deprecation in this individual who sees themselves as less than, based on the views of the oppressor. In either case, it speaks to another obstacle when seeking to drive LGBTQ change in schools.

The ‘Non-threatening Queer’ perspective

I want to conclude this section with a short examination of data that I feel is important to the conversation about who gets to lead change in a school. It also links to critical theorists perspectives of how the oppressed are viewed by those in positions of power. The quote comes from a different part of the conversation that was had by Participant 3 at Greenwich Secondary:
I also think it was useful here because... maybe I had the persona of a straight
guy, or people assumed I was straight... no-one ever asked me actually, then it
was easier in some ways to introduce policies around health ed and so on, which
is interesting. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student
Wellbeing)

This statement speaks to how those in positions of power will support or hear those struggling
for recognition if they conform, look or act just like those in power. Freire (1996) notes that it is
imperative that when working for transformation it is important to consider the individuals who
are oppressed as a whole, and not how we might want to see them act, walk, talk or behave. All
the work needs to be with and through those who are truly in solidarity with those oppressed,
that is, their allies (Freire, 1996).

In this thesis many of the participants describe themselves as LGBTQ-allies and as being in
solidarity with their LGBTQ students and colleagues. Throughout the postal vote in Australia, as
described in the literature review chapter, there were many who saw themselves as allies to the
LGBTQ community. Freire considers and cautions parties about this important and intricate role:

‘...true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform
the objective reality which has made them these “beings for another.” The
oppressor is in solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the
oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been
unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of a labour -
when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks
an act of love’ (Freire, 1996, p. 31).

This is a complex notion as it requires a non-paternalistic or condescending role to be played by
the ally. They cannot expect the oppressed to ‘take on the persona of a straight guy’ in order to
help drive the change. They have to ally with the oppressed as they are and as they identify. As
is pointed out above, there must be a true engagement and understanding in the drive to resist
the oppression.
This section has considered the barrier that arises when the environment of a school determines who is ‘allowed’ to drive change. The data indicates that there is still a fear of LGBTQ individuals being at the forefront. While true LGBTQ allies exist and ally well with those who have been marginalised, this data is of concern. It speaks to the fears that exist and that have been described earlier in the chapter. It speaks to the fear of the ‘sexual other’ and their ‘agenda’, it is based on the expectations of a heteronormative teaching space and is based on the lack of knowledge and understanding of those in power.

This section concludes the specific roadblocks and barriers to change that the data has indicated are linked to the LGBTQ experience or issues. The next section highlights the barriers that are more general in nature and that hamper many different change processes.

**Organisational barriers and resistance to change**

The first two sections in this chapter focused on the individual and the LGBTQ issues, concerns, and heteronormative perspectives that may inhibit action at a school. They considered the barriers to change that participants identified when wanting to initiate a LGBTQ change process, as well as those barriers and obstacles that emerge from cultural fears, LGBTQ fear of emancipation, and the fears surrounding personal lack of knowledge or understanding. This final section focuses on the organisational challenges that exist when trying to introduce something new or when trying to drive and embed change in an environment.

Organizational change experts describe several different reasons why people may resist change in the workplace. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) note that the Gramscian notion of hegemony insists that winning popular consent is multifaceted and requires different approaches that consider the social-psychological and physical aspects at work in an environment. This section interprets the data that the participants provided which indicated their resistance to, or the barriers to the LGBTQ change process at their schools. It does so with the understanding, as described by Freire (1996) that those who are oppressors often hesitate or resist change for a
number of reasons and the oppressed will inhabit the status quo as a means to stay safe or as a result of the oppressor consciousness that exists.

This section examines the resistance that emerged in the organisation, but which participants indicated was not directly related to the LGBTQ element of the work. Some of these barriers could be found in any change process that a school or organisation seeks to undertake. I have used the critical theory framework to understand and analyse the data, but I have incorporated the research of organisational change experts to assist in understanding the barriers. The themes that emerged from this data were that resistance to change stems from individuals who act in their own self-interest, a misunderstanding and mistrust of the potential benefits for change, individuals having change fatigue, and an ever-increasing burden on resources. I will consider each of these situations below and link them to the data that participants have shared.

**Self-Interest**

In considering self-interest as a theme that emerged as a resistor to change, I was particularly struck by an interview with a participant at Greenwich Secondary, who felt very strongly that the change that was being driven at the school was constantly forcing staff to have to work out new ways to teach and fit in to the changing school culture and that this state of flux contributes to some staff resisting to protect their personal ways of doing things:

*Like I almost feel like if you look at schools as this living, breathing organism, there’s always something that comes up as a ... and I don’t necessarily mean there’s a shadow to it, but there’s an opposition. There’s something that always comes up that we have to go – okay, so how do we refine our practice now? Where do we fit? And if we are genuinely moving into the 21st Century as knowledge building communities and learning communities that are inclusive and open to all, we have to keep doing that don’t we? (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5)*
The observation starts off with an interesting point about the changing and organic nature of some school environments, but quickly moves to question the need to continually change her own teaching practices. I have interpreted the question, ‘...we have to keep doing that don’t we?’ as an indicator of her personal resistance to this change and her need for assurance that perhaps she does not have to change. She goes on later in the interview to once again come back to the idea of change and the implementation of new ideas that link to the idea that self-interest drives to change;

Reinvention for what? Another layer of facade? Because some of it is that, because there is that chunk out there that looks like we’re doing these next pillars of whatever’s coming up, but behind the scenes there’s just a lot of people doing a lot of the same thing that they did back then you know... It’s another form of it’s just the newness. So, you’re either going to reinvent and come with us, or you’re going to do this you know... you’re going to stay silent
(Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5, Staff Member)

She once again highlights the needs for schools to change and ‘reinvent’ themselves, but then goes further in that she calls it a ‘façade’. Importantly she also highlights the fact that many of staff appear to just be doing the same things that they have always done, in other words, resist the change. She makes the point that that resistance is often silent, and that by staying silent the staff simply continue their old ways and habits as a way to resist ‘newness’ and to preserve their own practices.

Fulluga (2015) and Gramsci (2014) describe how individuals seek to maintain their own positions of power and the ways in which those in power embed that hegemonic structure through economic, political and structural means. People believe that they will lose something because of any change that takes place. They choose to focus on their own self-interest rather than the benefits to the total organization (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). In these cases, the individual often chooses to ‘play politics’ and tries to undermine the change efforts in a subtle and carefully orchestrated manner in order to protect their current position (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Even
for positive changes such as the one being described here, people will concentrate on what they will be losing, rather than what they could be gaining (Blanchard, 1992).

**Intolerant perspectives and understandings**

Opposition to transformation may occur when individuals have a different view of the issue. This is particularly important in the work that is being done around LGBTQ change as there are a variety of different religious, social and political views and values that surround this topic. One statement made by the participant at Greenwich College was particularly thought provoking and useful to consider:

*Is diversity somebody’s civil rights movement? Is it somebody else’s ‘I want to fly the flag’, and I want to do this, and I want to publicly say these things, or are we genuinely not setting up the right pathways for these kids to get help? ... maybe we have to be actually quite critical about what we have set up and whether those needs are being met because while the child is out here doing their hormone therapy replacements, and having those conversations with surgeons about that part of the procedure, this child is so involved in that plus the emotional fallout of that, what’s happened to quality learning because that got lost somewhere? So, what did we do as educators for this particular case, we turned a spotlight here, but nobody focused [there]. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5 Staff Member)*

The participants start off wondering about the motivations and purpose of incorporating LGBTQ change at schools. There is a dismissal of the situation as just ‘somebody’s civil rights movement’ and an opportunity to ‘fly the flag’, and a vastly different perspective on whether or not the school should be involved in focusing on issues such as gender diversity. This interview was clearly a very confronting one for me as the researcher, as the participant spent a lot of time making statements that directly challenged the validity of gender identity, and seemed to feel that there is a tension between the school’s obligations to focus on helping the student, and their obligation to step in to question that person’s identity and medical decisions. The phrase ‘nobody
turned a spotlight there’ in the final part of the quote, refers to the expectation that teachers highlight the dangers, concerns or problems with gender confirmation surgery, instead of just going along with it through an inclusive LGBTQ understanding at schools. While this is a hugely problematic statement, it does point to a key element of change in an organisation – that being, what if the stakeholders just don’t believe in it?

Research indicates that there is often a difference in the way those initiating and driving the change see a situation and the way those on whom the change is being imposed see a situation (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). This diverse and differing assessment of a situation could be due to managers and leadership often feeling that they have all the relevant information and analysis, and those affected by the change feeling that they have more pertinent and different information due to their position ‘at the chalk face’ (Kotter, 2007; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). While using a critical theory lens might point to the importance of dialogue and praxis at this point to alleviate some of this resistance and stress, it is also a space to be entered into cautiously due to the repressive tolerance that might come to bear (Marcuse, 1968).

In this case the participant understood the issue of gender identity very differently to those who had been advocating for an inclusive environment and felt that the students needed help. While being able to express ideas and opinions is an important part of change and transformation, the tolerance of intolerance can paradoxically lead to a more oppressive space (Popper, 1945). Saulius (2013) points out there might be a temptation to consider someone as a tolerant individual if they consider others ‘needing help’ or ‘confused’, but they refrain from brutal, oppressive or violent action. Even though the teacher in this case holds a position of power as a member of the hegemonic group in charge, there is still an oppressor consciousness and moral superiority which pervades the space. Tolerance must be seen as conditional and those in positions of power must be aware of how the tolerant will only stay quiet for as long as those who are leading the change process are in place (Zaoui, 2008).
Resistance may be a good thing if those resisting have the better information but could lead to frustration on both sides in the long term if the information gap is not closed (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Fast and complex environmental changes in schools, like those described by this participant, which do not allow a proper situation analysis, are overly tolerant. Poor internal politics may also have exacerbated this flow of information and therefore the resistance that the leaders of change may face (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003).

**Resource burden and fatigue**

The data indicates that the teachers in these schools operate under significant pressure and are often time poor. That pressure emerges from expectations of lesson plans, new teaching strategies, marking papers and the plethora of other requirements to fulfil the role. One concept that some might use to justify their lack of engagement with a change process at a school is that while some people relish the opportunity to learn new things, others are frightened by it (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). A poignant quote that might sum up this resistance to change due to it having been too much and the harkening back to an easier time was made by a participant at Greenwich Secondary, where she said;

*I know that they talk about the crowded curriculum. Every time we come up with a good idea, we add another thing on, and very rarely do things drop off. And we sort of ... whether we’re getting better at it... the whole world seems to have sped up with computers and so we’re doing things, we’re expecting things to happen more quickly, everything seems to get such a pace. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 6 Staff member)*

If the organisation requires too much change, or there is change fatigue, the people on whom the change is being imposed become emotionally unable to make the necessary transitions and choose to resist any further change programs (even if they realise that it may be a good change) (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Blanchard (1992) states that, “on a personal level, people who undergo too much change within too short a time will become dysfunctional, and in some
cases may become physically sick” and he emphasises the importance of not piling on change after change in order to help those who have low tolerance for the process of change.

There is also a perception that change takes time and effort and may result in increased burden on the resources, even if it may have the long-term effect of reducing workload (Kotter, 2007). I was particularly struck by one of the participants at Lakeview College who had initially driven the change process and expressed her excitement and enthusiasm for the progress that had been made, but later in the interview admitted that it was difficult to maintain the momentum and drive. She echoed what other participants indicated regarding the pressures of time on a teacher’s energy and ability to engage in a process:

I suffer a lot of guilt about these things. I start going with it and I think, oh I’m not doing enough, I’m not doing enough, but it’s just recently I’ve thought no, it’s reasonable to run a project and put an enormous amount of effort into it, but it’s not realistic to think you can keep that level of input. You just can’t because other things come along. (Lakeview College: Participant 2 Head of Student Wellbeing)

One of her colleagues confirmed that pressure to start things and to drive the process in an environment that is often very time poor:

…and it’s just schools are just so crazy, they’re just such mad places. We’re just so time poor. It sounds like a terrible excuse, and I actually have quite a lot of guilt about not starting something sooner (Lakeview College: Participant 3 GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)

Kotter (2007) states that individuals see change that may bring success to one area of the organization may require sacrifice in other areas, but the change managers do not provide for this sacrifice. The resistance arises due to the view that the change being implemented is being obtained without change of other pressures and factors, resulting in low motivation to change (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003).
Lack of trust

A lack of trust in the process, the people driving the process, and the end result was a theme that emerged. Ideas of incorporating sexuality and gender discussions in a school certainly do confront some staff and members of the community. The lack of trust in a LGBTQ inclusion process might be seen through a critical theory lens as the desire to use a position of power to abstain from getting involved or participating, as it provides a sense of control over the narrative (McLaren, 2009). It could also be considered through the idea of repressive tolerance (Marcuse, 1968).

As has been pointed out in the section above there is a fear that surrounds not only the topic but also the individual’s own knowledge of gender and sexuality. One of the dangers that school leaders run into is that resistance starts to build up due to be individuals not fully understanding the benefits of this sort of change in the school.

*But be mindful of where’s the line when we let an educator make a choice about what they want to be involved in and what they don’t want to be involved in? ... Do I have the right to say that you have to emotionally do something or psychologically do something that you might not be comfortable with? And I don’t even think it’s about comfortability. I think it’s just a not knowing... and not knowing is a frightening terrain for those that have been doing something for a long time (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 5, Staff Member)*

There is a fear indicated in this data that stems from the ability of staff to speak back to those in positions of power and to express their own feelings and values. By simply tolerating the change or the new initiative, without seeking to understand it, Marcuse (1968) argues leads to repressive tolerance, in that individuals will stay quiet as long as they are told to, but no longer. This fear of confronting the issues, links to the importance of open and honest dialogue (Darder et al., 2009; Freire, 1996). Without understanding and being open to all points of view, both the staff and the principal class are missing an opportunity to chart a course through this process which incorporates both parties.
If people do not understand the implications of the change or the process that is going to take place, they may assume that it is going to cost them more than they will gain. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), make the point that this misunderstanding of the benefits and lack of trust in the process is another one of reasons that will lead to the resistance. The resistance is amplified when the person does not trust the leader or change manager and where there is a poor working relationship between them. Principals and school leaders should be careful to explain and discuss the change process clearly and openly allowing workers the time to question and understand the benefits clearly.

This section of the Chapter has examined the themes that emerged from the data that pointed to individuals concerns and resistance to being part of a change and transformation process. While they don’t directly reference or link to the LGBTQ issues, they are common resistance strategies that organisations see enacted. Understanding the variety of different factors at play in an education environment, particularly in respect to LGBTQ issues and how people enact their resistance to these, is complicated. Without an understanding of many ways in which resistance to change might happen or be enacted, even the best ideas and intentions will not take hold within a school culture (Fullan et al., 2005).

**Conclusion**

There are confronting issues when considering LGBTQ inclusivity, which are based on social, cultural, inter-personal, internal and historical issues. Many of these provide a unique challenge to school leaders because ‘unlike structural change that can be mandated, cultural change requires altering long-held assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that represent the norm for people in the organisation’ (DuFour & Fullan, 2012, p. 2).

This chapter has analysed the data in three parts, namely; fear of engaging in LGBTQ issues, permissions to drive and lead the change process and organisational barriers to change. While those three different sections allow for a more focused and detailed examination of the data, it
is clear that fear of change and resistance to change is the overarching factor that constrains any inclusive LGBTQ inclusive teaching practice at schools. That fear of change could come from LGBTQ individuals themselves, from those wanting to lead the change or from the self-interest, frustration, or change fatigue of those on whom the expectation for LGBTQ inclusive teaching is placed.

This research in this chapter correlates with the factors that critical theorists might point to with regards to how hegemonic spaces maintain the status quo and dominant, oppressor consciousness. It also highlights issues such as the fear that LGBTQ individuals experience when wanting to lead and drive change that enables them to become more complete and self-actualised beings (Freire, 1996). There is an emphasis on how those in positions of power hesitate when confronted with the opportunity to help those being oppressed (Freire, 1996; McLaren, 2009). This chapter points to the fear that exists in the possibility of a change of status of those in power, and how self-interest and other excuses for resistance can be used that are not necessarily linked to LGBTQ individuals, but which critical theorists might point to being just another way that individuals hold on to their dominant and hegemonic positions.

The data highlighted an interesting perspective on who the participants considered worthy or important in driving and leading the change process. Using critical theory, and the ideas of Freire (1996) in particular, points to the importance of the oppressed being their own saviours and being the drivers of change. The data indicated that the participants, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, felt that it was important for the leaders of change to be non-LGBTQ (or at the very least, a non-threatening queer person). This is a problematic finding and one that needs to be further explored. At its heart, this finding speaks to how non-LGBTQ people need to ally with those who are oppressed and how there is still work to be done to allow the oppressed to be the instigators of their own freedom.

As has been analysed in this chapter, people avoid and resist change and are fearful of including LGBTQ change into the school space. However, in the end, it doesn’t really matter why people
are dragging their feet, the resistance and the fear of change may cause the project to become unviable and fail. There is of course the prospect of choosing to view the resistance and fear of change as an opportunity to strengthen operational outcomes and to correct personal biases. This point is well made in the quote below:

‘Resistance, properly understood as feedback, can be an important resource in improving the quality and clarity of the objectives and strategies at the heart of a change proposal. And, properly used, it can enhance the prospects for successful implementation’ (Ford & Ford, 2009)

Resistance and the fears associated with change can be seen as a positive influence on the process and is the focus of the next chapter on the enabling factors of change. What cannot be in dispute however is that this change is something that needs to happen and should be happening in schools. The critical theory philosophers point out that it is up to all of us to focus on not merely how things are, but how they might and could be.

Getting to that position of where we want to be and considering the opportunities for the future takes courage (Bronner, 2011). This requires that people gain the courage to overcome their fears and to challenge the resistance to change in their organisations. It is my contention and view that if we can overcome our reluctance to be activist teachers and agents for change then we are able to grow in our own voice, and sometimes able to do incredible things not only for others, but for ourselves as well.
Chapter 8 - Enabling LGBTQ Change

Introduction

This chapter examines what prompted school leaders, principals and teachers to move through some of the barriers that were identified in the previous chapter. It will look at the reasons that the participants articulated for their involvement in the LGBTQ inclusion and change process. The chapter will seek to understand how people moved from their ‘frozen in fear' and ‘blocked by barriers' positions described in the previous chapter, to examine how they started to achieve practical goals for social transformation. This chapter analyses how participants highlighted their understanding of the change that happened and how it was enabled. These perspectives are analysed using the critical theory concepts of dialogue, leadership, praxis and care. These are used to explain how the educational organisation was affected and subsequently changed. I have grouped the data that emerged as enabling change into five broad themes which will be described and discussed below. While recognising the intensely personal and complex drives that prompt ‘activist’ teachers and leaders, the five broad themes that will be covered in the sections below look at; the need to provide care, contact with LGBTQ individuals, finding and seeing support in the environment, visible leadership, and developing knowledge.

The need to provide care

One of the most prevalent drivers of change that the participants would often reference, related to the need to get involved due to an established relationship that exists or due to an altruistic need to care for those they have identified may be struggling. One of the beliefs explored in critical theory is that human beings strive to become self-actualised or to be on a road to understanding themselves and the human condition (Freire, 1996; Greene, 2009). The way that humans do that is through our care of and for other people, and for this section I am going to draw upon the ideas of care theory by Greene (2009), Noddings (1988) and Tronto (2010) to understand how relationships have driven the process forward.
There are two interview responses that I want to highlight for this section and, in both cases, the participants told stories about situations that arose where their desire to care for and comfort individuals was the catalyst to driving their action and enabling them to engage in LGBTQ change at the school. The first piece of data concerns the participant’s experience with a young student at the school. This participant is affected not only by the young person's feelings of oppression and exclusion, but also because they know this person, and they can see the hurt and pain that the LGBTQ discrimination is causing;

... we had one boy who came and said, ‘I am sick of being bullied', and [he described] what had happened to him... I don't think he was out as such, but kids said things to him you know, and he was a brilliant, he is a brilliant kid... he was out in public with everything he did... but he had said that comments were made...he'd had this experience where ... kids made comments to him – ‘are you gay?’ They would ask him questions like that, and then he had a project from memory that someone had written ‘gay’ on, and he felt really hurt by that sort of marking of his work. And I think at the time, from memory, he went to the principal and said I’m not happy about this. So, I think those two things I just wanted to make a difference. (Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)

An even more confronting example of why teachers and school leaders get moved to action, was provided by a participant from Greenwich Secondary. I have chosen to include the more extended version of this story as it is a sobering reminder that while this research may be about the wonderful things that schools and school leaders are doing, there are extremely sad real-world reasons for why this work is so important.

... there were two or three gay kids amongst them, including a beautiful boy who had been tossed out of home. He’s the only kid I’ve ever known who’s been forced to undergo an exorcism because his parents believed he was ...possessed by a devil. That would have been... he only finished here in about 2002. They came from [another state in Australia]... and yeah... I mean his father broke
both his arms too. So, he ended up on the streets of Adelaide and then the streets in Melbourne. His saving grace was... he wasn't interested in drugs at all, never, and so he ended up on the streets of Melbourne, ended up in the refuge, the refuge rang me, and we took him here into Year 10, and he thrived, and it was just interesting. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing)

Both of these participants and many of the others interviewed were driven to action through concern for their friends, students, or colleagues. They perceived that an injustice had occurred or was occurring, and they sought to take proactive steps in trying to help someone in need. The interview responses show how teachers, can take action to strive for our completeness (Freire, 1996; Greene, 2009). Both Greene (2009) and Noddings (1988) make the critical point that striving to nurture or care for people through the use of dialogue and inclusive practices, opens up the public space and recognises the oppression, marginalisation and exploitation that occurs.

We can begin to analyse their actions by incorporating the ideas of care theory, which broadly considers the human obligation to do something and our sense that we must do something when others call for our help (Noddings, 1988; Tronto, 2010). Providing care and support for someone in need, as these two individual students were, is multifaceted and complex. Tronto (2010) contends that the nature of care that can be provided by caring institutions and individuals could be considered to consist of four components. First, to recognise the need for care (‘caring about’), second, by deciding to address or meet that need for care (‘caring’), third, to provide the care needed (‘caring for’) and finally, for the recipient of that care to receive it and evaluate its effect (‘care receiving’) (Tronto, 2010, p. 160).

The interview responses from these two participants can be used to illustrate three of those multifaceted phases of care that Tronto (2010) describes. In both of those examples cited, there is a recognition by the participants that someone needs care. Both of these school leaders decide to take action despite the heteronormative environment in which they are operating and the
social implications that may exist. Their actions focus on providing care for those LGBTQ individuals in need.

Schools where the focus is being a place of care, could be a confronting idea for teachers. Those challenges to care and fully support LGBTQ youth and these issues emerged as a theme for why teachers or school stakeholders might resist LGBTQ inclusive practice and were articulated in the previous chapter. The reticence in some staff to embrace the LGBTQ plight more fully perhaps stems from the complexity of the relationships that need to be created or which may emerge. Noddings (1988) states that the relational construction of care requires both subjective and objective elements. In any caring relationship, each person brings their subjective understanding of moral imperatives and different modes of behaviour, but there is also an objective component that helps to direct attention to an individual's choices or judgement to allow growth and developing agency (Noddings, 1988). Within the scope of this thesis, both the subjective and objective elements would presuppose support for the LGBTQ staff and students' predicament. As described in the previous chapter, in some cases this would be absent due to the cultural hegemony of religious or political views preventing teachers or fellow students from either wanting to build the relationship or from wanting further knowledge. The hesitance may also be due to a fear of seeing the LGBTQ individuals start to develop their own agency.

There is an important consideration that should be articulated about the idea of an ethical care relationship in schools and how that might drive an LGBTQ inclusive environment. Tronto (2010) warns that two dangers could emerge and that caregiving institutions should guard against; first, ‘paternalism’ (p. 161) where those who are providing the care assume or are assumed to be the most knowledgeable and to have a superior understanding of what is needed. Crossley (Crossley, 2005) supports this by stating that those in positions of power and dominance in an environment need to carefully consider how they exert that power and engage in relationship building so as not to keep perpetuating the oppressive systems in place. The second danger that Tronto (2010) states could emerge in spaces which individuals are seeking to transform to be more inclusive is the one of ‘parochialism’ (p. 161) where caregivers develop favourites and provide more care to
those whom they perceive as being more worthy recipients. By doing so, Tronto (2010) would suppose that the individuals providing care are not truly acting in the best interest of all of those who are being oppressed. Parochialism can also be linked to the section in the previous chapter which describes how some individuals would prefer a non-threatening queer person to be leading change, rather than those who might not be worthy of following or might be too confronting to listen to.

bell hooks (2014) provided an important touchstone in understanding how care is sometimes seen as being competitive and how it is often confusing to see it being enacted in a classroom or school situation. Greene (2009) states that as we strive for completeness, we do so through experiences of caring and being cared for. We have to begin to imagine better spaces, and we have to transform and repair the social order that exists due to the cultural hegemony in place (Greene, 2009). hooks wrote:

*Why do you feel that the regard I extended to a particular student cannot also be extended to you? Why do you think there is not enough love or care to go round?* (hooks, 2014, p. 199).

Care, compassion and relationship building is not a zero-sum game. The participants point to the impact it has on driving LGBTQ change processes throughout a school environment. It is an important emboldening factor and driver of change. The next section is going to further this understanding of the importance of relationships and connection, by examining the theme that emerged around the importance of just knowing or being in the same space as an LGBTQ person.

**Contact with LGBTQ individuals**

A second factor that appears to enable change and reduce LGBTQ prejudice and discrimination is contact and face-to-face interaction with someone who is LGBTQ. Crossley (2005) emphasizes the importance of the dominant group or those in positions of power, coming to understand why change and transformation in hegemonic spaces needs to occur. One of the ways that this happens is through intergroup contact between those who are LGBTQ (the oppressed) and those
who are not (oppressors). This contact and visibility can change minds and drive change according to the ‘contact hypothesis’ initially put forward by Gordon Allport and later extended by Thomas Pettigrew (Pettigrew, 1998).

One of the participants from Lakeview College discussed a young man taking his partner to a senior dance. At first, he describes the fact that this was a ‘super football player’, possibly confronting the stereotypical idea of ‘gayness’ that the interviewee had previously held. He then goes on to point out how confronting it was, but that once he (and presumably the other staff) saw that it was just two people who wanted to enjoy each other’s company and participate in an act of passage that all heterosexual couples get to enjoy, it eased the discomfort and became ‘normal’.

...[at a previous school] we had a boy in Year 12 who was the super football player, and he came out at the beginning of Year 12 and that just... for some kids it was... and for some staff even, they found that confronting, but anyway. But he was just so natural and comfortable with it all, and why not? He brought his boyfriend to the Year 12 formal, and it was normalised. (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)

This example used by the principal describing the gay football player bringing his date to the school formal, supports the importance of how an environment can be transformed when those people in positions of power see and better understand the motives of those who are not. Seeing the ‘normal’ nature of the relationship, the heterosexual in-group was forced to reconsider their position. This participant uses this example to illustrate how they adapted their perspective on LGBTQ relationships. Pettigrew (1998) might argue that this data is also an example of how learning about the young man’s sexuality and seeing how comfortable he appeared to be, corrected this participant's negative or uniformed view of LGBTQ individuals and reduced his prejudice.

The ‘contact hypothesis’ is an interesting touchstone to use in order to highlight the importance of connection and interaction as a way to promote transformation and change culture as per the
ideas of some critical theory writers. It is clear in the interview responses that I have collected that by having contact with open and out staff members or students, staff and school leaders were emboldened to speak out and take action. Pettigrew (1998) states that the contact hypothesis makes the point that intergroup contact (in this case between LGBTQ individuals and supporters with those who have previously not engaged with them or the issues) yield positive effects when four conditions are met. Those four conditions are; ‘equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom’ (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 66). I am particularly struck by the similarity that this has to the emphasis that Freire (1996) puts on the need for the oppressed and their allies to work together in an environment of open dialogue, cooperation, equality of position, and with an understanding leadership in order to inspire and maintain change in their environment. In considering the school sites and the interview participants in this research, it is clear that the change took place in an atmosphere where strong relationship bonds drove much of the critical thinking and that these are vital components to revolutionary pedagogy (Freire, 1996).

A different participant drew my attention to how his behaviour changed after he had attended professional development and had started to consider the number of LGBTQ students that might be in his classroom and on his sports teams. This participant reflected on his behaviour in a sporting context, and his understanding of his actions and those of other members of the clubs could have had a detrimental effect on LGBTQ people in those spaces. Not only does he regret his behaviour in the past, but he appears to be taking it upon himself to make sure that that does not happen in environments where he is active in the future.

... having taken a lot of sports you know you hear those [negative] connotations towards homosexuality and comments made, and you know I felt that our students needed to be made more aware that it’s not right, and sport should be an area that’s inclusive for all. (Lakeview College: Participant 4, Staff Member)

... look I played sport and I said things that I shouldn’t have said denigrating [homosexual] people because at the time I didn’t know any better and I didn’t
realise I was an immature person, and I said these things and I want to right that wrong and not have other generations of kids who love sport do what I did wrong. (Lakeview College: Participant 4, Staff Member)

Not only has learning about LGBTQ issues affected this participant’s views and required him to reappraise his understandings of their experiences in his classes, but it also appears to have shifted his behaviour. Contact theory contends that as one starts to experience these new situations, there is a conforming to new expectations (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). In this example, those new expectations involved accepting and promoting acceptance of LGBTQ students in the sporting environment and therefore changing his behaviour and attitudes accordingly. Pettigrew’s (1998) research shows that there are interrelated processes that mediate individual and group attitudes to change, these are: ‘learning about the out-group, changing behaviour, generating affective ties, and intergroup reappraisal’ (p. 70). This interview response above, indicates once again, how increasing knowledge about LGBTQ individuals and understanding the interconnectedness of your actions and LGBTQ oppression, are factors that can enable change in a school environment, and they can contribute to increasing LGBTQ inclusive practice.

The third example I would like to cite concerns a participant who was describing her partner’s reaction to having a transgender student in his class. Her partner worked at the same school as the participant and was previously described in the interview as being reticent to fully engage in all the LGBTQ processes and initiatives at the school. The participant had described how in the past her partner had been confronted by an experience of a family member being HIV+ and that while he was not against any of the school’s LGBTQ initiatives, he did not always feel ‘comfortable’, but was prepared to ‘toe the line’. Recently however there has been an indication of how the contact hypothesis and the processes involved in changing attitudes described above may be affecting him.

So there’s a.... there’s a girl who’s now a boy. Now [my partner] taught that person, and.... as the boy, and ... I’ve never ever taught him or her, [but he] was very good about it. So actually he’s changing, he is changing, it’s just slow, and
Anxiety and feelings of discomfort can be reactions to being in a situation where there are different identities, in this case the transgender student and the heteronormative, non-LGBTQ staff member. While these situations can spark negative reactions, Pettigrew (1998) argues that continued interaction generally appears to reduce anxiety (Pettigrew, 1998), which appears to be the situation described above. Pettigrew et al. (2011) remind us that if there are negative experiences in the intergroup contact, it could lead to increased anxiety and prejudice down the line (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Some of the ways that this is seen in the LGBTQ context is where so-called ‘flamboyant’ behaviours by queer individuals might be perceived as off-putting by straight men, and they thus stereotype all queer individuals. Conversely conversations that might be considered to celebrate toxic masculinity, might offend some queer individuals and impact the group dynamic.

An important point to bear in mind when considering contact theory is the need for contact to be maintained for a period of time. Extended intergroup contact is more effective in successfully reducing prejudice and discrimination over the long term (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011). It is important to note that both the individual’s response, as well as the culture of a space play vital roles in developing a more inclusive environment (Pettigrew, 1998). In fact, critics of contact hypothesis point to the importance of the influence of groups or society being underestimated. The group think and societal pressure often dominates eventual decision making, much in line with the ideas of cultural dominance and hegemony described in the theoretical framework (Gramsci, 2014; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Tredoux and Finchilescu (2007) argue that consideration should, therefore, be given to the idea that while there are positive results that come to the fore when individuals are able to connect and be in contact with each other, there is complexity involved when dealing with the interactions of groups of people all of who hold multiple identities and allegiances.
These first two sections have highlighted the importance of care, relationships and contact with LGBTQ individuals. As enablers of change and transformation in school spaces, the themes of care and contact have been explored using a critical theory lens. Important aspects of care theory and contact theory connect with the aim of this analysis and thesis. The next section puts the focus on how the data showed that external support could be an enabler of LGBTQ inclusive practice at schools.

**Finding and seeing support**

The third factor that the data indicates is enabling change in schools, is centred around the theme of support. The participants see and feel this support coming from three different areas. The first one that I will discuss below is finding and seeing support for LGBTQ inclusive practice from colleagues, peers and leadership. The second one that was prevalent in many of the interviews was the need for support from external organisations and how their support helped the process. The third, and possibly most interesting source of support, was that which came from the students at the school.

Within all of the participants' responses, there was a clear need to identify who was supporting whom and how that support helped them move forward. I am particularly interested in how these sources of support appeared to be used in order to address some of the issues that I have presented in the theoretical framework. Participants indicated that with support and collaboration from peers, students or authorities, they were able to resist feelings and situations of alienation, oppression and cultural hegemony. In many cases, it appears finding a support system drove the change process and led to a striving for a sense of enlightenment. This enabling factor of support, therefore, takes on an important focus when viewed in this light.

**Support from peers, colleagues and leadership**

The participants described recognition and support from friends and colleagues as an important step to starting or continuing the LGBTQ inclusion processes at the school. Two examples that may confirm this need for support from staff are provided below, and they speak to the points
raised above. It describes the scene that emerged at the first staff professional development session dealing with LGBTQ understandings.

...you heard people saying – yeah, this is what we want to do, not just one or two, but the majority of people saying – this is fantastic and so it's that whole business. It's almost like outing, isn't it? Everyone was able to put it out there. This is what I want to do and so you know there was that support for each other"

(Lakeview College: Participant 2, Head of Student Wellbeing)

This statement is telling in that there appears to have been an almost ‘silent majority’ of voices, who had not previously been allowed to express their belief in the actions. I was struck by the phrase ‘it’s almost like outing isn’t it?’ and I was amused by the idea of heterosexuals having to ‘out’ themselves as supporters and allies for the LGBTQ community. Felluga (2015) makes the point that critical theorists seek to question, consider, and be critical of all aspects of current society, including the interaction between individuals and groups, in order to understand ways to achieve a better reality. There is a power dynamic which comes into play when individuals who were thought to be part of the hegemony of a space, ‘out’ themselves as supporters and allies of the oppressed subaltern group.

A different way to see recognition affecting or confirming decisions was highlighted by a participant who spoke about the importance of being recognised by peers in the teaching community. His answer speaks once again to the ‘silent’ support that he initially did not expect to find, but then also the dawning realisation that others considered the work that they were doing to be important. When he looks back on the work they did, he described it as follows:

... and it just went from strength to strength, and then the [anti-discrimination organisation] got on board and it got bigger and bigger and it was recognised, and I think the staff saw it as – oh, this is bigger than we ever thought and we're getting some recognition out in the media, and the people from [anti-discrimination organisation] were just fabulous (Lakeview College: Participant 1, Principal)
This links to an idea by Nancy Fraser, in a book where she debates Axel Honneth, that ‘one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject’ (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 10). The interview participant indicates that there was a change in the thinking about LGBTQ inclusive practice, when those who were hesitant about support, saw other recognising them and their work.

The acts of recognition and support were motivating and enabling factors for the staff who were being asked in some cases to engage in a process with which they may not have felt particularly comfortable. Daniel Witthaus (2010) has spent many years providing professional development to staff and schools around issues of sexuality and gender identity, and he makes the important point that for many staff their overarching fear was what others around them would think if they challenged the school culture. The data collected in this thesis confirms that point and emphasises the notion that until staff feel supported by their own colleagues and the educational authorities, ‘coming out as allies for most will be a difficult option’ (Witthaus, 2010, p. 140)

I have used the data that has emerged and the theory that having one’s views and ideas seen and confirmed by other members of your community, enables one to strive for further action. The next sub-section will explore the need for external guidelines or expectations from education authorities to be drivers and enablers of LGBTQ inclusive change.

**Support from external organisations or legislation**

The participants identified another source of critical support as coming from external organisations, the Department of Education, legislation or other schools. Witthaus (2010) makes the analogy that clear policies and directives from educational authorities are akin to the starter's pistol at the beginning of the race. Without this signal of support, many schools would not begin to strive for LGBTQ inclusive practice (Witthaus, 2010). The signal of support could be seen through a critical theory lens in terms of the permission given by those in positions of power, to
begin to engage in the thinking, learning and active participation in the transformation of the school spaces.

The first and probably most important external organization that participants at both schools identified as being vital to professional development and the LGBTQ inclusion processes was the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria. The work of this organisation has, been a source of tension that exists within the school environment. The views and polemic that has been driven by conservative politicians and parents were laid out in Chapter 2, the Literature review. Consider some of the quotes below:

*I went to Safe Schools Victoria and did some Professional Development, and that really, I guess inspired me, and I felt very empowered after that - they’re just brilliant (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)*

*But the other thing I like about being a member of the Safe Schools Coalition is that if they send me an email with something that’s current, that’s easy to share with staff like a little YouTube clip or something, then I will share that with staff – I did that just recently... So yeah, so I’ve shared that with staff, and I shared it with the [LGBTQ support group] – they loved it. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 3, Student Services Coordinator)*

Both of these participants from the two different school sites highlight the idea that the Safe Schools Coalition was an important provider of information and resources. Both of the schools relied on their aid and guidance when there were issues of gender or sexuality on which they needed advice. The importance of this organization and others like it, that provide that initial platform for discussion and open dialogue cannot be understated. Using the critical theory framework, it is possible to emphasise that it is the understanding these power structures and hegemonic spaces, that could lead to change, through the empowerment of the oppressed (Darder et al., 2009; Lincoln et al., 2011). Bodies like school boards, legislative spaces and autonomous organisations like the SSCV, are important in that they are power structures that sit
outside the schools and bring perspectives, ideas and expectations that can be used to change school culture, empower leaders and enable change. Staff and students benefit from hearing about these issues by a third-party or an outside voice, one that does not come with the baggage of interpersonal school politics. In the previous chapter, I made the point that LGBTQ individuals who work at the schools and who attempt to initiate change are often seen as merely pushing their own private school social agenda. Through the use of an external organization, those fears are alleviated.

To further illustrate this point above, another important source of external support that was identified was documentation and legislation that already existed. Documents such as ‘Catching on Everywhere - Sexuality education program development for Victorian Schools' (Dyson, 2008), ‘Writing themselves in 3’ academic research done by Lyn Hillier (Hillier et al., 2010) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act ("Equal Opportunity Act," 2010), provided important Education department and legislative support for schools who wanted to be more proactive. One interesting comment came from the principal at Lakeview College who noted that while some schools avoid these issues and perceive those schools who are engaging in them to be socially progressive, that is not the case at all:

*I think I’ve read all the documentation and the government [papers] ... and well [the head of the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria] was quite clear, she said, you’re following government policy. So I had nothing to lose in terms of ultimately doing anything ... I wasn’t a maverick (Lakeview College: Participant 1)*

An interesting point that is made is the idea that there might have been something to lose. He also indicates his relief at not being perceived as a ‘maverick’ or someone who was doing something too socially progressive. Once he was assured of support from those in positions of power, he appears to have felt relief that the work that they were doing would be condoned.

The concept of power is once again an important touchstone in this section. Not only did the Principal see some of his power to drive this change emanating from the education authorities
and statutory bodies, but he was also able to then put the power of his position to use in driving that LGBTQ transformation process at the school. The final sub-section in this theme of support, considers the importance of students at the school as vocal supporters of the change process and thus enabling the LGBTQ inclusive work to continue and germinate.

Support from students at the school

One area of support that helped some of those in positions of leadership start to engage more actively was from the student body. This raises the idea of a student(s) as leader and driver of change. The support from students can be analysed similarly as that of the support from colleagues and staff in the sub-section above, but it is interesting to note that there is a distinct difference in the power relationships that exist between staff and student. Power often rests in relationships and some critical theorists would suggest that the power dynamic is based on a socio-political context within a particular time and space (McLaren, 2009). In this case, it is interesting to consider how the approval of the students in their care, was a driving factor for continued work.

Often the support came as a surprise, and the importance of the ‘student permission and encouragement’ was a key factor in many of their interviews.

*They were just fantastic, I can’t commend [the students] highly enough, they were brilliant, and they were all those typical type kids that possibly we thought may not get involved... very much your alpha male sporting types, but they were right into it, and straight away they could see that there was real benefit for them and their cohorts* (Lakeview College: Participant 4, Staff Member)

There was an element of surprise that staff members experienced when working with groups of students in their class who they had initially anticipated may not be welcoming of LGBTQ discussions or interactions. The staff leading these activities expressed a sense of relief and wonder at how accepting the students were of this new school initiative, and one gets the
impression that they were spurred on by what they had seen. That visible support from young people who were in their care provides incentive for further movement forward.

In considering the role that the students played in the process, it is also interesting to consider the idea put forward by Freire (1996) that they, the students, were the instigators and drivers of their own freedom. The participants describe how the students themselves could be the instigators of change if the leadership allow them to develop their agency:

..., it started off with a group of kids getting together and deciding that they wanted to you know establish a gay/straight alliance you know, and develop a group in that, and they call it the [LGBTQ support group] – we haven’t had a group like that for many years, ... It’s not about setting up the gay/straight alliance group, because the kids will do that, and if they feel that there’s a need they’ll say we need to do this. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)

I’d like to say that it had something to do with me, but it didn’t, but it was student pushed, it was pushed by the students. At that time, we had probably a dozen or so kids in Year 12, or going into Year 12 that year, who were very keen to march [in the Pride March] under an [Greenwich Secondary] banner. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 2, Ex-Head of Student Wellbeing)

Both of these statements illustrate how important the student voice is to staff members in a school environment. They also illustrate the point that leadership on these LGBTQ issues can emerge from the school students. There is an admission in the second quote that while this participant may have gotten some recognition for the LGBTQ work done at the school, a lot of it was actually reliant on the students and the way they pushed, pulled or chivvied the staff along the road to social justice and inclusion for all at their school. The staff and leadership must be open to this cajoling. School management must be open to dialogue and to being part of the power structures that allow for a change in the dominant discourses around LGBTQ inclusive work (Darder, 2009; hooks, 2014)
This section has analysed the theme of support for staff and school leadership when it comes to driving and embedding LGBTQ change within the schools. That support was one of the factors that was seen as a method to break through the hurdles and resistance to aid in facilitating this work. The next section builds on the support provided by staff, students and stakeholders, and moves to how the LGBTQ change was enabled through a shared understanding of where the school wanted to go and what the vision was.

Visible and vocal leadership

Visible and vocal leadership has been identified several times by the participants in the research as a key factor of the successful drive for LGBTQ inclusive practice. In Chapter 6, the theme of visible leadership was examined as a tool to address and confront cultural hegemonic practices or oppression. That chapter focused on the process of leading change and considering some of the steps that a leader may employ to enable or initiate a process of LGBTQ social justice in their environment. The section in this Chapter focuses on the ways the participants saw the leadership enable a more robust and engaged school community. It addresses the theme that emerged about the importance of leadership being seen to be active, consultative and vocal about the need for change and the direction of the change process.

Two participants in the research spoke about the importance that they had attached to seeing the principal of the school be a key supporter and driver of the LGBTQ inclusion process:

*I feel even more positive about working here since [the principal] came on-board a couple of years ago as principal, and really all of this stuff that’s happened with [LGBTI sports project] has happened because of [the principal’s] support. Yes, he’s been completely committed to the idea since day one* (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and Staff Member)

*I don’t think it would have worked if it hadn’t been [the principal] from the top strongly commending it, and coming on all the marches with us... I think the fact that we have a gay supportive school is [due to the principal] very much,
because he is receptive to being that... I think it’s a really important thing the leadership (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 6)

Both of these participants highlight the importance of the principal’s support and the need for them to be seen to be visibly engaged in the process. The work of critical theorist Paulo Freire (1996) would summarise these actions as those of a revolutionary leader who is acting dialogically. In other words, for a leader to be seen acting in real solidarity with those who are hoping to affect change, the leader must be seen to be humble, loving, trustworthy and courageous participants in the process (Freire, 1996). Anyone hoping to see themselves as allies and part of the change must be willing to be authenticated in their actions and reflections (praxis) by those for whom they are hoping to affect change. This is often too great a challenge for Principals and leadership teams who have been appointed to the position of dominance (Freire, 1996).

This visible and vocal leadership makes it clear where those in positions of power stand on these issues. It is important to remember that ‘official silence makes schools hostile places for sexual minority youth and any youth perceived to be a sexual minority’ (Mayo, 2009, p. 20). By being leaders who aim to lead using a set of prescribed values and ideals, these two principals are showing how they intend to care for their school community. Noddings (1988) maintains that care involves a combination of ‘modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation’ (p. 222). The participants highlighted how the school leadership enabled and facilitated LGBTQ inclusive practice by modelling self-belief and self-esteem for their students to see. There was an understanding of the importance of engaging in dialogue and open discourse that lead to decisions and conclusions that considered the influence, consequences and justifications of different positions. Within these school sites (and described in Chapter 6), the principals were vocal and visible about the practice of caring and encouraging the practice of caring in others.

The final point to make is that being a leader of change takes courage. Freire (1996) draws an important distinction between what he calls ‘dominant elites’ and ‘revolutionary leaders.’ He sees leaders who only think about the people who follow them in order to understand how to
dominate them further, or how to maintain their positions of power as the dominant elite (Freire, 1996). They seek to maintain a hierarchy, limit dissent, manage speech, and to use their power in order to guide, order, and command others. Revolutionary leaders, on the other hand, do not see their followers and allies as ignorant. They work best in communion with their colleagues. Freire maintains that these leaders ‘[think] about the people in order to liberate (rather than dominate) them, the leaders give of themselves to the thinking of the people’ (Freire, 1996, p. 113). In short, a revolutionary leader can be seen as a companion, rather than a ruler.

Through their vocal and visible support of the transformation processes and the staff involved, the principals enabled change and enabled those who were hesitant to understand the expectations on them. Participants regularly highlighted this as a vital component of the success of the programs or initiatives. The next section builds on this work of vocal leadership, by using the information gathered to understand how the values, vision and reflective practices within a school can lead to a common understanding of the purpose of education.

**Common understanding of the purpose of education**

In the previous chapter on those factors that inhibit change, one of the factors that was discussed was the participants lack knowledge of LGBTQ issues. The data showed that this lack of understanding and insight caused a barrier for full engagement in a process that sought to be more inclusive. One of the factors that emerged from the data was that participants understanding of the role of education or their perceptions of the vision of the school drove them to seek out people and knowledge in order to adhere to the shared values the school is seeking to foster. This section considers the importance of having a school vision and a common understanding of the role of education, it links to Chapter 2, the Literature Review, where different understandings of the role of education were articulated.

**Vision and Values**

In the first data chapter, I drew on the importance of how a school’s vision and values impact the culture and how they can be used to embed change. In this chapter, they are used to help
stakeholders understand the way the school envisions the role and purpose of education at the school. The role and purpose of education, and the expectations for their work, was identified by participants as coming from the schools' values and vision statements. Consider this interview response from the Principal of Greenwich Secondary, wherein they speak emphatically and passionately about how important it was for them to be able to communicate and live up to the school’s vision and values:

‘And I think too it’s about being able to be really clear in my mind... and align my thinking with the school and its philosophy. [I need to be able] to challenge inappropriate behaviour, inappropriate gestures, or [help students when they are] saying [something] inappropriate. What I mean is behaviour and gestures and conversations and writings and whatever else that actually challenges what we’re on about. [I need to be] confident and [have] the strength to do that. (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)

The principal articulates the importance of why understanding a school's vision is vital for the students and staff. Organisational change theorists might argue that it is a way to communicate the values and the behaviours that are expected in the school environment (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). This links strongly to the Giroux’s (2009b) perspective that culture is maintained and fostered through a common understanding of values, beliefs and traditions and transmitted through language and symbols. Blanchard (1992) points out that people want to understand what any proposed change entails, ask questions and get honest answers. In a school environment, the staff, students and parents need to understand how any change process will affect them and the way that both of the school principals in these school sites have been able to articulate this, is by using the schools vision and, in the case of Lakeview College, even use the school’s motto.

Through our discussion, the principal of Lakeview College outlined that one of the key terms in the school’s motto was ‘diversity’. This motto had been part of the school way before the principal had arrived and he could use that to help to explain why the LGBTQ inclusive practices that were being introduced should be included under that very broad heading:
I’m not so sure when the school ... actually thought of diversity as [being as broad as] that to be honest. So I think that we’ve expanded the kids’ horizons by including [sex and gender diverse] focus, and that’s almost given us authority to do that too with parents – diversity is not just about cultural diversity, it’s about a whole lot of things. (Lakeview College: Participant 1)

The school’s motto and marketing documentation has for many years boldly and visibly included this broad term - ‘diversity’. By linking the LGBTQ change process to an already accepted term, that being ‘diversity’, the principal was able to expand the understanding of the term to one that was now inclusive of LGBTQ staff and students. Conley (1993) makes the point that ‘schools tend to accept ideas or programs that are consistent with the existing structure, assumptions, and culture of the school’ (p. 4). This school had for many years believed in the value of ‘diversity’. By using the school’s motto, the principal was able to challenge the assumptions, practices and underlying discourse that the school took for granted when using that word.

The result of having a clear and well-articulated vision is that developing any strategies or processes for achieving that vision will be easier and likely more successful (Kotter, 1996). Crosby and Bryson (2006) echo this important concept by explaining that one of the main tasks of leadership is to attend to the purpose of the culture and environment and help the organisation adapt to internal and external change. This thesis supports the expectation that leaders had about building an inclusive community inside and outside the organisation. Participants understood that it was the duty of the leader to help others achieve that vision and understand their roles in the school by creating meaningful mission statements, philosophy statements, develop goals and strategies, and to create flexible governance, administrative, and communication systems (Bryson & Crosby, 2006).

The effect of the vision and values of the school was supported by data indicating that it had an impact on how staff saw their place in the environment. An interesting story arose when one of the participants described what they felt was the role and purpose of education and the school environment. This is the final part of a story where the participant is describing an incident after
a staff meeting wherein, they disagreed with someone who felt that the purpose of education was knowledge transfer:

... [but it] really does connect with pastoral care, and some priorities for schools is really [only] about the academics, but I fundamentally believe that ... you are asking students to engage. You're asking people and children to engage. Children will not engage if they don’t feel safe and supported, no matter what it is and if they don’t, yeah, they won’t (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 7, Staff Member)

This short snippet illustrates not only the importance of staff members communicating their beliefs about the purpose of education to others but also the frustration and tension that can exist when there are a variety of different points of view about what staff see their role to be in the classroom. While the interview responses indicated that participants who understood and accepted well-articulated visions and values presented by the school, were more likely to have a similar understanding of the role of education, the data also showed that there was cautiousness in some of their peers. The participants highlighted some of this frustration that exists in places like staff meetings and school environments.

One of the concerns to note is the perception of ‘paternalism’. This occurs when only a few people are allowed to determine what the role of education is and how it is implemented at a school. This may lead some to see those who are driving the change to have assumed that they know best and that they are the only ones with the answers (Tronto, 2010). Critical thinking must inform and drive dialogue that enhances the interconnectedness between the environment and the people that exist in it. Naive thinking and expectations that people will just understand the vision or will just ‘fall in line’ with the values in some subservient manner due to the paternalistic decree from the principal or leadership perpetuates the status quo, normalises current actions, and accommodates current behaviours; whereas critical thinking transforms the future (Freire, 1996).
Praxis – reflection and action

Praxis is a term used in critical theory to indicate that it is important not only to theorise and imagine a transformed society or space but to make that socio-political change a reality (Felluga, 2015). Freire (1996) states that praxis demands that there is both action and reflection that takes place. In order to address any changes and actions that have taken place, there must be time spent reflecting on the success or resistance to those changes (Freire, 1996). This reflection process also enables the subaltern group to work through the system that has been set up in order to point out the change that still needs to take place (Freire, 1996; Gramsci, 2014).

The need for praxis is imperative, and this can be illustrated by the perspective of the leaders who administer that reflection on the actions that have occurred. The Greenwich Secondary Principal discussed the need for the vision and values to be continuously reassessed and evaluated in order to make sure that they are being implemented and that they still reflect the ethos of the environment:

...we continuously review the values, and we review our purpose statement – is this still what we’re about, is this what we’re on about, is this what we still want for our kids? Yes – so how do our values actually support us to achieve that, and then from that developing the overall school vision in terms of what we want our kids to leave here with you know, after having been through the [Greenwich College] conveyor belt, if that makes sense (Greenwich Secondary: Participant 1, Principal)

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), two experts on organisation management, contend that making sure that the vision and values of the organisation are incorporated into the everyday behaviours is part of the change process. For this to happen, they cannot be left on a wall and never referred to again. The participants in the environment must identify with them and know what they are, one of the principals described the need to make sure that they were ‘alive and dynamic’ and that these value statements should never become “[just] a bit of paper on the wall” (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Blender (1992), another organisational change theorist, points out that it is
important to remember that once the vision and values have been agreed to, it is vital when driving change that the internal structures of the schools must be flexible. Kotter (1996) argues that by changing any systems or structures that could undermine the vision, the school leaders can encourage risk-taking or non-traditional ideas, activities and actions to take root in the workplace. He reminds us that it is essential that through any change process the stakeholders understand the direction and purpose of the change, there needs to be a constant reflection on the actions that are being taken (Kotter, 1996). The interview responses in these school sites indicated that through this praxis, the transformation process was enabled by creating a clear vision for the stakeholders and leaders, which helped to direct their efforts.

By keeping the values and vision at the forefront of any discussions, visible and as points of discussion, the school can use them when there are infractions of the rules or when students or parents are seeking to challenge the system. It is a purposeful action that keeps change happening and allows for in-depth discussions about the way forward for the school. It becomes not just the staff trying to instil discipline, but an understanding that these are the guiding principles for all, and the staff use these to explain consequences and the reasons for their own decision making in times of conflict.

This section highlights the data that points to the challenge of managing a school, but also, the opportunity to use articulated vision, values and reflection to drive change in a manner that is collaborative and understood. There is a tension between having a set of values and having individual and unique participants in the environment that poses a challenge to anyone in a leadership position as they have to be able to allow those individuals to draw on their unique skills, ideas and characteristics (even though they are often culturally conditioned) and get them to work with other individuals with different skills and ideas in a manner that enables all to share the way forward and develop shared concerns for the space (Bryson & Crosby, 2006).
Conclusion

This chapter considers what factors enable stakeholders to start to take action or enable them to continue to try to embed ideas of LGBTQ inclusion in their school environments. It has considered and examined what sorts of actions and prompts drive people from positions of inactivity to ones that seek to actively improve the situations for those LGBTQ members of their community.

Support is one of the critical themes that has emerged. Individuals are buoyed by support and ascribe seeing visible signs of support from colleagues, students and even education authorities. That support helps to reinforce their own belief that they are ‘on the right track' and engaged in something important and meaningful. That support also emphasises the importance that some critical theorists place on how power is created. The idea that one might feel empowered to act through what support or discourse see existing is important. If those in support connect with your hopes or world view, it prompts action, and feelings of empowerment (Foucault, 1980; Kincheloe, 2008b; McLaren, 2009). One of the themes that could be further explored is how individuals acted or reacted when they did not see or find that support. Another space for further study might be about individuals who were standing in opposition to LGBTQ inclusive teaching practice and how they performed in a space in which that practice was the dominant discourse.

The freeing of the oppressed is another critical aspect of this chapter. There is a connection that appears to exist between the oppressed freeing themselves and care theory or contact theory. The connection between care theory and the contact hypothesis strengthens the process of change that might aim to reduce prejudice. Allport and Pettigrew’s work highlighted the four conditions that helped reduce oppression – ‘equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom’ (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 66). In the section above Noddings highlights ‘modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation’ (p. 222) and Freire (1996) speaks to the importance of dialogue, trust, critical thinking, humility and hope. While I understand that there are nuanced differences between these three schools of thought, I am struck by how important all three find equal engagement and cooperation to be
when striving for a particular objective or common goal. This cannot happen without visible and vocal leadership who are trusting of their followers, who seek to act with humility and care.

This chapter makes it clear that if we, as teachers or leaders in these school or organisational space, can overcome our reluctance to be activist and agents for change then we are able to grow in our own voice, and sometimes able to do incredible things not only for others, but for ourselves as well.

_It has been the most positive thing I have done in my teaching career, without a doubt. The most powerful and meaningful thing (Lakeview College: Participant 3, GSA Coordinator and staff member)_
Chapter 9 – Conclusion and Findings

Introduction

There is significant literature on the many LGBTQ policy initiatives or policy imperatives that could or should be made by curriculum bodies or government education authorities (ACARA, 2013; Barr et al., 2008). There are a plethora of studies and literature about the types of activities, school inclusion initiatives or programs that schools should pursue to make school spaces recognise marginalised identities (DET, 2016; FYA, 2017; Minus18, 2016; “Student Wellbeing Hub”, 2019). This thesis sits at the point between those two fields of study. It has sought to answer the question of why some schools have begun or continued a journey of inclusive practice and to understand the factors that drive school leaders to taking the step from a position of inaction and status quo, to one where they take the leap, and begin to implement some of the ideas on LGBTQ inclusive classroom and/or school practice.

This conclusion draws together findings to answer the research question, ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’ The three sub-questions that were posed are also addressed; What is the role of school leadership? What is the role of teachers? What are the significant forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?

What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?

The overarching research question in this thesis has always been what drives the school leadership and teachers to take action. The question could also be; how does this research address the nexus that was identified between what was expected to be done and what could be done, and understand what prompts action? The findings in this sub-section, focus on the broad issues of the role of education, and vision and values.
A common understanding of the purpose of education

This research emphasises the importance of understanding education as a space for care, compassion and understanding. The responses of all of the participants who were interviewed, indicated that they wanted the LGBTQ students in their care, or colleagues in the staff rooms, to feel safe, seen and accepted. The importance of teachers understanding the role of education as one of care and the responsibility to keep a safe, brave space for their students has been emphasised throughout this thesis. A common understanding of the role of education is therefore a core part of understanding what drives teachers, leaders and schools to implement and enact LGBTQ change.

There are many ways in which the role of education could be conceptualised. For some people, the role of education is to socialise individuals into becoming productive members of the community (Biesta, 2009). Biesta (2009), describes individuals who see education as a way to perpetuate ‘existing ways of doing and being’ (p. 40). This view of education is echoed in the actions against the Safe Schools Coalition, as described in Chapter 2, wherein conservative voices sought to perpetuate ways of being that excluded LGBTQ staff or students. For some individuals the understanding of the role of education is to maintain the status quo and thereby ignore the oppression or marginalisation of LGBTQ individuals in the process.

Through the literature there was an exploration of how the role of schools could be considered as spaces of care or spaces to promote agency. This is more in keeping with the ways in which the teachers and leaders in this thesis considered their purpose as educators. Those teachers and leaders who were interviewed, described how they felt the need to help, facilitate change or initiate change due to their need to care or their need to empower the LGBTQ individuals in the school spaces. This speaks to an important part of the conclusions of this thesis, in that it highlights how important an understanding of the role of education is in driving change. If the school leadership, if education authorities or even education training spaces are able to promote an understanding of schools as spaces of care or of promoting agency for all students who might
be marginalised, then there may be an increased imperative to drive LGBTQ change in spaces where it has not yet been implemented.

A clear school vision and well-articulated set of school values

Leading on from a common understanding of the role of education is the importance of common, well-articulated, and accepted school values and vision. In Chapter 5 there was an analysis of the way in which a school’s culture could impact decision making and the implementation of more inclusive LGBTQ practices. A key element of the school culture, at the sites researched, was shown to be the articulated vision and values. In the literature review, Chapter 2, Moorish and O’Mara (2011) highlighted the problem that school visions and values have become ubiquitous and, in many schools, they are seen as ‘signifier(s) of everything and yet nothing’ (p. 974). In this research, the finding is that when used often and considerately, the school vision and values can be assets in driving change for LGBTQ individuals.

The principals and school leaders in this research were able to describe ways in which the school vision and values had not only driven their own thinking, but also how they were able to use them to inspire others to follow them and be more inclusive of LGBTQ individuals. In order to drive change, school leaders and teachers had to take important steps that addressed the marginalisation of LGBTQ individuals in the school environment. Once they pointed out the imperative laid down in the school’s vision or values, by words such as ‘social responsibility’ or ‘respect for diversity’, the change process moved forward.

An important factor highlighted in this research is that school leaders have to be vocal about the vision and values. They cannot simply have them on the school website or on documentation and never refer to them again or allow different interpretations of their importance or contents. School visions and values that include inclusive language and which can be shown to be supportive of LGBTQ identities are ones that this research has shown can drive change, but that it takes constant support for those values and school vision, and determined focus and collaboration by a number of role-players in order to embed the thinking into the school culture.
What is the role of school leadership?

The first sub-question to be answered concerns the importance of school leaders. This research emphasises the necessity of visible leadership in order to drive this sort of social justice change in a school setting. The findings in this sub-question and the subsequent ones all feed into the key research question regarding the drivers of LGBTQ change.

There are three findings that will be discussed under this heading. They are: the importance of leaders being visible and vocal symbols of the change; the imperatives for coalitions and for dialogue; and the need to understand expectations and resistance.

They should be visible and vocal symbols of change

Seeing a visible and vocal leader at the forefront of the process remains a vital element of driving change. The findings indicate that school leadership is considered important from both the symbolic perspective, as well as for the purpose of driving the strategic planning of the organisational change. The way a school leader understands their role in the school is a key element of driving and leading LGBTQ change.

Heads of schools must lead with purpose and determination that is driven by clear vision and values. These values must be able to be communicated to all of the stakeholders of the organisation. Leading organisational change that focuses on LGBTQ social justice is both challenging and rewarding. The leadership of the schools in this research, understood and articulated the imperative to use their own positions of power to accomplish a vision of a more equitable schooling experience for LGBTQ individuals. The force that drove them was identified as the need to have a space that was free from oppression or marginalisation of the LGBTQ individuals in their schools. Their ability to communicate and articulate a vision helped to create a revolutionary consciousness and a more enlightened space.
One of the findings that was both surprising and encouraging, was the importance and impact of symbols and symbolic actions. In this thesis this was explored when considering the factors that enabled change in Chapter 8 and the ways in which school leaders visibly demonstrate purpose in Chapter 6. The reason it was considered to be a surprising driver of change, was that often in training sessions, or in LGBTQ facilitators’ handbook it is suggested that a small way to contribute to LGBTQ change was to display artefacts in different spaces. For example, teachers could have the rainbow flag displayed as a visible reminder that they are supportive of queer rights and that their classroom is a safe space. This research points to those actions not only being very important, but that they are also opportunities to find their coalitions of supporters. There was also an important emphasis placed on the school principals not only allowing those artefacts to be displayed, but also to stating their own support of LGBTQ inclusive practices. They did that through school speeches, in newsletters or by attending events or committees that are LGBTQ focused. The encouraging part of this finding is that it means that for some leaders, this could be a first step into the change process, and they can begin the change process in small ways which will encourage support and drive larger LGBTQ change in an incremental fashion.

**They should form strong coalitions and facilitate dialogue**

One of the other key roles of school leaders when seeking to drive this type of change was shown to be the ability to work with others, form coalitions of supporters and to facilitate dialogue about the imperatives for change. Finding those supporters of the vision and the idea of more inclusive LGBTQ spaces is an important factor that speaks to the critical theorists’ ideas of breaking down hegemonic structures. It also speaks to the narrative of those who are oppressed (or their allies), standing up and breaking down the system of oppression themselves.

The leaders understood that they could not drive change alone, but that they would need to find supporters who would assist in dispersing the reasons for LGBTQ inclusive practice, support each other and who would contribute to knowledge of the topic. The idea of finding a supportive coalition has a long history in leadership and organisational change literature (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005; Kotter, 1996). This thesis not only supports that notion but emphasises its
importance for social issues such as LGBTQ inclusive work. The leaders of schools drove the change when the people with the social and political capital to enable the process to move forward were aligned and working together.

School leaders also had to facilitate dialogue, and they did this with the help of the coalition of supporters. The findings indicate that leaders must be knowledgeable and articulate on why LGBTQ change is important, as they are likely to be called upon to explain their position to others who are weary of changing the status quo. The participants in the research described situations in which they had to engage with parents or students. The school leaders emphasised that they were not afraid to engage in dialogue as they understood both the ethical imperative and that there was support for the direction of the work. The role of school leaders was therefore to be that conduit through which dialogue could be facilitated and to help connect other individuals who supported the vision for LGBTQ inclusive practice.

They should understand the expectations upon them

The final point that needs to be made regarding the role of school leaders is one regarding the understanding of expectations for change. In one of the sections above, there was a discussion about how the leaders and principals were enabling LGBTQ change due to their understanding and interpretation of the role of education. There is a further driver of change and that is the expectations for change from education authorities. This imperative and expectation for LGBTQ inclusive work can be seen in the education and legislative policies and guidelines that authorities issue and which were highlighted in the first two chapters (ACARA, 2013; Barr et al., 2008; Equal Opportunity Act 2010). Being able to articulate that expectation was another driver of the LGBTQ change process. The principals and staff used it as a method of conveying the urgency for change to the school stakeholders. Alongside the role of education and the school’s vision and values, the ability to appeal to authority was identified as important tool for driving change.
What is the role of teachers?

The third question to be answered is how teachers are able to facilitate the change process and what this thesis found to be the factors driving change in staff at schools. This sub-section connects with the ones above but focuses on the importance of knowledge development and of connecting with colleagues and students. Both of these were found to be important in the interviews with teaching staff.

They should develop knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ issues

One of the opportunities to arise from this thesis is to highlight the importance of the education of LGBTQ issues in training, professional development and university spaces. The participants had varying degrees of understanding LGBTQ identities, issues or challenges. These emerged through the course of interviews and were used in Chapter 7 to illustrate one of the fears that teachers have in engaging and driving this change process. In order for teachers to facilitate and drive LGBTQ inclusive work, they need to be educated on issues of gender identities, sexualities and on why LGBTQ inclusive initiatives will benefit both the students and their own classroom work. This research also shows that there is a need for continuing professional development on these issues as definitions and understandings of queer topics and theories to appreciate gendered identities are constantly changing. Issues such as gender fluidity and gender non-conforming identities are some of the contemporary discussions in LGBTQ spaces and the research in this thesis would suggest that teachers should be prepared for them if they want to be effective drivers of change.

The role of teachers in the process of driving change is to be informed about the issues so that they can support school leadership when resistance arises. The participants spoke about being weary of entering the space as they were fearful of saying the wrong things and they should therefore use opportunities to break down that fear through their own continuing education. Coupled with that, there is also an implicit suggestion through this research that school leaders must afford teachers the opportunities and time to pursue further work in this field.
They should recognise the importance of colleagues and students’ perspectives

In the section on leaders above, the importance of supportive coalitions was described. In this research, participants discussed the importance of a coalition of supportive colleagues to support teaching staff to drive and lead change initiatives. For teachers, these can be seen and identified in a number of different places. One of the important ‘cheerleaders’ that participant teachers identified were the students in their classes, both those who were LGBTQ and those who wanted to see equality for their LGBTQ classmates. This finding speaks to the way in which schools could be reaching into the student population and striving to understand their perspectives and vision, finding ways to amplify the youth voices as supporters for change.

It is also important to consider the impact of colleagues who were part of the LGBTQ community. They can be important drivers of change should they choose to be. This thesis described both LGBTQ identifying staff leading change and non-LGBTQ staff stepping up to make the school space better for their colleagues. Two different factors are at play here and should be considered by other schools or teacher seeking to drive change. First, the consideration about the safety of the school space and culture. Can LGBTQ teachers come out safely and be accepted in the space by their colleagues? The second consideration is to what degree the school leadership might be placing the emotional labour on the LGBTQ staff to lead and run change initiatives or be the people that the school continues to use for LGBTQ knowledge or visibility at events. While some LGBTQ individuals would relish and thrive in that space, as was the case in this research, there needs to be consideration as to the whole staff efforts to drive change and to develop their understandings of being effective and vocal allies for the change process.

Other forces and factors that help or hinder the drive for change?

This sub-question was framed throughout the thesis as being focused on the ‘significant’ forces and factors that help drive change. As most of these have been discussed above, this sub-section will focus on overarching issues that came to the fore. This sub-section will elaborate on the findings surrounding fear, contact hypothesis and who is ‘permitted’ to drive or lead LGBTQ change.
Fear

Underpinning the whole study, is the idea of why school leaders and teachers would not want to move from their position of status quo and bring about LGBTQ inclusive schooling. The findings are that people are afraid and that this fear is rooted in historical understandings of LGBTQ identities, the fear of the ‘other’, or the fear of how society might react if the change process was initiated, all of which were explored in Chapter 7. The research addresses the factors that inhibit change through a broad consideration of fear and how it perpetuates the status quo. Fear of change was identified as one of the factors enabling the oppressive hegemonic culture that does not allow individuals to embody their different sexual or gender identities visibly. This finding is an important one in that it forms the basis of so much of the resistance to change and is one that has to be overcome through things like; education, colleague engagement, or contact with LGBTQ individuals. It is important to consider the other supporting structures that teachers and leaders had in place, for example, supportive colleagues, visible leadership, legislative documentation and changing cultures. These all contributed to the opportunity for these leaders to step through the fears associated with LGBTQ inclusive change.

One of the reasons that it was important to contextualise the research as having happened over the course of the Australian marriage equality plebiscite and through the controversy attached to the Safe Schools Coalition, was that these two occurrences focused directly on the fear that people may have in engaging in LGBTQ inclusive practice or in seeking to address the disparity that exists for LGBTQ individuals in many social spaces. The drive for increased LGBTQ inclusive school practice will have to be considered through this lens. This research does highlight some ways in which it could be overcome, but there is a long process of dedicated leadership, education and hard work which must be accomplished in order to address this resistance and hurdle.
Contact theory

One of the factors that was identified as an important facilitator of change was knowing an LGBTQ person, be they fellow staff member or student. This finding supports the concept of contact theory as put forward by Pettigrew (1998). This theory and this enabling driver of change was fully discussed in Chapter 8. This finding is important for those individuals in school environments as it addresses the importance of being out and visible. The idea that those who are being marginalised or oppressed rising up to be their own liberators was highlighted through the work of Freire (1996). This finding supports the idea that the oppressed have power to change their environments through their open acknowledgement of their gender or sexual identities.

There is an important role to play in driving change for those who can be safely out at work as teachers, or LGBTQ parents who have students at the school or even students in schools where they are safe. This is a double-edged sword however, in that in Chapter 2, the dangers and experiences of being out in spaces that did not acknowledge LGBTQ identities was described. Those individuals who do experience the ‘narrative of emancipation’ (p. 49.) as described by Cohler and Hammack (2007) in Chapter 2, are ones who are at the forefront of the challenge to drive change through the simple act of being present, out and visible. While this can be a difficult place to be, the research findings in this thesis are that they are important change makers and an important part of moving leaders from positions of status quo.

Who leads the change?

The final factor to consider in this sub-section is whom a school culture might allow to lead and drive LGBTQ inclusive practice initiatives. While this is also interconnected with fear of addressing systems of discrimination, it is also an important part of answering the research question posed in this thesis. It addresses the issue raised in Chapter 2 by Jagose (1996) and Fraser (1997) about the dilemma that school leadership might have in how liberation is achieved. The debate between assimilation strategies or liberation strategies is linked to this finding in that it focuses on the deconstruction of identities and power and how individuals expect the leaders to enable
change. The question being; how or if individuals who do not fit into gender norms or the gender expression binaries can lead and drive LGBTQ change.

One of the factors identified in this research, as facilitating change or initiating LGBTQ inclusive practice, is having a good leader for the work. However, the findings are that the sexual or gender identity or external expression of those identities, of the person driving the change was a factor in the success of the movement. This matters in that it speaks to a disappointing discovery that emphasises the difficulty that LGBTQ individuals who have been oppressed in these spaces for a long time have in rising up and leading the movement to address their own oppression. The analysis points to the importance of having an ally or a 'non-threatening' queer person at the helm of any change initiative. This is an area of concern and one that would merit further thought and study. In the interviews, it was felt that the factor that contributed to driving the successful implementation of LGBTQ change was having a non-queer person leading it. This might not be the answer to the research question that was expected but is one that should be acknowledged as important to many who are in a school environment.

This section has outlined how the research has addressed and answered the questions and sub-questions that were posed at the outset. The analysis of the participants’ information has yielded evidence and insight that points to ways in which more LGBTQ inclusive spaces can be achieved and to the factors and forces that might enable that work to be done. The data analysis in each of the chapters offers a far more comprehensive perspective and in-depth thoughts on the multiple ways in which the research question has been addressed.

**The road to a more inclusive schooling system**

The aim of this thesis was to facilitate discussion and thought about the factors that drive change within schools and to begin to bring to the fore solutions to the stumbling blocks and resistance that might emerge when that change is proposed. Nick Crossley’s (2005) explanation of the role of the critical theorist is helpful in understanding how this thesis has understood this inaction and perpetuation of the status quo:
The research has used and added to the LGBTQ perspectives in school environments to explore issues that should not exist in a space where the care and nurturing of all young people is expected to be paramount, where learning to contribute and understand society is part of the purpose. Through an analysis of a variety of different issues and 'crises' that were identified by participants in the study, the research has been able to explore a variety of ideas. These are not only the challenges that exist, but also the ways in which teachers and school leaders are able to move through those barriers and create change for the LGBTQ stakeholders at their schools. Within the thesis, critical theory concepts have been used to explore and analyse why individuals are driven to a particular action in the workplace. Critical theorist focus on not only 'how things were, but how they might be and should be' (Bronner, 2011, p. 1). This research imagines how things 'might and should be' at a school where there are LGBTQ students and staff, who may be situated in spaces of oppression with their friends and colleagues preferring the status quo. The thesis examines the underlying assumptions and how the existing forms of practice can be understood, and more importantly, can be changed.

There are two key areas of the work that could be considered as contributions to critical theory and LGBTQ social justice work. First, critical theorists are skeptical about any fixed system of thought, and the critical theory space is therefore open to interdisciplinary and experimental ways of thinking and contributions (Bronner, 2011). This thesis contributes to critical theory in that it considers ways in which leaders of spaces of oppression are driven to help facilitate the change that critical theorists hope for. This thesis builds on work regarding how allies are able to engage in the change journey and the importance of finding and building coalitions of supporters that are necessary for new change initiatives to take root and grow. Second, this thesis has also
linked ideas of organisational change management with those of critical theory. The resistors to change or the factors that facilitate change are often left in the purview of those in the business management sciences, this thesis has considered the behavioural imperatives that underly those actions. It has used critical theory concepts to explore and analyse why individuals are driven to a particular action in the workplace, and in particular, the social justice work surrounding LGBTQ inclusion.

Fear has been a constant touchpoint throughout this thesis. It is at the heart of the resistance to change, while at the same time can be a driver of change. I want to end this thesis in a way that suggests that the fears holding us back from leading and driving change that benefits LGBTQ individuals at schools can be overcome. To this end, I have used the work of Paulo Freire (2014) once more. Coupled with fear is the concept of hope. At its very core, dialogue and the desire for change, cannot exist without hope. The struggle for change and for freedom from oppression starts with the hope that it will succeed and that there is a better way to do something. As Freire (2012) beautifully states:

’No, my hope is necessary, but it is not enough. Alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way the fish need unpolluted water’ (p. 2).

Not only is it important to consider fear and hope as motivating and driving factors of human behaviour, but it is also important to remember that without the struggle for a better future, hope fades and dies (Freire, 2014). As is stated in the quote above, it is just part of the struggle, but it is an essential one. Every individual's struggle to do better and to be more is rooted in hope. That struggle is carried out in communion and dialogue with others and within a specific context and environment. If we see a path to a better future, then the encounter becomes exciting and even more hopeful, but if there is no hope for change, then the dialogue becomes fruitless, bureaucratic and dull (Freire, 2014). Barriers and stumbling blocks aside, this thesis shows that there is hope for a better and more inclusive school system that recognises a variety of different
identities and life experiences. While the wheels of change might not move quickly, there is a reason to hope that the education space is where they will find traction and continue to move us forward.


Symons, C., O'Sullivan, G., Borkoles, E., Andersen, M. B., & Polman, R. C. J. (2014). *The Impact of Homophobic Bullying during Sport and Physical Education Participation on Same-Sex-Attracted and Gender-Diverse Young Australians' Depression and Anxiety Levels*. Retrieved from Melbourne:


APPENDIX # 1 – School site invitation to participate

INVITATION TO [School Name] TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

Dear Principal,

This is an invitation for you and your school to participate in a research project, which is being conducted by Dr. Helen Stokes and Dr. Kylie Smith (Supervisors) and Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD student) of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne. The aim of this study is to investigate what drives the management process, approach and implementation of a more comprehensive and explicit inclusivity policy regarding GLBTI students in the Victorian school system.

Your school has been identified as having a strong track record with regard to GLBTI inclusion and the study would seek to encapsulate this journey in a rich and detailed case study of the changes and developments that have taken place in order to serve as an example to others as to how they could engage in a similar process. Through your schools involvement with organisations such as the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria, ‘Fair Go Sport’, its willingness to engage with GLBTI inclusive activities such as IDAHOFIT and your explicit and comprehensive policy on GLBTI students at your school [TO BE ADAPTED TO SPECIFIC SCHOOL CIRCUMSTANCES], the researchers felt that your school community had a valid and exciting story to tell about ways in which the goals of ‘inclusivity’ and ‘diversity’ are practically engaged in and implemented at schools in Victoria.

This research will form part of Mr. Moolman’s PhD thesis, and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute to this in the following ways:

1. An interview with you as Principal (or designated substitute) of about 60 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what changes have taken place, your impression of its key driving forces and how the school community have engaged in the change process.
2. Assist the researcher by allowing a poster / flyer to be displayed in the staff room (or on appropriate staff notice board) and by emailing information to staff and the school council that will inform them of the research and invite them to participate.
3. At least two other semi-structured interviews with other important role players who helped to drive and implement the GLBTI change process, examples could include teachers, student wellbeing coordinators, Council members.
4. Allowing pre-approved documentary evidence of the schools change journey to be included in the study, examples could include new vs. old policies, school data, and program implementation documents etc.
5. Allow the researcher time at a staff meeting to invite members of staff to volunteer to be part of a focus group that will investigate their impressions of the changes that have taken place.

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent. Interviews and focus group audio recordings will be made to ensure accuracy in transcription. In the final report, you and your school will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you and the school.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. Potential benefits of this research would be for your school to see their change journey and successes documented. This study should not only acknowledge your struggles and triumphs, but should also validate your experiences by holding it up as an example for others. Schools who are contemplating GLBTI inclusivity may use your case study to consider steps that they could follow and may be able to initiate, adapt or confirm their own GLBTI inclusivity and diversity programs thanks to your documented case study.

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.

If you would like to participate or are interested in getting more information before making a decision, please phone or email Robert Moolman (details below) in order to arrange a mutually convenient time for a short introductory discussion about the research and to sign a consent form agreeing that your school would like to participate. After this, we will set up a date and time for the formal interview and next steps.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Helen Stokes (Responsible Researcher)  Dr. Kylie Smith (Co-Supervisor)  Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)
Ph. 03 8344 9646  Ph. 03 8344 4084  Ph. 04519 49551
Email: h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au  Email: kylieas@unimelb.edu.au  Email: rmoelman@student.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education  HREC: 1442119.1; Date: 3/03/20; Version: 1.0
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia  W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au
APPENDIX # 2 – Principal Information sheet

PRINCIPAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr. Helen Stokes and Dr. Kylie Smith (Supervisors) and Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD student) of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at The University of Melbourne. Your school’s name and contact details have been selected due to its involvement with the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria and on recommendation by specialists in the field of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex (GLBTI) young people. This research will form part of Mr. Moolman’s PhD thesis and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The aim of this study is to investigate what drives the management process, approach and implementation of a more comprehensive and explicit inclusivity policy regarding GLBTI students in the Victorian school system. Your school has been identified as having a strong track record with regard to GLBTI inclusion and the study would seek to encapsulate this journey in a rich and detailed case study of the changes and developments that have taken place in order to serve as an example to others as to how they could engage in a similar process.

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute to this in four ways. First, by participating in an interview of about 60 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what changes have taken place, your impression of its key driving forces and how the school community have engaged in the change process. Second, by allowing pre-approved documentary evidence of the schools change journey to be included in the study, examples could include new vs. old policies, existing data, minutes etc. Third, by posting a flyer on a staff notice board or in the staff room and emailing a letter of invitation to staff that explains the research and invites their contribution. Finally, to allow the researcher time at a staff meeting to personally invite some of your members of staff to volunteer to be part of the investigation through a focus group and interviews.

With your permission, your interview would be digitally recorded (audio only) so that we can ensure that an accurate record of what you say. When the interview has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the time commitment required of you for this would not exceed 30 minutes.

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 interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you and your school will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you and the school.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the MGSE. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. The data will be kept securely in the MGSE for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

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.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for a short introductory discussion about the research and to set up a date and time for the formal interview and next steps.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers; Dr. Stokes or Dr. Smith: 8344 0000, Mr. Moolman: 0451 949 551. 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.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Helen Stokes (Responsible Researcher)
Ph: 03 8344 9646
Email: h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au

Dr. Kylie Smith (Co-Supervisor)
Ph: 03 8344 4084
Email: kyleas@unimelb.edu.au

Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)
Ph: 04519 49551
Email: rmoolman@student.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
HREC: 1442119.1; Date: 3/03/20; Version: 1.0
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au
APPENDIX # 3 – School Consent Form

SCHOOL CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

I, ___________________________________________ [PRINT NAME], give consent on behalf of our school _______________________[PRINT SCHOOL'S NAME] to participate in the project named above run by Robert Moolman at The University of Melbourne. The particulars of which - including the development of a thorough case study through the use of focus groups, interviews and document analysis - have been explained to me. A written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

I authorise the researcher or assistant to use for this purpose the data and evidence collected in order to develop the case study.

In accepting this invitation on behalf of the school I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved has been explained to me at the first introductory meeting, including any inconvenience or risk and their implications. Any questions that I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and that the school is not under any obligation to consent. I have read the Participant Information Statements and the Consent forms and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and the school’s involvement with the researcher.

3. I have been informed that the school is free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

4. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information that is provided will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements. I further understand that while every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, as the number of schools being investigated is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify the school in the published research.

5. As a representative of the school, I consent to:

   a. Focus Groups being held on school premises
   b. Researcher speaking to staff to invite them to focus group or interviews
   c. Putting up a pre-approved flyer / poster and emailing staff and council
   d. Digital audio recording of focus groups and interviews
   e. Pre-approved school documents will be provided and used as research sources

   Please Circle

   YES / NO

Signature: ________________________________

Please PRINT name: ________________________________

On behalf of: ________________________________

Date: __________________________

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au
APPENDIX # 4 – Email invitation to participate

EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

This is an invitation for you to participate in a research project, which is being conducted by Dr. Helen Stokes and Dr. Kylie Smith (Supervisors) and Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD student) of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne. The aim of this study is to investigate what drives the management process, approach and implementation of a more comprehensive and explicit inclusivity policy regarding GLBTI students in the Victorian school system. This research will form part of Mr. Moolman’s PhD thesis, and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [HREC].

Your school has been identified as having a strong track record with regard to GLBTI inclusion and the study would seek to encapsulate this journey in a rich and detailed case study of the changes and developments that have taken place in order to serve as an example to others as to how they could engage in a similar process. Through your schools involvement with organisations such as the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria, ‘Fair Go Sport’, its willingness to engage with GLBTI inclusive activities such as IDAHO DAY and your explicit and comprehensive policy on GLBTI students at your school [TO BE ADAPTED TO SPECIFIC SCHOOL CIRCUMSTANCES], the researchers felt that your school community had a valid and exciting story to tell about ways in which the goals of ‘inclusivity’ and ‘diversity’ are practically engaged in and implemented at schools in Victoria.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

There are no doubt many rich and varied stories around this change process. Should you be interested in participating, you could contribute to this in the following ways:

1. An interview of about 60 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what changes have taken place, your impression of its key driving forces and how the school community have engaged in the change process. We are particularly interested in obtaining insight from those members of the school community who were involved in driving, implementing or contributing the GLBTI change process.

2. Engaging in a focus group with 4 – 5 other school colleagues of about 60 minutes, that will investigate your impressions of the changes that have taken place and your experience of the change process. You do not need to have been directly involved in the management or development of the policy and we are particularly seeking to understand the experiences of the change on the staff body.

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent. The interviews and focus groups will use audio recordings to ensure correct transcription of information. In the final report, you and your school will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you and the school. 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.

This study should not only acknowledge your school’s struggles and triumphs, but should also validate your experiences by holding it up as an example for others. Schools who are contemplating GLBTI inclusivity may use your case study to consider steps that they could follow and may be able to initiate, adapt or confirm their own GLBTI inclusivity and diversity programs thanks to your documented case study.

If you would like to participate or are interested in getting more information before making a decision, please phone or email Robert Moolman (details below) in order to arrange a mutually convenient time for a short introductory discussion about the research and to sign a consent form agreeing that you would like to participate. After this, we will set up a date and time for the formal interview or focus group.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Helen Stokes (Responsible Researcher) Dr. Kylie Smith (Co Supervisor) Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)
Ph. 03 8344 9646 Ph. 03 8344 4084 Ph. 04519 49551
Email: h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au Email: kylieas@unimelb.edu.au Email: rmoolman@student.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au

HREC: 1442119.1; Date: 3/03/20; Version: 1.0
This is an invitation for you to participate in a research project, the aim of which is to investigate what drives the management process, approach and implementation of a more comprehensive and explicit inclusivity policy regarding GLBTI students in the Victorian school system.

Your school has been identified as having a strong track record with regard to GLBTI inclusion and the study would seek to encapsulate this journey in a rich and detailed case study of the changes and developments that have taken place.

**RESEARCH TOPIC:**
‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

**HOW TO GET INVOLVED:**
There are no doubt many rich and varied stories around this change process. Should you be interested in participating, you could contribute to this in the following ways:

1. **An interview** of about 60 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what changes have taken place, your impression of its key driving forces and how the school community have engaged in the change process. We are particularly interested in obtaining insight from those members of the school community who were involved in driving, implementing or contributing the GLBTI change process.

   **OR**

2. **Engaging in a focus group** with 4 – 5 other school colleagues of about 60 minutes, that will investigate your impressions of the changes that have taken place and your experience of the change process. You do not need to have been directly involved in the management or development of the policy and we are particularly seeking to understand the experiences of the change on the staff body.

If you would like to participate or are interested in getting more information before making a decision, please phone or email Robert Moolman (details below) in order to arrange a mutually convenient time for a short introductory discussion about the research.

Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)
Ph. 04519 49551
Email: rmoolman@student.unimelb.edu.au
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

Dear Interview Participant,

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr. Helen Stokes and Dr. Kylie Smith (Supervisors) and Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD student) of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at The University of Melbourne. Your name and contact details have been selected, on recommendation from other members of your school community, due your direct involvement in the development and implementation of your school’s GLBTI policy. This research will form part of Mr. Moolman’s PhD thesis, and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The aim of this study is to investigate what drives the management process, approach and implementation of a more comprehensive and explicit inclusivity policy regarding GLBTI students in the Victorian school system. Your school has been identified as having a strong track record with regard to GLBTI inclusion and the study would seek to encapsulate this journey in a rich and detailed case study of the changes and developments that have taken place in order to serve as an example to others as to how they could engage in a similar process.

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute to this by participating in an interview of about 60 minutes, so that we can get a more detailed picture of what changes have taken place, your impression of its key driving forces and how the school community engaged in the change process.

With your permission, your interview would be digitally recorded (audio only) so that we can ensure that an accurate record of what you say. When the interview has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the time commitment required of you for this would not exceed 30 minutes.

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 interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you and your school will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you and the school.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the MGSE. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. The data will be kept securely in the MGSE for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

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.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for a short introductory discussion about the research and to set up a date and time for the formal interview and next steps.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers; Dr. Stokes or Dr. Smith: 8344 0000, Mr. Moolman: 0451 949 551. 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.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Helen Stokes (Responsible Researcher)
Ph. 03 8344 9646
Email: h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au

Dr. Kylie Smith (Co-Supervisor)
Ph. 03 8344 4084
Email: kylieas@unimelb.edu.au

Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)
Ph. 04519 49551
Email: rmoolman@student.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au

HREC: 1442119.1; Date: 3/03/20; Version: 1.0
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: ‘What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?’

I, ___________________________________________ [PRINT NAME], give consent to participate in the project named above run by Robert Moolman at The University of Melbourne. The particulars of which - including the development of a thorough case study through the use of focus groups, interviews and document analysis - have been explained to me. A written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

I authorise the researcher or assistant to use for this purpose the data and evidence collected in order to develop the case study.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved has been explained to me, including any inconvenience or risk and their implications.

2. Any questions that I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction

3. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement with the researcher.

4. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

5. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

6. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

7. I understand that while every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, as the number of schools being investigated is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify the school and me.

8. I understand that if I am being interviewed, I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

9. I consent to:
   a. Audio-recording YES / NO
   b. Receiving Feedback YES / NO

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details below

Feedback Option:
Address: ____________________________________________
________________________________________
Email: ____________________________________________

Signature: ______________________________________

Please PRINT name: ______________________________

Date: __________________________
LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These are a list of potential interview questions to be used when meeting with individuals who have been actively engaged in the GLBTI change and inclusivity program and/or whom the principal has suggested as important contributors to the process. The interview is expected to last about 60 minutes.

1. Could you describe the school or the experiences of GLBTI students / staff before the commencement of this change journey?
2. Can you describe any initial catalyst that prompted change in the area of GLBTI inclusion at schools? Why do you think the school embarked on this change process?
3. Was the need for change felt around the entire school community or was it more localized?
4. Could you describe the process, discussions, debates etc. that were embarked on in the prelude to the formal meetings taking place?
5. Can you describe the change process and implementation?
6. What overt GLBTI inclusive policies / programs do schools have in place? What existed in the past?
7. Who were the people most involved in driving and steering this process and what did their skills and talents allow or provide?
8. Was there any formal ‘school time’ allocated to the planning, adoption or implementation of the process?
9. Do you feel there is a ‘whole school’ approach and adoption of the policies? Thinking of the 3 circles of the ‘whole school approach’ could you explain the impact on community vs. policy vs. curriculum?
10. What are the difficulties and challenges that face schools in their efforts to establish and implement effective policies and procedure to address issues of GLBTI inclusivity?
11. What strategies were used to lead those resistant to the changes? How are the attitudes of the greater school community understood and catered for?
12. How was the change and inclusivity (policy and practices) promoted or communicated to the school community? How would they get to understand what is / isn’t appropriate inclusive behavior?
13. Has the school used any outside organizations to promote the change, manage it or provide support? What was their effectiveness?
14. How are the changes currently being enacted in practice at the school? What specific changes to the curriculum or Teaching and Learning have taken place?
15. To what extent do you feel the issue of GLBTI inclusivity has been consolidated and institutionalized for the future of the school?

MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL:

These are more specific questions that could be included when interviewing the Principal. They will be used in conjunction with some of those listed above:

1. Was there specific literature, knowledge or information that you relied on to focus your thinking or determine your actions?
2. How are you monitoring the success of the policy? What tools are you using?
3. What would you do differently if you had the opportunity?
4. Comment on the type of leadership style that you felt was most effective. Why?
5. Were there any ‘easy wins’ or ‘quick successes’ that you could point to that helped the process move forward?
6. Would this policy be reviewed and developed in the future and what would prompt those revisions?
7. How does your leadership drive the policy? How is it being imparted to new staff or leading teachers?
8. What was the input from the School Council / Governing Body? How have they communicated and embedded these changes in the greater school community?
APPENDIX # 9 – Invitation to debrief

INVITATION TO DEBRIEF YOUR RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?

Thank you for your participation in the research being conducted by Dr. Helen Stokes and Dr. Kylie Smith (Supervisors) and Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD student) of the Youth Research Centre at The University of Melbourne.

While we do not expect the interview/focus group process to cause participants any distress we understand that the process may bring up issues you will to discuss further. Please rest assured that we acknowledge and value your time and contribution to our study.

As you were told, we intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent. In the final report, you and your school will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity. You will also be sent transcripts of your interview or discussion for you to review, after which you could ask to include more information for clarity or ask to withdraw content you are not comfortable with.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the interview or focus group that you have just participated in then please feel free to contact Mr. Rob Moolman (details below), who would be available to debrief the data collection at your convenience. Should you have experienced any distress about questions asked, content discussed or information provided, Rob also has contact details of groups such as the Safe Schools Coalition of Victoria, The Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, The Gay Families Network, Gay and Lesbian Switchboard and Minus 18.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the supervising researchers; Dr. Stokes / Dr. Smith: 8344 0000 or the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073.

Dr. Helen Stokes (Responsible Researcher)  
Ph. 03 8344 9646  
Email: h.stokes@unimelb.edu.au

Dr. Kylie Smith (Co-Supervisor)  
Ph. 03 8344 4084  
Email: kylieas@unimelb.edu.au

Mr. Robert Moolman (PhD Student)  
Ph. 04519 49551  
Email: rmoolman@student.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia  
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au  

HREC: 1442119.1; Date: 3/03/20; Version: 1.0
Author/s:
Moolman, Robert John

Title:
What drives schools to implement a successful change process that is more inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) students and staff?

Date:
2019

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/234436

File Description:
Final thesis file

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.