Working Through Tension: 
A Response to the Concerns of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Secondary School Students.

by

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis. This thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, appendices and footnotes.

Michael Crowthurst
ABSTRACT

The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB)(T) secondary school students are often problematic. The literature documents that LGB(T) students often experience harassment in secondary school settings. The participants in this study identify that issues around subject content, the need to address bullying and strategies around support are three key issues that might be targeted if LGB(T) school experiences are to improve. This thesis responds to participant perspectives by outlining a broad approach that is anchored by their concerns.
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Introduction

This text has been written over a number of years. It has gone through a series of re-writes and revisions as my understandings around schools and sexualities has evolved. I initially became interested in researching the school experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual secondary school students because as a gay teacher I was aware that school experiences are not always as positive as they might be for these young people. This interest gave me a research topic for a Master's minor-thesis that I completed in 1993 under the supervision of Associate Professor Peter Dwyer.

While that thesis answered questions it also teased open the area and generated further questions. I had a short break from study and went back to full-time employment but I soon found myself back at the library hunting through more books on sexuality. I decided to continue to work in this area. I decided to write a thesis that might make some contribution to improving the experiences of same-sex attracted young people in schools. The thesis that follows attempts to do this in the following manner.

The text opens with a gallop through historical perspectives regarding sexuality and then moves on to consider a selection of contemporary social theorists. The thesis is influenced mainly by feminist poststructural writers. The initial theoretical sections suggest that one of the differences that distinguish historical thought from contemporary thought is the latter's concern with lived experience. The sexuality of 'old theory' is a sexuality that is pinned down, dissected and displayed in jars filled with chemicals in an effort to render it known, in an effort to bring it to closure. Sexuality within such frameworks is understood to be an essential aspect of identity that is outside of culture. Contemporary poststructural theory, on the other hand, is more concerned with sexuality as it is lived, as a way that embodied subjects take up space in the world. Sexuality is understood to be fluid and relational and an aspect of subjectivity that is constructed by embodied subjects as they move through the world.

The text employs the use of the term 'discourse', to imply speech, writing and movement. The subject, is understood to come to be formed via engagement with discourse, in the sense that discourse makes subject positions available for the subject to inhabit and also in the sense that the subject is positioned by discourse. I argue, following feminist poststructural theorists, that discourse is embedded with values that can be 'taken-up' by subjects.
I coin the term 'heteroprivilegism' to serve as an umbrella term to indicate that values that disadvantage LGBT young people are evident within discourses in layered ways, some exceedingly subtle, some less so. I argue that schools are subject to, and reproduce such discourses. The idea that discriminatory values are embedded in discourse in a layered fashion implies the need to adopt a variety of strategies to rupture such discourse (such ideas are relevant to other forms of discriminatory discourse).

The text then asks: 'What it is about 'queer bodies' that provokes tension in 'others'?'. Following Grosz, I suggest that bodies that move differently, that move in expansively different ways can provoke tension. Themes around sexualities, rationality, and vision which inform the approach to teaching outlined in the later sections of the text are also introduced at this point.

Literature that applies to the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people (SSAY) is then considered. Here the focus is mainly on relevant Australian literature from the 1970's through to the current time (however Canadian, American and European literature is also used here). The conclusion that is drawn is that the school experiences of SSAY are often problematic and that this is the result of discourses that are embedded with heteroprivilegist values.

The next section of the text focuses on the experiences and key concerns of same-sex attracted young people. I interviewed 10 SSAY who were attending secondary school at the time of the interview and I asked them about their school experiences. The methodology chapter outlines how the participants were interviewed and explains the theoretical perspectives that have informed the methodology. Again, the methodology is largely influenced by feminist poststructural theory but neo-Marxist theories were also quite influential here.

A central notion that underpins the methodology is that the research process should be as collaborative as possible and that the participants should maintain some sense of control over that process. To that end, I approached the collection of participant stories as being about an opportunity for participant concerns and perspectives to surface rather than being about the collection of information to do with concerns that I had set out to investigate via a pre-set list of questions. The semi-structured interview format provided the opportunity to maintain some sense of focus without being overly prescriptive.

This process generated 100,000 words of transcript material, which I then edited down to 30,000 words (which I hope to publish after this project has been completed). There were
many themes that emerged and many ways that I could have used the material to structure a text. I decided to focus on how the themes that emerged through this material might guide the work of teachers.

During the interviews I directed participants via my questions to discuss issues that I felt were pertinent and I also asked each participant to indicate what they thought that schools might do to improve the experiences of same-sex attracted young people. The young people had many suggestions and insights and addressed the issue in various ways. I collated and analysed their responses and through this process identified three broad themes or areas of concern:

1 the need for work around subject content,

2 the need for support / affirmation of sexual diversity,

3 the need for anti-harassment policy.

Participant suggestions around these broad themes are then tabled. What emerges here are very clear and useful suggestions and strategies. The broader themes are then used to anchor the approach to working with sexual diversity in the classroom that is outlined in the latter parts of the text.

The text considers the issue of queering subject content. In the process, I suggest, following feminist and poststructural theory, that the subject content that young people encounter in schools is, like all knowledge, produced in social contexts which are in turn not value neutral. It is not surprising therefore, where subject content is constructed within heteroprivilegist cultures, that such subject content will often come to reflect this.

Another key idea that is suggested in this section is that the knowledge that is produced in classrooms is a social product that is made not only by teachers but rather is made by teachers and young people. Subject content, as a form of knowledge, is an effect of work that teachers and students do and comes out of the relationship that exists between teachers and students. The text argues therefore that changes around subject content will not only come about through the efforts of teachers but that young people are capable of making change in this regard too. While there is certainly a need for teachers to work to rupture heteroprivilegist knowledges there is also a need to support young people as they engage in similarly disruptive work.
Within this section of the text, the tension that the well meaning inclusion of queer perspectives in subject content can provoke in same-sex attracted young people, is also considered. Here I refer to John (a participant from my Master's work), who recalls that while he was angry that the words gay or lesbian were seldom mentioned in the classes that he took, on the few occasions where there was mention, he felt very uneasy indeed. John's comments introduce the theme of tension into the thesis. The theme of tension threads the second half of the text and is an essential ingredient of the approach to working in this area that is outlined.

Following poststructural theory, I argue, that John's discomfort is an effect of discourse, embedded with heteroprivilegist values, that have been 'taken-up' by him in an embodied fashion. John's blushing and discomfort, I suggest, highlight the importance of supporting the construction of spaces where SSAY might construct new expansive discourses that they might 'take up' as they construct positive and expansive sexualities.

The text then returns to theoretical concerns, where I demonstrate, in a persuasive fashion, by drawing on the data, a moment where discourse is 'taken up' by embodied subjects. I do this by reflecting on the comments of Dante, another participant, who suggested that he didn't like the sound of his voice because it sounded 'too gay'. In this chapter I illustrate, via the sound of the voice, and specifically by focusing on accent, that there are indeed aspects of embodiment where culture and the body are 'inseparable'.

The final chapters continue to explore the theme of tension. I suggest that if schools are to become better places for SSAY that there is both a need to manage tension and a need to provoke tension. Here I also consider participant concerns that schools implement anti-bullying policies that specifically attend to sexuality. Many of the participants suggested that they were likely to be bullied if they were gender non-compliant and I link this observation with their call for anti-bullying policies. I argue that if schools are to be able to support a diversity of sexualities that this will also entail support for a diverse array of ways of doing gender. In the process the text returns to theoretical considerations considering the linkages between gender and sexuality, and suggests that part of the reason that there can be a tension that circles subjects that do their gender differently is that sexuality is never seen in isolation; that it is only ever glimpsed as it is done through other discourses (discourses such as gender).

The final section of the thesis suggests that the tension that is provoked by bodies that are read as 'undecideable' is to do with the way that such bodies call into question assumptions around our ability to read the sexuality of others accurately. Following Britzman, I argue that the responsibility for managing the tension that is sometimes
provoked by difference, rests with the school as an institution and with the person who is feeling tense, rather than with the person who is read as or positioned as 'different'.

Finally I consider a lesson plan that I taught in a secondary school as part of a humanities course in 1999. The lesson has many objectives but one of the main ones is to complicate the gendered reading of my body and in the process to generate questions around my sexuality. The lesson plan demonstrates how I set out to do this. My intention here was to negotiate the tension that being gay can provoke in a secondary school so that at a latter stage in the year I might 'come out' to students without causing too much fuss. The last section of the text reflects on this process.

This text is written with the intention of generating or provoking questions. Implicit is the notion that complex problems do not have simple or single solutions. This text does however attempt to suggest an approach that might, over time, make a contribution towards improving the school experiences of same-sex attracted (and transgender) young people.
Chapter 1: Positioning The Subject

...there is an instability at the very heart of sex and bodies, the fact that
the body is what it is capable of doing, and what any body is capable
of doing is well beyond the tolerance of any given
culture...Knowledge is the consequence of bodies and in turn enables
bodies to act or prevents bodies from acting, expanding themselves,
overcoming-themselves, becoming.

(Grosz 1995: 214).

Historical Perspectives

Introduction

The literature suggests a number of themes or discourses that are present in historical
accounts of sexuality. The discourses that will be briefly considered here are:

The positioning of sexuality as an essential attribute of subjectivity,

The positioning of sexuality as an attribute of subjectivity that is mapped with
meaning or disciplined,

The positioning of sexuality as distinct from culture,

The notion that the 'origin' of sexuality is located in the past.

The positioning of sexuality as an essential attribute of subjectivity.

Historically sexuality has been considered to be an aspect of self largely outside of or
separate from cultural influences. Connell and Dowssett (1992: 49-75) piece together a
history of Western thought as it relates to sexuality suggesting that discourses regarding
sexuality have changed (see also, Weeks 1981: 143). They argue that sexuality has
historically been understood to be either God-given or in post-enlightenment times as an
aspect of self, linked to the body and knowable scientifically (see also; Crowhurst 1993:
1- 23; Jagose 1996: 8). They use the terms 'nativist' or 'essentialist' to describe such
approaches:

At the bedrock of our culture's thinking about sexuality is the
assumption that a given pattern of sexuality is native to the human
constitution. We will call this assumption 'nativism'. It has much in common with what others call 'essentialism', but we want to stress the assumption about origin. Whether laid down by God, achieved by evolution, or settled by the hormones, the nativist assumption is that sexuality is fundamentally pre-social. Whatever society does, in attempts to control, channel or restrict, cannot alter the fundamentals of sexuality

(Connell and Dowsett 1992: 50).

Connell and Dowsett suggest that until recently, religious versions of nativism (i.e. sexuality as God-given), framed Western thought regarding sexuality. It is with the end of the nineteenth century, they argue, that religious versions of nativism come to be replaced with what they label 'scientific nativism' (1992: 50-2: for 'scientific nativism': 52). The work of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Kinsey and Masters and Johnson are considered and critiqued as reductionist, heterosexist, mechanistic and culturally biased (see also, Weeks 1977: 11-83; and Weeks 1981: 141-152), and the social implications of such frameworks are also outlined:

Though nativism is dead as a scientific program, it remains powerful as social ideology. Here religion and natural science are in unexpected alliance to support social 'common sense': boys need to sow their wild oats, rapists may be caught but rape cannot be stopped, girls naturally want to look beautiful and to have babies, lesbianism is unnatural...

(Connell and Dowsett 1992: 56).

With some scientists continuing to search for strands of DNA that 'cause' same-sex attraction and others looking to establish differences in the structure of straight and same-sex attracted brains, the claim that scientific nativism is dead as a scientific program is debatable (see, Steinberg 1999: 59-85). The suggestion, however, that such frameworks, by theorizing a causal link between biology and behaviour, often excuse certain behaviours is valid.

Of central importance here however, is the notion that sexuality has historically been positioned as an aspect of subjectivity that is biologically based. More specifically it has been positioned as an aspect of subjectivity that is of the body. And while Connell and Dowsett's claim that this positioning excuses certain behaviours is valid such a positioning of sexuality, has also rendered it an aspect of subjectivity to be controlled by reason.
In 'Gender and Power', Connell considers similar terrain as it relates to gender (and in the process he also considers sexuality). He argues that with the end of the nineteenth century and the emergence of Freud, that sexuality and gender (while still not understood as being 'distinct' see, Harris 1996: 16), come to be positioned as psychic processes (as opposed to processes understood as to do with 'the body') negotiated through culture (Connell 1991: 23-61).

Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that sexuality unfolds developmentally, and that this process is provoked by universal psychic dramas. Freudian frameworks suggest that sexuality is a manifestation of the drives of the unconscious psyche which direct the actions and decisions of the subject. It is important to note here that Freud theorized consciousness as layered, with certain layers being both beyond the reach of the subject and universal. Freudian theories suggest that aspects of identity, like sexuality, are an effect of a tense battle that is played out between the various layers of consciousness and culture. Freudian frameworks stress that the unconscious drives that shape desire, while they exist in a psychic realm outside of culture, are given shape within cultural contexts (See: Weeks 1981: 152-3). In doing so, while Freud begins to dismantle the absolute distinction that had been constructed between nature and culture (Connell 1991: 198), sexuality continues to be positioned as an effect of universally shared drives outside of cultural influence. Freudian frameworks essentialize sexuality.

Freudian frameworks in adhering to a notion of universally shared drives, which function through culture to produce 'normal' sexualities have been one of the dominant discourses that have been instrumental in defining homosexualities as abnormal or perverse. Similarly Freudian frameworks have positioned women and girls as incapable of being desiring subjects. By positioning women and girls as incapable of occupying positions of real power, and queer sexualities as 'perverse', Freudian frameworks have been used to justify practices that have impacted on women, and on people who are queer in negative and in harmful ways (Connell 1991: 200; see also Weeks 1977: 30-31). Despite these significant qualifications the Freudian insight that consciousness is layered, and often conflicted, is of enormous interest and of enormous worth in thinking about issues of difference (Connell 1991: 209).

Neo-Freudian theorists, such as Lacan, retain the idea that consciousness is layered but depart from Freud in the sense that the layers are theorized as being an effect of the subject's positioning in culture rather than being pre-social, or a given that achieves shape through culture (see, Furey 1995: 16). Layers of consciousness are 'put down', and these become inaccessible, or unconscious, as the desiring subject changes. The
unconscious represents parts of the subject that have been left behind as the subject moves through culture, through discourse, through social practices and language. The unconscious is akin to a type of loss, or forgetting, that is forged as the active subject moves through the present and into the future.

Lacanian accounts also differ from Freudian accounts of subjectivity, in that, subjectivity within such frameworks is positioned as fragmentary (Phelen 1997; see also; Lacan 1981; Grosz 1990; Reynolds 1994: 252-261). The sense of being a unified subject within Lacanian frameworks is theorized as illusionary. Lacanian accounts of subjectivity suggest that subjectivity is an effect of the desire to attain unity. Lacanian accounts of fragmented subjectivity inform the work of many poststructural writers.

The Lacanian insight that subjectivity is layered and fragmented has been appropriated by many poststructural writers. It does seem plausible to suggest that we may in fact be inherently fragmented. Other poststructural writers however, disagree, and stress that such fragmentation could also be an effect of contradictory discourses that subjects are embedded in, and that they take-up, that fragmentation could be an effect of cultural factors.

While Lacanian accounts can be critiqued on the basis that they essentialize the fragmentation of the subject, and seem to downplay cultural factors, the main criticism that can be levelled at such accounts is not I believe their tendency to essentialize but rather the tendency for such explanations to seek the position of meta-narrative. It is at the point where psychoanalytic theory (of whatever persuasion) ceases to offer a perspective and instead poses as meta-discourse that it is unconvincing. Psychoanalytic insights, offer an interesting perspective but they certainly do not offer the only perspective, and they certainly do not have the answers to bring questions relating to sexualities or subjectivities to closure. Where writers who use psychoanalytic theories inform sections of this text the intention is that their ideas be read as interesting rather than as prescriptive.

Essentialist discourses position sexuality as either an effect of the body or as an effect of the mind. And in doing so they also differ from some contemporary accounts in the sense that they artificially separate the two. Contemporary accounts of sexuality, such as those that are currently dominant within the humanities, and particularly those that are informed by feminist theory, are interested in complicating and calling into question the assumption that there is an absolute distinction between mind and body.

The positioning of sexuality as an attribute of subjectivity that is mapped with meaning or disciplined.
Connell and Dowsett also consider 'frame' theories which suggest that gender and sexuality are learnt, shaped or given meaning in culture. 'Symbolic Interactionalist' accounts, for example, suggest that meanings are brought to sexualities (Greenblat 1981: 22-3). Such accounts suggest a sexual base onto which meanings are mapped. Sexuality, within such frameworks, becomes a bedrock that is given meaning using cultural filters and knowledges. The difficulty with such approaches is that they continue to theorize the body as distinct from the mind and also as distinct from culture. Sexuality, and the body, are also positioned somewhat passively within symbolic interactionalist accounts, waiting to be inscribed with meaning as they are. Moira Gatens, considers such terrain in 'Imaginary Bodies' (1996: 9).

Connell and Dowsett also consider behavioural theories which suggest that particular versions of gender and sexuality are perpetuated via a system of punishments or rewards. They stress that while such accounts represent a movement away from biological determinism, and that while there are positive theoretical aspects to such accounts, that they are nevertheless flawed.

Such accounts offer no explanation as to the motivation that entices individuals to enforce rules that might regulate gender and sexuality. And further, in assuming an absolute distinction between the body and culture, between base and superstructure, between mind and body, such frameworks essentialize the difference between socially constructed categories such as gender and sexuality, such as mind and body, such as gay and straight (see, Connell 1991: 50-1; Butler 1993: 1-23; Connell and Dowsett 1992: 56-60; Wyn and White 1997: 64-6). Harris covers similar ground and makes related criticisms of such accounts of sexuality and gender (Harris 1996: 16-28).

Early in the process of working on this thesis I read a great deal of feminist literature that employed notions of the body being inscribed or mapped with meaning. I was particularly interested in a discussion of the cortex that is referred to in Elizabeth Grosz's work (1994: 41), (which I was incorrectly reading at the time as being a discussion about the writing of social meanings on the bedrock of the body). I went to the anatomy and physiology library in the Medical faculty and wandered around, looking at bodies that had been dissected and that were on display in fish tanks of formalin in order to see what the cortex looked like. It was fascinating to see this secret body opened up; the bones; the muscle and the tissue; even if it did leave me feeling like Frankenstein's lab assistant.

On each of the displays was the name of the surgeon who had performed the dissection. And many of the displays were labelled. My impression on wandering around the library
was that in this case the feminist language of 'mapping' was entirely appropriate. These cadavers had indeed been scientifically observed, mapped and labelled. The layers of the body, under the skin, were unbelievably complex, and physicians would certainly require a precise mapping to guide them in their work.

My feeling on viewing the cadavers was that while they were very definitely entities in their own right, they had certainly nevertheless had meaning conferred on them, they had been inscribed with additional meanings. Following Symbolic Interactionist theory I think that it is correct to suggest that the cadavers represented a base, in this case a static base, that had been mapped or inscribed with social meaning. In relation to sexuality however, I think that it is a little more complex than this, or differently complex from this, and that 'it' (sexuality) is not an attribute of subjectivity that lends itself to labelling or observation, in quite the same way that bones and tissues are able to be observed and labelled. Further, while sexuality is an effect of material practices that embodied subjects engage in it is not material in the way that bones and tissues are material.

Sexuality is enacted by bodies, it is not a static feature of them. Sexuality is not an aspect of embodiment like the colour of the eyes, or muscle tissue. Sexuality can only be glimpsed as it is done, and it can never be observed in isolation in the way that other parts of the body may be dissected and viewed in isolation (these themes will be taken up further in latter sections of the text).

While Symbolic Interactionalist accounts of sexuality, that describe 'it' as an aspect of identity, that is outside of culture, onto which meaning is mapped are of value as a way of thinking about how sexuality is socially constructed they are also limited for a number of reasons. In separating the body from culture they ignore the ways in which the boundary between the body and culture is sometimes traversed. They miss the ways that cultures are often evident in and on the body. In positioning the body as a pristine, sovereign state, that is only impinging on at the level of meaning, they miss the way that the body engages with culture and the way that culture is engaged with and appropriated by the body. They miss the many ways in which culture and the body are 'inseparable' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1998: 1). And further there is a tendency within such accounts to impose a unity on an aspect of subjectivity, like sexuality, that empties it of complexity, contradiction, fragmentation or difference.

The positioning of sexuality as distinct from culture.

Phenomenology is preoccupied with the boundaries of the body and invites many questions (Merleau Ponty 1974: 35-110). Phenomenology ruminates on the edges or
boundaries of sensation. When I touch another person, for example, the sensation of touch simultaneously reinforces a boundary, and calls it into question. When I look at a landscape, my vision stretches, sometimes miles, beyond the boundary of my body, to take in that vision. When I listen to someone else speak, the vibrations that are the sounds that they speak, impact on my ear drums and reverberate there. The sound that they have made crosses the boundary that is my body and produces an effect in it. Phenomenology while ultimately still separating the body from culture, and bodies from other bodies, complicates and questions the degree of separation.

Grosz, pushes phenomenological frameworks, in the sense that the blurring of the boundary that she theorizes between the body and culture doesn't only emanate from the body and extend outwards. For Grosz, this blurring of the boundary between the body and culture, also includes the way that culture is able to inhabit the subject, the way that culture is able to come to be, in some senses, literally inscribed and present on the body as a result of the work that embodied subjects do as they move through culture.

In doing so, she departs from the way that the relationship between the body and culture has been thought about in the past. The body does not only act on culture, culture acts on the body and this action can be very subtle and can also be achieved with the subject's cooperation. (Such ideas, are prevalent in the work of other writers and indicate one way that contemporary social thought, as it relates to sexuality and the body, differs from that which has preceded it. I will consider Grosz and similar theorists, in more detail, in the section that follows this).

Elizabeth Grosz considers the blurred boundary that separates the body from culture, where she writes about the cortex, the body and body image (1994, 62-85). The cortex is the membrane that covers the brain. It is 'mapped' by the actions of the body as it moves through culture. Medical scientists can observe this mapping and see the sections of the cortex that correspond to sections of the body. The cortex mappings of one person can be subtly different to those of another and in this sense the cortex can be described as plastic. Grosz also reports that not only is the cortex plastic in this sense but also in that these mappings can change after injury. When a finger is lost for example the remaining fingers are able to colonize the newly available space on the cortex. What is of interest in this discussion is that the structure of the body can be impacted on by culture.

There is an illustration in Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' that is concerned with related terrain. The illustration is of a tree that is tied to a stake in such a manner that over time the shape of the tree is altered. The illustration, which is dated 1749, is entitled 'Orthopaedics or the art of preventing and correcting deformities of the body in children'
(1991: Fig 10). The intention of the picture is to illustrate the aim of Orthopaedic surgery, namely the correction of skeletal abnormalities with the aid of surgery or other surgical braces and the like. Orthopaedic surgeons straighten bones by restricting and redirecting them, they change the shape of bones. Culture, via the work of the surgeon, impacts on the body not only at the level of meaning but very obviously in a manner that can produce differences in or on the body.

Foucault's choice of illustration demonstrates a moment where cultural influence is depicted as imposed. Foucault and Grosz, however, while, they are interested in the influence of culture on bodies suggest that this influence happens as a result of work that bodies do, rather than as a result of the imposition of an order of some sort, on the body, by an external force against its will (See: Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 23; Butler 1993: 22). These themes will be returned to in later sections of the thesis for they also illustrate a significant way in which some contemporary social theory departs from historical accounts.

There are other examples where the body, as a physical structure, is altered as it engages with culture that are more obvious than changes to the surface of the cortex or the interventions of a surgeon. The meals that we cook that comprise our diet, if they are full of fat, will have an impact on our bodies. The decision to pierce our ears will result in a hole in the skin that makes up the ear lobe. The decision to work out on a gym will mean that the texture of the body may change.

There are many social practices that embodied subjects engage in that have an impact on the structure of the body. There are many cultural practices that shape the body. It is not such a leap to make similar suggestions in relation to sexuality i.e. that the social practices that we engage in as we live our sexualities impact on our bodies in significant ways. Grosz and Foucault are writers who challenge us to acknowledge the inter-relatedness of bodies and culture and in doing so they depart from the way that such relationships have been theorized in the past.

*The notion that the 'origin' of sexuality is located in the past.*

...it is time for genetic narratives like psychoanalysis...to stop representing the idiot perseveration of the assaultive and sinister question, Where do homosexuals come from. The complications I have been trying to introduce here are a way of saying, "Get used to it."

(Sedgwick 1994i: 95)
A further way that historical accounts of sexuality differ from some contemporary frameworks is in the sense that often they have been concerned with aetiology. What causes sexuality? What is the origin of sexuality? These are the questions that have often motivated researchers and theorists of sexuality and have often been mirrored with the desire to normalize or police behaviour. And fuelling this search is the belief, supported by discourses that position sexuality as an essential aspect of subjectivity, that 'the truth' of sexuality is to be found inside the body, or inside the mind, and that this 'truth' is locatable, unified, fixed and observable. This theoretical focus on searching for an origin, that is located in a biological past, is another factor that divides historical accounts of sexuality from contemporary social theory.

Jeffrey Weeks, comments on the search for origins as follows:

One might have views (as to aetiology), but that does not affect the more interesting questions. The issue of whether there is a biological or psychological propensity that distinguishes those who are sexually attracted to people of the same gender from those who are not can safely be left to those who want to cut up brains, explore DNA or count angels on the point of a needle. The really important debates are concerned with the meanings these propensities acquire, however or why ever they occur, the social categorizations that attempt to demarcate the boundaries of meanings, and their effect on collective attitudes and individual sense of self.  

(Weeks 1999: 16)

I would like to side with Weeks, and contemporary poststructural theory, to suggest a similar interest in 'lived sexualities' rather than an interest in uncovering the origins of a sexuality buried in a genetic code or in the psyche.

Contemporary social theorists do not position sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that is absolutely separate from culture. They do not position sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that originates solely from somewhere inside the body or the mind. They do not position sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that can be isolated and observed. Rather, contemporary social theory seeks to position sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that takes shape as the embodied subject engages in social practices within social contexts. Contemporary social theory positions sexuality as an attribute of subjectivity that is relational, and as such, is interested in the ways that embodied subjects live and construct their sexualities in relationship with social structures, in relationship with
systems of meaning and in relationship with other people. Contemporary social theory leaves questions of 'origin' to one side and instead concerns itself with questions regarding the lived experiences of subjects as they engage in the work of constructing sexualities.

Sexuality ceases to be considered as an aspect of subjectivity that lurks inside the body somewhere, separate from the world, fixed and able to be known, uncovered and observed, and instead, comes to be theorized as fluid, as relational, and as inseparable from culture. Sexuality comes to be theorized as lived and as open ended. And if there is to be any observable sexual 'truth' then that truth, following contemporary social theory, is just as likely to be glimpsed in the future as it is in the past.

Plummer, quoted in Weeks, covering similar terrain, and writing about same-sex sexualities, for example writes that:

In scarcely a quarter of a century, same-sex experiences in the western world have been ruptured from the simplified, unified, distorting, often medical, frequently criminal, always devalued categories of the past. Instead, they have increasingly become a diverse array of relational, gendered, erotic, political, social, and spiritual experiences, difficult to tame and capture with restrictive and divisive labels. Criss-crossing their way through class, gender, and ethnicity, a stream of emerging identities, new experiences, political practices, and ways of living together have been firmly placed on the political agendas of the future.

(Plummer in Weeks 1999: 17)

This thesis is influenced by the thinking of contemporary social theorists and is interested in sexualities as they are lived, and as they emerge in cultural contexts. The notion that cultural contexts play an essential part in the shaping the sexualities that embodied subjects actively construct, is taken as axiomatic in this text.

There is indeed a shift in the theoretical focus of contemporary social theorists from searching for a known and certain past to exploring the lived sexualities of embodied subjects as they make their way toward an unknown and uncertain future. I'd like to suggest, following Plummer, that contemporary social theory is concerned with sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that takes shape in culture as it is lived. I would like to elaborate on this in some detail in the next section.
Poststructural Theory - Discourse and Fragmented Subjectivities

Introduction

In this section I will elaborate on poststructural theory and how such theory explores subjectivity. This focus will be on key terms and concepts including; subjectivity, embodied subjectivity, discourse, the relationship between subjectivity and discourse and the notion of multiple or fragmentary subjectivity.

Catherine Belsey, quoted in Gunew, writing about subjectivity (in the 1980's) states that:

Subjectivity is discursively produced and is constrained by the range of subject-positions defined by the discourses in which the concrete individual participates...In this sense existing discourses determine not only what can be said and understood, but the nature of subjectivity itself, what it is possible to be...Since meaning is plural, to be able to speak is to be able to take part in the contest for meaning which issues in the production of new subject-positions, new determinations of what it is possible to be. (Belsey in Gunew 1994: 54)

Sexuality is one aspect of subjectivity and Belsey argues that 'subjectivity' is negotiated within cultural contexts. In the process she uses a number of concepts which need to be defined and clarified. I will consider the terms, subjectivity, concrete individual and, discourse.

Subjectivity

Belsey uses the word 'subjectivity' in preference to the word 'identity'. She does so, in concert with feminist poststructural theory, to challenge the notion, implicit in the term identity, that people unfold, from the inside out, like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Gilbert and Taylor, drawing on Fiske, also highlight this distinction: '...the individual' is viewed as being essentially biological, the notion of 'the subject' highlights the 'constructed sense of the individual in a network of social relations'...' (1991: 24). Discourses that employ the term 'identity' often seek to erase the degree to which structural factors, which are evident in cultural discourses, are embedded in and taken up by people in very subtle, complex and deep ways (see also Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 261-263).
In opposition to discourses of 'identity' which suggest a personhood that is separate from culture, feminist 'poststructural theory' (see, Furey 1995: 4-6: 38) is interested to explore the links that exist between personhood and culture. Using the word 'subjectivity' denotes this. Belsey articulates a position where personhood or 'subjectivity' (Furey 1995: 5-6) is understood to be an effect of the work that the subject engages in within culture.

**Concrete individuals: Embodied subjects**

Belsey, in the quote referred to previously, also states that subjectivity is produced as the 'concrete individual' 'participates' in social practices that offer the possibility of various 'subject positions' (theorists writing at the current time often use the term 'embodied subjectivity' rather than 'concrete individual' to refer to this) (see, Cranny-Francis 1995: 1-21; de Lauretis 1993: 84-5). In doing so she stresses that subjects are formed as they enact social practices and draws attention to the body (Cranny-Francis 1995: 1-21).

Subjects are formed as they seek to access subject positions that discourses make available to them. 'Concrete' subjects seek to access these positions as they engage in social practices. Belsey also, correctly, draws some distinction between the individual and discourse, in order to suggest that the individual is not entirely an effect of 'discourse', and further to suggest that the individual can resist discourse (Harris 1996: 26-7). My position is that while there is certainly a relationship between discourse and subjectivity, that there are clearly aspects of subjectivity that are outside of discourse.

However, there is not a question of hierarchy here. Aspects of subjectivity that are socially constructed are every bit as 'real' and every bit as valid as those that are biologically based. They are equally significant. The belief that one has managed to identify that which is purely natural or purely cultural often represents the construction of a binary that doesn't stand up to close scrutiny, for in many ways nature and culture (particularly as they are evident around sexualities) are inseparable (these themes will be further explored in later sections of the text).

**Discourse**

The other term used by Belsey (and other theorists) that requires consideration as it will be used throughout this text is 'discourse'. There is no one definition of this term and it is used in different ways in the literature (see, Mills 1997: 1-28; Misson 1996: 118-121; During 1993: 5-12; Edgar and Sedgwick 1999: 116-9). Here, where the word discourse
is used, it is intended to refer to social practices as well as written and spoken texts. Buchbinder provides a very useful definition as it illustrates how discourse frames experience:

A discourse may be thought of as a kind of language about a topic or preoccupation in the culture. Its 'vocabulary' is not only verbal (that is the words available, and what is actually said) but also behavioural and gestural signs (what physical action, clothing, behaviour and so on are permitted or deemed appropriate). And its 'grammatical' rules define who can speak, who can be spoken to, and what can be 'said', as well as who and what must remain silenced. Discourses thus impose limits and establish relations of power within the culture; and we all learn them, even though they may restrict or deprive us in certain ways. They contribute to how we are defined in the culture and how we may act (and speak) acceptably and appropriately. They also provide us with the very mechanisms by which we view the world, interpret and 'think' it.

(Buchbinder 1994: 29-30)

Misson, discusses the limits of the term discourse when it is narrowly used to denote language, and drawing on the work of James Paul Gee considers the need to extend it's meaning so that it encompasses more than the linguistic. He echoes Gee's concerns around the way that 'the linguistic' often comes to over shadow the embodied in discussions or texts that deploy the term discourse:

The other concern about the term, that the linguistic emphasis in the traditional use of the word 'discourse' is limiting, has been generally recognised. Human subjectivity is not fully constituted in language: there are quite clearly significant extra-linguistic features. The main way of dealing with the problem that has been much favoured in recent times, is to extend the notion of discourse to include the extra-linguistic, either by insisting that everything is ultimately semiotic, or by redefining the term to include the non-linguistic. James Paul Gee talks about the distinction between discourse and Discourse. Big-D Discourse extends well beyond the linguistic. He defines the term thus: a Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, of feeling, believing, valuing and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially
meaningful group or 'social network' or to signal (that one is playing) a socially 'meaningful' role (Gee, 1990, p.143).

(Misson 1996: 119)

It is worth labouring this point. Where discourse is used in this text it is intended to refer to language and to social practices. Here, not only are written and spoken words considered discourse, but things such as the clothes that one wears, and the way that one walks through the world, are also understood as types of discourse.

A further point that needs to be stressed here is that discourse does not exist of its own accord, or in some separate field outside of culture. Discourse is produced and reproduced by subjects as they engage in social practices of various kinds. Discourse is a social product, meaning that it is an effect of action of one kind or another. Subjects produce, resist and reproduce discourse and engage in processes that enable the construction of subjectivity as they do so. Discourse is both an effect of social practices and a social practice itself (these themes will be returned to in latter sections of the text focusing on subject content).

One further point regarding discourse, following the insights of poststructural theorists such as Derrida, is that the meanings that we give and take from discourse are not absolute or fixed. The meaning, which is communicated via discourse, is understood, within poststructural frameworks, to be arrived at as a result of the play between different discourses, and play between different subjects and discourses. Meaning is understood to be an effect of relations of difference. So while discourses may have currency, in the sense that they are collectively understood, such understanding may vary subtly or in major ways from person to person. Discourse as a signifier of meaning within poststructural accounts is understood as fluid and decentred (see, Derrida 1976; Baudrillard 1993).

**The Subject and Discourse**

To recap, the suggestion is that subjectivity is formed within social practices (which are both a form of discourse and also rendered meaningful via discourse) which offer the subject various subject positions. The embodied subject becomes aware, in sometimes very subtle ways, of various ways of 'taking up space in the world' (see Pronger in Altman 1992: 36; Pronger 1990: 8). The embodied subject also becomes aware that he or she is 'positioned' by discourse in particular ways, and that these possibilities or positionings can be accommodated or resisted. The notion that subjects are also positioned by discourse is important to stress. On this, Harris states that: 'Being
subjectively positioned is what occurs when we use a discourse, or are referred to through a discourse' (1996: 13; see also, Davies 2000: 70). Being positioned by discourse therefore is about the taking up of space in an active fashion and also about being the target of discourse.

Hillier and Harrison suggest for example that same sex attracted young people in schools are subject to many discourses which attempt to position them in negative ways (Hillier, and Harrison (under review); See also, Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 167-8; for historical accounts, see: Weeks 1981: 104-5). They offer the following as examples of such discourse:

* That to be same-sex attracted was to be evil or allied with the devil
* That to be same-sex attracted was akin to an illness or pathology
* That to be same-sex attracted was to be unnatural or abnormal
* That being a same-sex attracted teenager was an immature phase that would pass with transition into adulthood and the maturity of heterosexuality.

(Hillier and Harrison (under review))

Similarly, Emslie identifies that same-sex attracted young people are subject to discourses that negatively position them in that they: '...(associate) homosexual emotions and relations with immorality, the unnatural, abnormality, danger and disorder...' (Emslie 1999: 161). Thankfully Hillier and Harrison also suggest however, drawing on contemporary poststructural theory, that such discourses, and the subject positions that they offer same-sex attracted young people are more often than not rejected by them. Hillier and Harrison, refer to alternative narratives/discourses that these young people construct that enable them to resist, deconstruct or transcend such limiting discourse (see, Hillier 3/5/2000).

This raises another important point regarding the relationship between the subject and discourse, namely that subjects actively engage with discourse. Discourse does not inevitably come to be inscribed on the passively waiting subject. Misson very clearly makes the point that discourses are not monolithic, and that they are received differently by different people:

(Discourse) has been an extremely important concept in developing critical literacy, but we have been asking it to do too
much work and it is now becoming exhausted. Why the term has been so significant is that it has been pivotal in theorising the connection between society, ideology, the individual consciousness (subjectivity), and language. Language is social, and discourses, made out of language, have ideology inscribed in them which then constitute the subjectivity of those hearing and speaking those discourses...(but)...there is often too simple a sense of the way in which a discourse produces a particular subjectivity, as if the discourse simply imprints itself perfectly onto the blank and waiting human material. Different people receive and use discourses quite differently.

(Misson 1996: 118-9)

Subjects actively engage with discourse as they make sense of it and as they engage in social practices that construct it.

Keeping these reservations in mind contemporary social theory suggests that discourse and subjectivity are interconnected or 'inseparable' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1998: 1; see also, Harris 1996: 14: 27; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 266). Subjectivity is achieved, as it is done by subjects, as they engage with various discourses, rather than an essential attribute that unfolds according to a biologically driven plan (see, Harris 1996: 27).

Multiple Subjectivities

Contemporary poststructural theory (drawing in many instances on the writings of Lacan) further complicates the scenario however, by suggesting that not only is it the case that subjectivity and discourse are linked but that subjectivity is also multiple or fragmentary (see: Harris 1996: 26; de Lauretis 1993: 83; Reynolds 1994: 249: 252-61). Subjectivity is (following psychoanalytic theory) inherently fragmentary in the sense that we can access many different subject positions and in the sense that we are positioned by discourse as types of subjects in many different ways. Subjectivity is fragmentary in the sense that we take up space in the world as embodied subjects, and are discursively positioned as subjects in multiple ways (see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 267).

This is not to suggest a state of affairs bordering on the psychotic, but rather to suggest that personhood is complex. This complexity however, can sometimes be experienced by the subject as contradictory and where this occurs often the result is tension. Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli’s work considers such themes and is very relevant to this text. Pallotta-Chiarolli, considers situations where one aspect of subjectivity collides with another in a manner that doesn’t lend itself to a neat resolution. In 'A Rainbow in my Heart' for
example, she writes of an Italian lesbian trade-unionist, named Silvana, who becomes aware that she is straddling different, and from her perspective sometimes contradictory, subject positions. Silvana is quoted as saying:

I remember one conference on women in the workforce and trade unions. Lesbians were getting up and saying, 'We have to talk about these issues of sexuality', and the migrant women were standing up and saying, 'We've got more important things to talk about. About exploitation and racism.' In the meantime my allegiances are ping-ponging between both groups. These Anglo women turned around and said, 'But what do you know? Do you really know what lesbian issues are all about?' And one Greek woman stood up and said, 'Have you ever heard of Lesbos? This is not an Anglo island. It's not an Anglo world we live in.' I was laughing and wanted to cry at the same time. I wanted to stand up and say, 'You're both right! You're both wrong! Get it together because those issues live inside me!

(Pallotta-Chiarolli 1996: 59-60)

This extract highlights the tensions that surface in Silvana's life because she is never 'only' a lesbian and never 'only' an Italian. She is both simultaneously and she is discursively positioned and seeks to position herself within seemingly contradictory discourses of ethnicity and sexuality. Her subjectivity is fragmented and multiple and the contradictions and the ensuing tension that this multiplicity provokes offer Silvana the opportunity to make decisions regarding how she will live or do her ethnicity and how she will live or do her sexuality.

Davies writes of a similar situation where a student in a class that she is teaching, becomes aware that she is occupying multiple subject positions and that these are in conflict (1994: 27-35). The student's daughter had been abused by her partner and this had caused a great degree of tension and anger. The woman is outraged that her ex-partner has abused her daughter but still has to contend with the end of her relationship with the perpetrator of her daughter's abuse. Davies argues, through this piece, that the tension experienced by this woman, is an effect of the contradictions that are evident in the different subject positions that this woman has 'taken up' (to focus on two, the subject positions of 'mother' and 'partner').

Contemporary social theory also suggests that fragmentation is not only evident 'between' discourses (e.g. sexuality and ethnicity) but that fragmentation and multiplicity
is also evident 'within' discourses. Discourses of sexuality, for example, are therefore fragmented and multiple and not unitary or monolithic. In the case above Silvana is aware that she 'does' a number of sexualities. She is 'differently' lesbian in different contexts or to say the same thing another way, there are multiple discourses of sexuality, that she can and does access, as she lives her sexuality and accordingly she is aware (on some level) that she lives or does, a number, of sexualities.

In other work I have also pursued such ideas (Crowhurst 1999). I argue for instance in an article that considers what might be done to support same-sex attracted secondary school students that it is important to refer them to, or support them to construct spaces, where they can begin the work of constructing 'positive parallel gaynesses' (Crowhurst 1999: 176). I argue within the article that the task is to build up these positive spaces to the extent that they take up more space in the young person's life than the negative ones. Implicit in this argument, is the idea that, gayness (the article focused on young men) is not one thing, that 'it' is multiple. Contemporary social theory not only points to the different fragments that constitute subjectivity but also to the fragments that are evident within these fragments.

The implications of the linkages between Discourse and Embodied Subjectivity

To recap then, the suggestion is that discourse and bodies cease to be understood as separate and instead come to be seen as connected and in relationship. Subjectivity is constructed within social practices which in turn occur within cultural contexts and sexuality is understood to be one socially constructed aspect of subjectivity.

Discourse as it is used here is intended to refer to social practices and to spoken or written texts. And further, discourses are understood to function in multiple ways, and to entertain the possibility of multiple meanings, in the sense that they:

1 position subjects or behaviours in certain ways,

2 provide various subject positions, which are embedded with values, that subjects can access or resist as they do the work of taking up space in the world,

3 are rendered meaningful in different ways as they are engaged with by different subjects.
Sexuality is understood to be a process or project, that takes shape as a result of the work that subjects do. The work that subjects do in order to access subject positions made available to them by discourse. Sexuality is seen as an effect of and achieved within such processes. The reasons that people want to access particular subject positions or reject others I am not sure of and there is no attempt to 'answer' such questions in this text. I do not know why different people desire in the ways that they do. What is clear however, is that, it is within processes of 'doing' certain subject positions, that subjects feel are right for them, that subjectivity comes to be (see Butler 1990; these themes will be taken up further in chapter 5).

Subjectivity, within poststructural frameworks, is understood as being achieved as agentic subjects live their lives in the cultural contexts in which they find themselves. And this framing of subjectivity, as a highly active process, that involves the subject making choices as he or she negotiates cultural contexts, is very different from most historical accounts which have suggested that subjectivity unfolds in a pre-determined manner largely outside of cultural influence (see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 267-8).

A Note on Choice

Here, I'd like to make a specific point drawing on the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick regarding the notion of choice. Sedgwick states that:

the subtle constructivist argument that sexual aim is, at least for many people, not a hard-wired biological given but, rather, a social fact deeply embedded in the cultural and linguistic forms of many, many decades is being degraded to the blithe ukase that people are 'free at any moment to'...'choose'...to adhere to a particular sexual identity...rather than to its other.

(Sedgwick 1993: 258)

Consider also Sumara and Davis who while discussing the notion that sexuality is socially constructed state:

This does not mean to suggest that sexuality is chosen or that it may be altered by changing one's circumstances or one's mind about things. Rather, it suggests that there is a complex and ever-evolving relationship between the biological and the phenomenological, a relationship that always shifts with context over the course of one's lifetime.

(Sumara and Davis 1999: 196)
To suggest, as this text does, that there are linkages between sexualities and discourse, is *not* to position sexuality as an effect of 'easy' choices that subjects make, and is *not* to suggest that all of these choices are conscious ones. Nor is it to suggest that sexuality is 'entirely' an effect of discourse (see Harris 1996: 66). While sexuality is bound up in choices made by subjects, and practices that subjects have engaged in, it is important to foreground the subtlety, the layers and the embeddedness that Sedgwick alludes to (for a related discussion see Duggan 1994: 9-10; see also, Esterberg 1996: 265). Later sections of the text will take up these themes further.

To claim that sexuality is bound up with choices that subjects make in culture is not to slip into the claim that it is without depth or that it can easily be changed. To suggest that something is socially constructed is not to infer an absence of depth (see chapter 5) (see Butler 1993: 234). To suggest that sexuality is fluid is certainly not to suggest that it can be altered at will or that it can be altered without cost.

Having said that however, as there are deep linkages between embodied subjectivity and discourse, it is important to reflect on discourse in order to reflect on how discourse may change so that subjectivity may too. Elizabeth Grosz, suggests that there are values embedded in discourse, and that as subjects engage with discourse that these values can be 'taken up' by them (while discourse does not absolutely embed values as it can be resisted; values can be embedded in discourse in very subtle ways that make resistance difficult). It follows that if these values are limiting that they may also limit the subjects that take them up.

I will now turn to consider how values that can limit same-sex attracted subjects can be evident within discourse in obvious and in subtle ways. Later sections of the text will then turn to consider what it means to suggest that discourse can be 'taken up' by subjects.
Embedded Values and Subjectivity: Heteroprivilegist Discourse

Introduction

A few years ago I was asked to be involved in a training program focusing on issues to do with difference and school culture. I was invited to facilitate a discussion focusing on lesbian and gay school experience. The training program was ironically entitled: 'We Don't Discriminate We Treat Them All the Same'.

The project workers who had designed and organised the program were interested to explore the tensions that surface or become evident where the culture of the school collides with the cultural background of the students who are seeking to use the space that is the school. The training program was an attempt to explore the many ways that cultures of learning are not neutral spaces but rather are sites that have the potential to carry particular values that may disadvantage some students (see, Crowhurst 1998). The idea that there are discourses that circle schools that are embedded with values that might subtly disadvantage members of the school community by positioning them, or offering them, less expansive ways of being an embodied subject within a particular school culture, will now be considered. (The idea that school sites are not value neutral and that therefore they have the potential to disadvantage certain categories of students is not new and is not confined to poststructural discussions of sexualities). (See: Catholic Education Commission of Victoria 1994: 6-7).

I will attempt this firstly by briefly exploring the proposition that discourses are value laden. I will draw on the ideas of Elizabeth Grosz to explore how discourse might be value laden, and in the process will imply or offer examples of how such discourse might constrain embodied subjects. I will argue, following Grosz, that values are evident in discourse in a layered fashion, and that as a consequence there is a need to work against limiting or negative values that are embedded in discourse in multiple and in layered ways. I coin the term 'heteroprivilegism' which is intended to refer to the way that values that privilege heterosexuality are evident as discourse and embedded within discourse in a layered fashion. These layers, following the literature, I label homophobic, heterosexist and heterocentric. I do so in order to convey the idea, following the literature, that values can be evident in discourse in subtle and in obvious ways. I will then argue, drawing again on the work of Grosz, the usefulness or appropriateness of using discourses of constraint or oppression to discuss the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people.
Grosz's Framework

Grosz, writing about 'prevailing models of knowledges' outlines a framework that delineates 'the range and scope of misogyny' (1988: 92). The framework focuses on academic disciplines, particularly the humanities, but is also useful in identifying and categorising misogyny, as it is evident, in various discourses. Essentially, Grosz suggests that misogynist values are evident in discourse in a layered fashion, with some layers being more obvious than others. While she focuses on gender the broad framework that she suggests is applicable to many other areas of interest. In relation to this text, the ideas that underpin her framework are of particular relevance to questions of sexualities.

Grosz identifies three layers of misogyny which she labels sexist, patriarchal and phallocentric. She offers a definition of each of the layers and draws out the difference in subtlety that characterizes them. Consider her definitions which are quoted at length below:

1. Sexism/t:

   ...sexism within knowledges consists in a series of specifically determinable acts of discrimination privileging men and depriving women. By 'acts' here I mean propositions, arguments, assertions, methodologies-discernible textual references to women or femininity. Sexism is a manifest phenomenon, easily illustrated, for it ranges from the open expression of hostility or suspicion about women, to ignoring and excluding women altogether from being considered worthy or relevant objects of investigation. Sexism is the unwarranted differential treatment of the two sexes (Grosz 1988: 93).

2. Patriarchal:

   ...patriarchal knowledges comprise a more systematic form of women's oppression and containment that women experience as the objects of sexist knowledge. Even if sexism could be 'eliminated' and even if the two sexes behaved in identical ways, their behaviours would still not have the same social meaning and value. Above and beyond particular acts of sexist discrimination, patriarchy constitutes underlying structure regulating, organising...
and positioning men and women in places of different value and with differential access to self-determination. Patriarchal oppression provides a context, structure, support and legitimation for the various sexist acts of discrimination. In turn, it exists relatively independently of sexist acts. As an underlying structure of evaluation, it can be analysed most directly in the unspoken assumptions lying behind the postulate of apparently sexually neutral terms, Reason, Knowledge, Truth etc. (Grosz 1988: 94).

3 Phallocentrism:

...prevailing models and ideas of theory also participate in phallocentrism, which is a discursive or representational form of women's oppression. Phallocentrism conflates the two (autonomous) sexes into a singular 'universal' model which, however, is only congruent with the masculine. Whenever the two sexes are represented in a single, so called 'human' model, the female or feminine is always represented in male or masculine terms. Phallocentrism is the abstracting, universalising, and generalising of masculine attributes so that women's or femininity's concrete specificity and potential for autonomous definition are covered over. It is thus more difficult to locate than sexist or patriarchal commitments, for it renders female autonomy and self-representations impossible and conceals alternatives. It operates as a condition of possibility for statements, methods, axioms and judgements and cannot be so readily illustrated by concrete examples as sexist or patriarchal models. It is a theoretical bedrock of shared assumptions that is so pervasive that it is no longer recognised (Grosz 1988: 94).

Grosz proposes that misogyny is evident in discourse in layered and in complex ways. At one level, there is discourse that is obviously sexist, in the sense that not only does it position women as 'less than' men but that this positioning is easily identifiable. When, for example, a male P.E. teacher, says to a group of boys: 'You're playing like a bunch of girls', he is accessing a discourse that is identifiably sexist. He is speaking a discourse, that is embedded with values that seeks to position women and men within a series of power relations that privilege men and that disadvantage women, and in doing so he is also accessing a subject position that offers him the privileges that flow to all men (but particularly to heterosexual men), within patriarchal and misogynist cultures.
Davies considers related terrain where she states:

Who we are, our subjectivity, is spoken into existence in every utterance, not just in the sense that others speak us into existence and impose unwanted structures on us, as much early feminist writing presumed, but in each moment of speaking and being we each reinvent ourselves inside the male/female dualism, socially, psychically, and physically.

(Davies 2000: 85)

I am not suggesting here that the Phys Ed teacher does all of this consciously. What he does when he speaks this discourse into being is an effect of what he has learnt, and like all that is learnt can after a time become unconscious. It is also important to note however that his speech does not appear out of thin air, and that in some senses it does not emanate from him alone (see Dwyer 1989: 63). When he accuses the boys of: 'Playing like girls', he accesses a discourse that establishes a relationship between himself and a community of sexist subjects who have preceded him (see Butler 1997: 80). His words are not his invention, they are a social product, uttered in a social context and they have a history that he connects with and benefits from as he uses them. That doesn't mean he is not responsible for his actions rather it suggests that there is more to minimizing sexist discourse than targeting the individuals who speak it into being. The cultural contexts that produce such discourse must also be targeted.

Grosz argues that sexist comments, like those made by our fictional P.E. teacher, are structurally supported in that they only make sense within a context where 'to play like a girl' is discursively positioned as inferring that to do so is to play in a manner that is somehow less worthy than 'to play like a boy'. Such comments only make sense within a context where discourse positions boys to be better than girls. Grosz uses the term patriarchal to label this layer of misogyny and suggests that sexism is both enabled by, and an effect of discourses that are embedded with patriarchal values.

The third level of misogyny that Grosz elaborates is far more subtle and insidious. The level of misogyny that Grosz labels phallocentric permeates discourses in a manner that is often unnoticed. The notion of phallocentrism suggests that unexamined, and unmarked places within culture are gendered, in that they are subtly assumed to be male. When the author of a text is unconsciously assumed to be a man, for example, this is an effect of phallocentric discourses and of the phallocentrism that is embedded within discourses.
This is perhaps the most difficult layer to work against because it is perhaps the most subtle and the most difficult to recognize. The concept of 'phallocentrism', like other 'centrism', draws attention to the ways that discourses are subtly embedded with values that position certain categories of subjects as 'different' and other categories of subjects as 'the norm'. The concept of centrism alerts us to the importance of not only working to identify discourses that 'other' but also to the importance of identifying those discourses that subtly construct 'the norm' (see Britzman 1995: 151-165; Martino 1999: 138-149).

In drawing attention to the layered ways in which values can inhabit discourses the importance of working for the achievement of cultures that might be open to all kinds of diversity in layered and multiple ways is made evident. When the P.E. teacher accuses his class of 'playing like girls', for example, Grosz's framework suggests that not only is there a need to rupture such discourse by naming it as sexist and responding to it in obvious ways, but that there is also a need to unpack the structural factors that support and enable such comments to be made in the first place. There is a need to work against such moments in multiple ways (Grosz 1988: 102-3).

Grosz's ideas are relevant to many other areas where individuals are working for the achievement of school cultures that are open to diversity of whatever kind. I'd like to now turn to consider how Grosz's ideas might be applied to questions around discrimination based on constructing a non-hegemonic, a non-heterosexual sexuality. (The notion of 'centrism' is very similar to notions of 'hegemony' or 'ideology' as used by structuralist theorists. The theoretical framework used to understand the phenomenon differs but the object under investigation - 'learnt' attitudes that have become unconscious - is very similar. When I use the term 'hegemony' I use it to indicate a type of ideological seepage, that is a little more intentional or structural than I intend to imply via the use of a notion like centrism). (See also Barthes 1990: 11).

**Extending Grosz's Framework - Heteroprivilegism**

I'd like to use Grosz's framework as the basis of another, which will attempt in a similar fashion to clarify and name some of the layers that make up the phenomenon that is discrimination on the basis of constructing a 'non-hegemonic' (non-heterosexual) sexuality. Following Grosz's lead, I would like to suggest three layers of values and I will label these: Homophobic, Heterosexist and Heterocentric. I will also coin the term 'Heteroprivilegist' as an umbrella term or shorthand to refer to discourses that are homophobic, heterosexist or heterocentric, and further to suggest that such discourses, while being limiting to all, nevertheless have the effect of privileging heterosexuality and heterosexual subjects.
The Homophobic Layer

There are limits to the usefulness of the term 'homophobia' which are discussed by Telford (1997: 9-12) and Glynn (1999: 65-7). One of the main limitations being that in using the term 'phobia' there is recourse to discourse that individualises 'homophobia' and in the process ignores the structural factors that produce it (Beckett 1996: 13-14). Nevertheless, the term homophobia enjoys a certain degree of shared understanding and while it does have limitations I want to retain it in order to refer to actions of a deliberate nature that are directed against same-sex attracted subjects (for a related discussion see, Wyn and White 1997: 137).

When someone screams: 'You fag' or when someone writes the word 'dyke' on a school locker they are being homophobic, in the sense that they are accessing homophobic discourse and in the sense that through their actions they are speaking that discourse into existence. They are also being homophobic in the sense that in actualizing such discourse they seek to position themselves as straight and in doing so to access the benefits that accrue to 'straightness' within environments where homophobic discourse is structurally supported and flourishes.

When Hillier and Harrison (under review), for example, refer to same sex attracted young people encountering discourses that positioned them as evil or as abnormal they offer an example of homophobic discourse. And, as mentioned previously, where the word discourse is used in this text it is intended to refer to a broad range of social practices. It is important to remember that homophobic discourse is spoken and enacted into existence in many ways by embodied subjects. It is important to remember that homophobic discourse is done.

While I have not yet spoken of the participants that I have interviewed for this project or of the methodology that I employed to speak to them (this will be done in the section dealing with methodology) I would like, nevertheless, to refer to some of their comments at this point as they are relevant to this section of the text. Many of the participants spoke of encounters with homophobic discourse.

Violet who was 16, bisexual and attending a State co-educational secondary school at the time of the interview provided many examples of homophobic discourse (as an aside) when I asked her whether she was aware of any other gay or lesbian students at school:
Ohhhh yeah...Mr X, he gets bagged all the time and there are just rumours that go around the whole school: 'So and so is the biggest faggot' and that sort of...it's just strains of abuse without any reasoning it's not that he's an arsehole because he's done this or this it's just that he's an arsehole because he's gay....And he's got to have all of these things wrong with him...And there's a lot of bullying in the corridors and when you walk past they'll stand on each side of the corridor and as you walk they'll just push you from this side to that.

Michael described himself as gay and attended a rural co-educational State school until year 8 before shifting to a rural co-educational Catholic school in year 9. Speaking about the State school he had attended he also provided an example of an encounter with homophobic discourse when he said:

Uh...I didn't tell anyone I was gay of course but I...they could tell anyway they could sense that I was different...and that's when they start teasing and...um...you know...They just gave me a hard time in general like not even talking to me that sort of thing.

Later in the interview Michael talked about his peers at the Catholic school and provided a further example:

M At the Private school...they're accepting of gay people but they sort of say: 'Well as long as they don't do it near me' or something like that...I don't know I think where I live as well it's not really out in the country and...We talk about it (gay people) a lot 'cause they don't know that I am...Um one of my friends just 'came out' and like told everyone...And the reaction was...I was glad actually that he did because I could see the reaction of everybody else...I mean some people were shocked and said: 'That's disgusting' and some people said 'Oooo they always thought that he was'...and some people they accepted him so...um...they sort of say that as long as he doesn't do it near us...that sort of thing...

I So as long as it doesn't impinge on them
M Yeah they don't have to really worry as much

I And how do you feel about that?

M Um...I'm not really worried because like they don't say: 'Well let's go and bash them all' or whatever

I Does that set up any situations for you or put you under any pressure?

M Oh well...I've decided not to tell anyone.

Veronica, was nearly 17 at the time of the interview and described herself as a lesbian. She attended a State single sex secondary school where she was in Year 12. During the course of the interview she mentioned an encounter with an English teacher who accessed homophobic discourses within the classroom:

IVF programs...I brought some articles in about same-sex couples wanting a child and the teacher said: 'I really think that that is disgusting...If they want a child why don't they just go with a woman or go with a man'...and I just got so infuriated...

I So the teacher said that?

V Yes...In front of the class

I And how did you respond seeing as you had brought in the article?

V I just started arguing for it...And then the teacher she still couldn't understand it...They'd never say anything about two white couples adopting a black child but...when it's same-sex issues they do not allow it, for god knows what reason, for religion, but religion really has nothing to do with it, from what I've studied...

Kelvin was 15 at the time of the interview and described himself as gay. He attended a State co-educational 7-12 secondary school. At one point in the interview where he was
talking about body language and peers he mentioned how he had policed the way that he walked and talked to avoid being beaten by students enacting homophobic discourses:

K  Sometimes you have to change the way that you walk and not just the tone of your voice but the way that you talk...

I  And what is motivating you to do that? Why do you want to do that?

K  Ummmm...I don't really like it but I just know that I have to because if they find out about me then ummm...What am I going to do?...I'll have to leave school probably...

I  So you'd be scared or fearful of the reaction of other people at your school? What would you be fearful of there?

K  Ummmm...probably...I know I'd get bashed

I  So physical violence

K  Yeah...Verbal doesn't worry me but I know I'd definitely get bashed up

I  How do you know that you'd definitely get bashed?

K  Well you just hear the straight guys say: 'Let's go bash him' or...

I  Is that in relation to you?

K  No but I heard one guy say to this other guy: 'There's this guy in year 7 and he's a real faggot let's go bash him'...Stuff like that

I  And would that be widespread or a small group?

K  Probably widespread I'd say.
Louise who described herself as a lesbian was 18 and in year 12 at the time of the interview. She attended a co-educational Catholic school. She made some comments about homophobic discourse in the form of graffiti:

Our lockers are in the corridor and I don’t know who’s locker it is but recently within the last two weeks of school someone has written ‘fag’ on someone’s locker and I mean

I If another word was

L It would probably be taken off yeah but they haven’t done anything about ‘fag’...

Max was 16 at the time of the interview and described herself as a lesbian. She attended a State co-educational secondary school in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs. She was in Year 11. At one point in the interview she described an encounter with homophobic discourse which took the form of 'othering' a student who was gay and then subjecting him to discourses of disgust based on his sexuality:

I also did 'Health Class'...It was a female class I mean there was just one guy in there and he was gay and so they'd have discussions about him...I mean he became the central focus because he was 'out' and he probably got a lot of abuse for it but it actually meant that these people discussed it...(later)...And that class by the end of the year were very open minded about it because they had like to stop and think about it...

I By the end of the year?

M Initially they were like: 'No, how can you' and like they were very closed minded...(a little later)...Yeah and there was like a lot of abuse like: 'Oh how could you' and 'Uhhhhh' and that I imagine would have affected him quite badly

I I’m interested too in the effect that had on you...How did you feel when he 'came out' and when all of this was happening?
M It was sort of like ok they're going to be negative about it...It was very threatening.

One participant provided an interesting example where he was the perpetrator of homophobic harassment. Dante was 17 and attended a Catholic boy's school. He was in Year 12 and throughout the interview slipped between the labels gay and bisexual to describe his sexuality. He described a situation where he had used homophobic discourse as a form of self protection:

D When I was in year 10, I got suspended from school for calling a kid a poof out of a bus window, and he was an 'effeminate' kid, so ummm...Because he was an 'effeminate' kid and because he'd been called gay so many times he went and dobbed and I got suspended...I thought that was really good...At the time I thought it was fucking ridiculous...

I And so when you call other people poof...What are you...

D Trying to save yourself because I'm gay and they won't think I'm gay because I'll give them a hard time...Just detracts attention from yourself and puts it onto someone else...

Hayes, who was 15 at the time of the interview described himself as gay. He was in year 10 and attended a State co-educational secondary school. He spoke of an encounter with homophobic discourse that resonated with Dante's comments. At one point in the interview I asked him if he was aware of any other gay or lesbian students at his school:

H Yes...They tease the shit out of me...There's one

I At you?

H Yes but I'll never blow the whistle on them

I And why do you think that they might do that?

H They're not comfortable with themselves and so they've got to 'have a go' at me to make themselves feel assured that they're
not (gay or lesbian) and to (prove to) their peers that they're not (gay or lesbian) too.

Each of the participants quoted above cites an encounter with homophobic discourse. In some cases it is directed at them, in others cases it is not. In some cases it is spoken, in some it is written, in some it presents as the threat of being pushed in the corridor. In some cases the participants access and activate homophobic discourse themselves. In all cases however homophobic discourse is rooted in the same belief, the belief that to be same-sex attracted is to be somehow of less worth than not to be same-sex attracted, and that the choice to occupy this position therefore warrants less favourable treatment.

Homophobic discourse often seeks to police or enforce the requirement that SSAY and SSAY perspectives occupy a hidden or constrained place. And as participants have indicated this requirement is communicated to all young people in very clear (albeit sometimes very subtle) ways. The participants indicated however that the requirement for constraint and concealment was often mirrored with incessant questions about sexuality in an attempt to draw the person suspected of being same-sex attracted out of that hidden or concealed place. Participants often mentioned that this suspicion was often activated where the body of the suspect was read as 'gender non-compliant' (these themes will be returned to) (see Sedgwick 1994: 154-164).

I find the participant's comments that refer to same-sex attraction being positioned within homophobic discourse as 'gross' or 'disgusting' interesting. Hillier and Harrison (under review) are correct, to suggest that same-sex attracted young people often encounter homophobic discourses that position them as evil, as sick, as unnatural or as immature, and that these discourses are often expressed clearly and with the threat of physical force.

They are also correct to suggest that SSAY develop survival strategies to avoid being beaten or verbally abused and that they also often reject or resist such homophobic discourses (see Hillier and Harrison under review). Michael and Max for instance, make a strategic decision to remain quiet about their sexuality after they witness the harassment that other students receive. And Veronica takes her teacher to task when her teacher entertains homophobic discourse in the form of a discussion about same-sex attracted couples rights to access IVF technologies.

I think that it's also true however, to suggest that same-sex attracted young people also encounter far less 'articulate' or directed discourses. Responding to, or dealing with, claims such as: 'queers are sick' or: 'dyke's are unnatural', might be distressing, tedious and annoying but at least there is something reasonably clear to react against. But how
can a person react against and reject the charge that one is 'gross' when that charge is communicated with sounds that indicate disgust?

I think that the sounds and the tones that frame homophobic discourse are worth consideration and raise a number of questions (and point to an area that I might follow up in other projects). I think that the power that accompanies the sounds and the tones that frame or in some cases constitute homophobic discourse need to be acknowledged and unpacked. The embodied nature of homophobic discourse, as it is spoken into existence, deserves a degree of consideration, and raises a number of questions.

Consider also Nayak and Kehily writing on similar themes:

The role of bodily practices as a signifier of a person's sexuality is seen, where the way a male might walk, hold himself, sit, etc. provide for a visual grammar of understanding. Speaking about the outward encoding of masculinity beyond the level of conversation Askew and Ross (1988) found 'There was considerable non-verbal, aggressive or physical communication among boys. "Body language" such as stance, or tone of voice, played a large part in interaction.

(Nayak and Kehily 1997: 148)

How might young people begin to develop the skills to resist not only homophobic words but the sounds that accompany such words? How might they resist homophobic discourse when the form that it takes is a disapproving sound? How might young people protect themselves from the injury that such sounds attempt to inflict? A disembodied discourse of words seems somehow easier to reject than an embodied discourse comprised not only of words but also of disapproving sounds.

As well as discourses that positioned same-sex sexualities as unnatural or 'gross' some of the participants also offered examples of homophobic discourses that they had encountered where same-sex sexualities were positioned as predatory, or as needing to be confined or contained (For an historical perspective see, Weeks 1981: 107). In a section of the interview I conducted with Dante he spoke about how he had became aware of 'beats'. At one point he refers to a situation where he overhears a conversation between his mother and a friend (a local policeman), where homosexuality is discursively positioned as dangerous or threatening:
Dante is aware during this conversation that 'the guys' that are referred to are gay, and it is also understood that they are untrustworthy and predatory particularly in relation to children (see also, Epstein and Johnson 1998: 136). Dante is aware that gayness is being positioned within this discourse as a threat and he rejects this positioning and instead uses the information provided to actively seek out sex with men at 'beats'. I do not intend to enter into a discussion regarding 'beats' here but instead want to echo a point made by Lynne Hillier (2000: 3/5/2000) recently; it is interesting to consider here that for Dante, 'beats', were a safer place in which to do his sexuality than the school that he attended.

Veronica also provides an illustration of where she is positioned within discourse as threatening or predatory and where the intention of such discourse is to isolate and contain her. Veronica is known as a lesbian at school and here she talks about an experience where a new student comes to school:

...Usually I can tell (what) a person is like...usually I try to speak to them or something...And if people who know me, who know what I'm like, if they see me, then they will try to break me talking to them or they may go: 'Oh my God she's talking to, she likes this girl, beware, beware'...

It's almost like trying to stop you from spreading...Spreading lesbian-ness

Yes exactly...They don't want other people around like you or they (get) jealous. For instance, there was this girl that I liked at school and after now if there are any new people in school ahhhh...she will tell 'That girl's gay, do not go near her, she'll try to get you or something'...So I can't speak to these new people who are coming into the school she puts like a barrier to stop

She puts a barrier around you?
The homophobic discourse that circles Veronica seeks to position her as predatory and as a threat and in the process to limit her influence on others. Veronica is aware of this positioning, and she is also aware that she is under surveillance. She is frustrated by this but it doesn't stop her from speaking to other students. Veronica resists this positioning.

It's also worth noting here that the homophobic discourse that circled Veronica didn't end at speech acts. Veronica was repeatedly pushed over in the school corridors and was distressed at the way that homophobic discourse, in the form of information about her sexuality, was spread via graffiti. Veronica said:

..I got annoyed after a while because the writing on the wall started also...moving onto my locker onto the school mirrors and that really bothered me...I didn't mind if it was just in the cubicle but when it started spreading around the school so literally everyone, the whole school knew, it just bugged me...

It's interesting to consider the linkages and contradictions that exist between homophobic discourses that seek to contain and police same-sex sexualities, and homophobic discourses that position same-sex sexualities as predatory. For on the one hand we have same-sex sexualities positioned as containable and by implication as less powerful than heterosexualities, and on the other, we have same-sex sexualities positioned as being predatory and by implication as powerful. Statements such as: 'I don't care what they do as long as they leave me alone' illustrate this multiple positioning and also the way that discourses function through each other to facilitate homophobic ends (for a related discussion see, Epstein 1997: 195; Wyn and Stewart 1991: 13). Such statements also raise questions to do with resistance. How does one call on discourses of rationality or reason to resist a discourse that is irrational and contradictory (see Misson 1999: 82-8)?

Homophobic discourse, can be directed either intentionally or unintentionally against same-sex attracted people and can take many forms. It can be spoken, written or evident in other physical acts (see Chris' comments in, Emslie 1999: 160). It is structurally supported and is only one layer of the phenomenon that is discrimination on the basis of constructing a non-hegemonic/non-heterosexual sexuality. The same-sex attracted young people that participated in this study offered many examples of homophobic discourse that they had encountered in the schools that they attended.

Homophobic discourse is supported by and works in tandem with and through heterosexist discourse and it represents one aspect, dimension or layer of cultures that are Heteroprivilegist. I will now consider heterosexist discourse.
Heterosexist discourses subtly assume, or in some cases overtly state, that to be straight is to be better than to be same-sex attracted (see, Beckett 1996: 13-4). Sexuality Education programs, for example, that consciously position heterosexuality as the norm, or that refuse the inclusion of same-sex perspectives for whatever reason, are heterosexist (as well as perhaps homophobic). Heterosexism supports and frames homophobia in that homophobic discourses only make sense within contexts where homosexuality is positioned as 'less than' heterosexuality and where heterosexuality is positioned as more powerful than or better than homosexuality.

The line that separates homophobic and heterosexist actions, however, is blurred in the sense that discourse that is heterosexist is also simultaneously homophobic. Discourse that positions heterosexuality as natural, for example, where discourses of 'the natural' are valorized as morally superior, are not only heterosexist, but are also homophobic in that they simultaneously position homosexuality (either explicitly or by implication) as unnatural. Homophobic and heterosexist discourses often function through each other.

I remember one instance where I was invited to speak about sexual diversity at a secondary school on 'Social Justice Day'. As I stood to speak, the Principal interjected, that while I was talking about homosexuality that this in no way represented any endorsement of homosexuality on the part of the school. I wonder if I'd of been there speaking as a black person about blackness whether he would have qualified and distanced the school as an institution from my discourse. Of course he wouldn't have. The principal, for whatever reason, at that moment, communicated a message to the students in the room that homosexuality is not an acceptable identity. The principal, at that moment, endorsed homophobic and heterosexist discourse.

It was actually very difficult to locate specific examples of heterosexist discourse in the participant interviews (see also, Mills 1999: 105). Most of the heteroprivilegist discourse that the participants encountered fell into the categories of homophobic or heterocentric discourse. There weren't any examples that readily come to mind where young people were explicitly told by a teacher or a peer that to be heterosexual was to be better than to be same-sex attracted. So while I was able to find many instances in the transcripts where same-sex attracted sexualities were discursively positioned as 'less than' straight sexualities in various ways, these discourses were not mirrored with others that sought to explicitly position straight sexualities as 'better than' the rest.
Heterosexist discourse, is however, often evident in religious discourse and many of the participants attended religious schools. Religious discourse that seeks to perpetuate a hierarchy of sexualities where heterosexuality within marriage is positioned as the only acceptable or fully realized expression of sexuality, offer examples of heterosexist (as well as homophobic) discourse (see, Epstein and Johnson 1994: 212-3). However, while many of the young people who participated in this study attended religious schools, and I would assume, had encountered or been exposed to heterosexist discourse, none referred to such encounters. It would appear that they had rejected them.

Hillier and Harrison (under review), discuss discourses that suggest that being a same-sex attracted teenager is a phase that will be 'grown out of', and such discourses are also a good example of heterosexist discourse. They are in the sense that there is a positioning of same-sex attracted sexualities as 'immature' (drawing on developmental discourses), as 'something' to be left behind, as 'something' to be replaced with a better, with a more complete, with a more adult (hetero)sexuality (for a related discussion see Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 268-9).

Discourses that position 'homosexuality as a phase' or 'homosexuality as a phase of adolescent experimentation' are often used to justify inaction in the area of LGBT school experiences. I have been told, for instance, that to teach about homosexuality is not appropriate because to do so might 'confuse' many young heterosexual people who are 'just' experimenting with same-sex sex, as they move through adolescence into adulthood. To teach about same-sex sexualities might lead them to the conclusion that they might really be gay or lesbian.

That being gay or lesbian might not necessarily be a bad thing, and that to suggest as much to a gay man might actually be offensive doesn't seem to register. And the notion that the needs of same-sex attracted young people should be carpeted because of the insecurities or experimentations of large numbers of young heterosexuals doesn't register as unacceptable either. In positioning the needs of heterosexuals as being more of a priority than the needs of same-sex attracted young people such discourses are heterosexist and simultaneously homophobic.

Perhaps James, who was a 15 year old, gay secondary school student attending a State co-educational secondary school in an inner city suburb in Melbourne at the time of the interview, comes closest to an encounter with overt heterosexism. He described a situation where he asked a teacher to include gay and lesbian experiences in subject content but was told that this was not viable. The teacher did not say that this couldn't be done because of a personal problem that he had with same-sex sexualities, but rather
suggested that the curriculum was overcrowded and that as there were not enough students who would be gay or lesbian, and who would therefore be interested in such material, that the inclusion of such material would be unwarranted. According to James same-sex perspectives were not deemed to be a priority. Consider his comments:

J None of the subjects have any gay topics. I don't think any subjects...touch on gay and lesbian students or experiences at all...but...I have brought the topic up but the teachers said: 'No we don't want to discuss it because there's just not enough gay and lesbian students'...

I So who did you bring that up with?

J I brought it up with my History teacher last year and he said: 'We can't because we don't have enough time to talk about it or even touch on the subject'...

I And so when he said there weren't enough gay and lesbian students

J I think he was getting into the percentage of gay and lesbian people in society since there's only about 10%...He didn't think that percentage was enough...

I How did you feel about that? Were you happy about that?

J I'm not happy about that at all I think we should be studying gay and lesbian subjects or that we should be touching on homosexual subjects within each subject or...

James' comments highlight a fact that became evident through the interviews. Many of the young people spoke about encountering discourse in the form of subject content that didn't include gay or lesbian perspectives and mentioned that they were angry about this, but James also demonstrates something else here. Hillier and Harrison suggest that same-sex attracted young people often encountered negative discourses but that they were often able to resist or reject them (Hillier and Harrison (under review)). James offers an example of just such a refusal or resistance here.
His comments draw attention to the fact that 'the curriculum' (or the part of the curriculum that we are focusing on here - subject content) is made. He draws attention to the fact that the subject content that young people encounter in schools is a social product that comes about as a result of the work that teachers and students do in classrooms. James' comments indicate not only how heteroprivilegist subject content can be rejected and resisted by young people but also how young people via their demands of teachers and through the assignments and essays that they write are actually in many cases taking the lead in the production of new knowledges, that are not heteroprivilegist (these themes will be returned to in latter sections of the text).

3 The Heterocentric (or Heteronormative) Layer

The heterocentric/heteronormative layer is the third dimension that constitutes heteroprivilegist discourse (for heteronormative see, Seidman 1994: 130). The term heterocentric or heteronormative is intended to refer to values that are subtly embedded within discourses as opposed to the homophobic and heterosexist layers which are more easily detected. The often unexamined assumption that a person is heterosexual is an example of and an effect of heterocentric discourse (see also, Epstein 1999: 30-33; Beckett Tweed and Fisher 1999: 262; Letts 1999: 98). Heterocentrism is evident in what is not said as much as it is evident in what is said. Discourses that are embedded with heterocentric values are also at work in contexts where heterosexuality is privileged into presence and where same sex subjects and sexualities are subject to discourses that seek to render them silent and unseen. Heterocentric or heteronormative discourses function in tandem with homophobic and heterosexist discourses and while they subtly contribute to the positioning of same-sex sexualities as 'other' their main contribution to heteroprivilegism is the way that they subtly construct heterosexuality as the unseen, unnamed, unexamined norm against which sexual difference is labelled and subjected to regulatory discourses (see also Warner 1994; Britzman 1995: 151-165; Martino 1999: 138-149; Sumara and Davis 1999: 192-3, 202; Mac An Ghaill 1994: 155, Nayak and Kehily 1997: 152).

The question of intent is important to emphasize here, because it is intent, that distinguishes homophobic and heterosexist discourses from heterocentric ones. Subject content that consciously or deliberately positions heterosexuality as superior or in some way preferable to same-sex sexualities, regardless of how that position is justified, is heterosexist and homophobic. Curriculum committees, educational bureaucracies and writers of subject content that make conscious decisions to ignore the inclusion of same-sex perspectives, while they permit the inclusion of heterosexual perspectives, are acting in a heterosexist or homophobic manner (as well as unprofessionally and unethically).
Heterocentric discourses are different in the sense that they are not the product of conscious choices. The term 'heterocentrism' is intended to refer to moments where such privilege comes to be embedded in discourse in an unconscious fashion.

Without wanting to minimize the stories of participants who have spoken about incidents of harassment that were in no way unconscious or gentle, the notion of heterocentrism allows work to proceed in this area without necessarily apportioning blame. The notion of heterocentrism also illuminates the importance of taking on board the deeply embedded nature of values that have been learnt and the necessity to work for change in layered and subtle ways. (I will offer an example that illustrates how cultural discourses might be taken up in very deep, in very layered and in very subtle ways by embodied subjects in chapter 5, which further explores contemporary theory and grounds that exploration using 'the sound of the voice').

Kelvin who was 15 at the time of the interview attended a co-educational State school. He described himself as gay. When I asked him whether he had encountered any gay or lesbian content in any of the subjects he had studied at school he replied:

K No none at all
I So can you remember any instance at all, either in your primary school or in your secondary school, where gay and lesbian content
K No...Oh...Just recently we had this Student Welfare Program or something
I And what was that all about?
K They came into school and they discussed anger management and stuff like that and they had one thing in relation to gays and lesbians and it was just 'Can you tell a gay or lesbian just by looking at them?' and everyone thought 'Yes'
I The whole class (laugh) ?
K Yes (laugh) and that's all...that's it...
I That was this year?
K  Yeah

I  And how long was the gay and lesbian part of that?

K  Just 5 seconds...

I  Just 5 seconds...So that would be the only mention that you've heard of gay and lesbian people in subject content?

K  Yeah...

Kelvin is not in this instance encountering discourse in subject content that tells him that to be same-sex attracted is evil or unnatural and nor in this instance is he encountering discourse that explicitly suggests that to be straight is to be better than to be same-sex attracted. He is however, encountering a discourse that unconsciously (and I would assume with good intentions), positions same-sex sexualities as 'other' and constructs the central, normative place as heterosexual.

In drawing attention to the '5 seconds' of subject content that included same-sex perspectives Kelvin also highlights the degree to which such perspectives have been absent from the subject content that he encountered. Other students spoke of similar or related situations that illustrate the notion of 'heterocentrism'. Violet for example, added another dimension to this where she began speaking of heterocentric discourse as it was evident in school texts and videos that were used within the sex ed program she had encountered at school. Again there is nothing in these materials that communicates an explicitly homophobic or heterosexist message, but the video as a form of discourse, is embedded with values that privilege heterosexual perspectives and marginalize same-sex perspectives nevertheless. Consider Violet's comments below:

The main focus is on puberty which would be affecting most people at that stage anyway, and reproduction, and that follows heterosexual issues...And the little cartoons have little males and females running around together and the little male watching the little female's breasts bounce around (reinforcing the idea that this is) normal (that) this is what should be happening to you, (loudly) that this is what WILL happen to you (and) if something else is going on, well it's not on this video and so you should think that there is something wrong.
Sam, is in year 11 at a State single sex school in a large city outside of Melbourne. She is 16 and is a lesbian. During part of the interview she also discussed the fact that she had encountered a lack of gay and lesbian content and in passing spoke about an all pervasive, often unconscious heterosexual bias, or assumption of heterosexuality, that was embedded in the subject content that she encountered:

I So there was no information (about being gay or lesbian) through the (school)...What about heterosexuality?...Do you think that it was different?

S It's always different for heterosexuality I think...The...They look at...That's just the general thing in schools they kind of just think that...Most young people will be heterosexual and they don't really look at the gay side of it they just look at the heterosexual stuff...

I So a heterosexual person if I were asking them the same question they would have a different response do you think?

S Probably yeah...Yep

I Do you think it would be an issue for a heterosexual person?

S What...Having gay information?

I Well having information about heterosexuality?

S I don't think so because I think it's like a general knowledge of...Heterosexuality it's so common...I mean everywhere you know about it...Where as with homosexuality it's something that is kind of kept in the closet...And it's not really talked about because people aren't really comfortable with it...

The examples above all offer examples of heterocentrism. These themes will be returned to in the latter part of the text where strategies that young people have employed to rupture heterocentric discourse as it is embedded in subject content will be considered.

Heterocentric, heterosexist and homophobic discourses represent different dimensions or layers of the cultural phenomenon that I am naming 'heteroprivilegism'. If we accept that
discourses that are embedded with values that position gay, lesbian and bisexual subjects as 'less than' heterosexual subjects are problematic, in that they may limit the potential of same-sex attracted young people, and if we accept that discourses that construct heterosexuality as 'the norm' are similarly problematic, and if we accept that such values are evident in discourses in a layered fashion, then the framework that I have developed based on Grosz's work, suggests the need to work in layered or multiple ways to counter such discourse (what it might mean to work in such a fashion constitutes much of the second half of this text).
Active and Reactive Forces: Moving Bodies

Introduction

Following Grosz’s framework it is contended that heteroprivilegists values are evident in discourse. Schools are one site where discourses are produced, reproduced, consumed, accommodated, rejected and resisted (see Wyn and White 1997: 86-93). If it is accepted that there are linkages between embodied subjectivity and discourse then questions regarding the effects of such values surface. While heteroprivilegists discourses vary in degree of subtly they target bodies that move ‘differently’ where that difference is construed as proof that a particular subject is same-sex attracted. Such discourses are ‘oppressive’ in that they seek to constrain difference, but they are particularly so, in relation to this text, in that they seek to constrain non-heterosexual sexualities. This text takes it as axiomatic that heteroprivilegists discourse disadvantages same-sex attracted young people.

Social Institutions are embedded with Values.

Denborough identifies the school as a discursive site where subjectivities are produced and by implication where there is a need to challenge discourses that are embedded with values that attempt to constrain non-heterosexual constructions of sexuality. He states:

Schools are astonishing institutions and producers of identities and meanings. They are also fields of power through which individuals make their way, and in the process, themselves. Such fields of power create and sustain particular constructions of sexuality. The ways adults and institutions behave towards young people affects their sexuality - not by suppressing or controlling it - but by participating in its creation.

(Denborough 1996: 1).

Denborough highlights the active work that subjects participate in as they carve out social spaces that feel right for them in the world, and to the generative relationships that exist between subjects, institutions and discourse (see also, Epstein and Johnson 1994: 211-225; Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 156-7; Redman 1994: 141-4; Diamond 1991: 143). Just as individuals are circled by discourse that they can reproduce, consume or resist, so too are
institutions. And just as the discourse that circles subjects is embedded with values, so too is the discourse that circles institutions.

Institutions, such as schools, and the subjects who inhabit them however, are not only passively subject to various discourses, they also actively produce, reproduce or resist them as they engage in social practices. Institutions, such as schools, only exist as a result of such practices. They have no life of their own as such. Institutions are spaces that house or enable certain social practices (which are value laden). Institutions are an effect of the sum total of social practices that subjects enact within their boundaries or in their name.

The problem in all of this for same-sex attracted young people is that discourses that are often produced in schools, and that come to be evident across the institution, can often mirror those that are evident in the wider culture of which the school is a part, and can therefore come to be embedded with heteroprivilegist values, which would seek to limit same-sex attracted young people. The problem for same-sex attracted young people is that often they encounter discourses which are reproduced in schools that are oppressive.

On Oppression and Bodies that Move Differently: Active and Reactive Forces

As has been discussed, contemporary social theory suggests that sexualities are produced by embodied subjects as they enact social practices within social contexts. Implicit in such theorising is a challenge to the notion that sexuality is an 'essential' (see: de Lauretis 1993: 76) aspect of personhood that is somehow outside of cultural influence. Sexuality is positioned as 'lived', as something that a subject 'does' and in the process constructs, rather than an attribute that a subject 'has', and that is expressed (see, Harris 1996: 27).

If, as contemporary theory suggests, sexuality is not an innate or essential attribute, then how does such theory deal with a subject's experience of being oppressed or limited without slipping into discourse that calls on essentialist notions? How is it possible to speak to the experience of oppression without simultaneously speaking of the oppression of an essential aspect of self?

In a chapter entitled, 'Experimental Desire: Rethinking Queer Subjectivity', Elizabeth Grosz considers a wide terrain of complex issues and among these, is the question of whether, in poststructural times, it makes sense to speak to notions of same-sex 'oppression' (1995: 207-27). Grosz argues that it is possible to do so, and that terms like 'oppression' are still of enormous value but not from within a humanist framework that would suggest that what is being oppressed is an essence of sorts. She suggests that it is
possible within poststructuralism to speak to notions of oppression but that the tendency to slip into essentialism needs to be resisted. She offers via the notion of active and reactive forces, a way that a discussion about oppression might happen within poststructural discourse.

Grosz also sets out in this chapter to discuss whether there is a distinction between oppressions that target sexualities and other forms of oppression. She considers whether oppressive discourses that aim to limit queer (Grosz is uncomfortable with the label queer) sexualities are different, or function differently, from other oppressive discourses. She does not aim to establish a hierarchy of oppressions in the process but rather to rupture the notion that oppressive discourses are monolithic. Grosz aims to explore how discourses of oppression function in multiple ways and how, for example, oppressive discourses that target race differ from those that target sexualities.

Grosz begins by offering a broad definition of 'oppression'. She maps out 5 criteria that function to produce oppressive contexts. The framework that she has constructed is very useful and I think worth quoting at length:

If there is a broad core to the term, oppression, it must be minimally understood as:

1. The production of systemically differentiated positions for social subjects, which function as modes of specification, constitution, and valuation, within a general structure which distributes to those positions and thus the subjects occupying them, various benefits, power, authority, and value. This implies that whatever skills, capacities, and attributes members of the subordinated groups have, their ability to take up the privileged positions remains extremely limited, if not impossible;
2. These differential positions distribute benefits to those in privileged positions only at the expense of other, subordinated positions. This privilege is possible only because its cost is borne by subordination. This explains why structures of power and authority remain tenaciously difficult to transform: it is not in the interests of the dominant groups, who have the benefits without actually paying for them, to readily give up those benefits without struggle...
3. Not only are specific groups positioned in differential locations within the social structure...these positions are directly or
indirectly linked to values, attributes, benefits, mobility, that are not specifically inscribed in but are preconditioned by these positions. Being born male, white, middle class, Christian, etc. gives one access to wealth, decision-making, and naming capacities that, while not entirely out of reach of other groups, is made extremely difficult for them, except perhaps at the cost of renouncing or overcoming their definitional linkage to a subordinated group;

4. Relations of domination and subordination are characterized not simply in terms of tangible material benefits, although these could be easily documented, but also in terms of the ease and ability of dominant groups to produce meanings, representations - which present their interests - perspectives, values, and frameworks in positive, self-evident terms, and define their others (non-reciprocally) in terms of these interests...

5. The relations of domination and subordination constituting oppression are more complicated than the occupation of fixed, stable positions of power and powerlessness or centrality or marginality...

(Grosz 1995: 208-9)

These are the factors that Grosz suggests are present in oppressive situations, or discourses, and I would suggest that these factors are evident in heteroprivilegist contexts. Grosz then begins to extend this discussion and argues that sexualities have historically been constituted within a series of binaries; such as straight/gay, public/private, good/bad and so on (1995: 214-7). (For a discussion of binaries drawing on the work of Sedgewick see, Misson 1999: 75-6). She argues that one such binary, is that comprising radically open difference on the one hand, and repetitive closed similarity on the other. Grosz deploys the terms active and reactive to discuss this:

In short, active force is that which stretches itself, takes itself as far as it can go (a limit that cannot be known in advance), moves in its directions without regard for anything other than its own free expansion, mindless of others. It is guileless, open, perhaps even naive in its openness to what befalls it. Reactive forces on the contrary, are cunning, clandestine, restricting, intervening, secondary, mindless, diligent, and obedient. They function ingeniously, living in modes of sensibility and sentiment (nostalgia, self justification, and hatred of the other are its primary
features). Where active forces affirm, produce, and stretch, reactive forces judge, pontificate, produce ideologies and modes of explanation, devise ingenious theories, compromise. They can be identified with the production of religion, morality, and law, with the systems constrained to endless reproduction of the same, without affirming the infinite nature of chance, change, and transformation...It can just as readily be claimed, as I will, that homophobia, heterosexism, racism, and so on are reactive forces which function in part to prevent alternatives, to negate them and ruminate on how to destroy them; and that gay and lesbian sexualities and lifestyles can be seen as innovative, inventive, productive, and thus active insofar as they aim at their own pleasures, their own distributions, their own free expansion. Heterosexism and homophobia are to be countered in so far as they prevent this and react to it.

(Grosz 1995: 215)

Grosz writes, from within a project that stresses that subjectivity is an effect of what embodied subjects do and in the process become. In the quote above, she positions (some) gay and lesbian bodies as expansive in the sense that as they move through the world in ways that contest and exceed heteroprivilegist discourses they open up possibilities for all bodies. Gay, lesbian and bisexual bodies are expansive not only because they are positioned as moving through the world differently themselves, but because in doing so they offer the possibility that all bodies might move through the world differently. LGB(T) bodies bring to consciousness the tenuousness of staying the same. LGB(T) bodies are active in the sense that they stretch what it is possible to become. LGB(T) bodies 'queer' all bodies and in the process provide a focus for reactive or disciplinary forces. (It is important to note here that Grosz does not suggest that all LGB(T) bodies are expansive nor does she suggest that all heterosexual bodies are reactive).

Grosz suggests that this threat, the threat that we might become different, is what lies at the heart of and what distinguishes oppressive discursive regimes that target gay and lesbian sexualities. She states that:

The threat that homosexuality poses to heterosexuality is its own contingency, and open-endedness, its own tenuous hold over the multiplicity of sexual impulses and possibilities characterizing all human sexuality. Its own un-naturalness, its compromise and
reactive status. Queer pleasures show that one does not have to settle for the predictable, the formulaic, the respected, although these too are not without their cost.

This is both the power and the danger posed by lesbian and gay sexual relations: that what one does, how one does it, with whom and what effects are ontologically open questions, that sexuality in and for all of us is fundamentally provisional, tenuous, mobile, igniting in unpredictable contexts with often unsettling effects: its power, attraction, and danger, the fundamental fluidity and transformability of sexuality and its enactment in sexed bodies.

(Grosz 1995: 226-7)

Grosz argues that it is the tendency for reactive forces to seek to limit the movement of queer bodies that distinguishes heteroprivilegist discourse from other oppressive discourses. She suggests that other forms of oppression are 'generally based primarily on what a person is quite independent of what they do' (Grosz 1995: 225). Grosz suggests that discriminatory or oppressive discourses directed at same-sex attracted subjects are based on what we do rather than who we are. She states that: 'Homophobia is an oppression based on the activities of members of a group, and not on any definitive group attributes' (Grosz 1995: 225). And if we accept that sexuality is constructed as subjects 'do' or engage in social practices then any attempted regulation of what a subject 'does' simultaneously attempts to regulate what a subject might become.

I do not agree that this is something that absolutely distinguishes heteroprivilegist discourses from others, as I would suggest that there are discourses and ideologies that position same-sex attracted persons as a 'type' as inferior, regardless of what the same-sex attracted person does. Some fundamentalist Christian traditions for example would suggest as much.

I also do not agree that regulatory or oppressive discourses that target the moving or active body are only experienced by same-sex attracted subjects. Other groups within the community also endure harassment as they move differently through the world. To give one example, Muslim women, who wear restrictive clothing, often encounter negativity on account of what they do as embodied subjects as they move through the world.

Nevertheless, Grosz's ideas are of particular relevance in unpacking oppressive discourses as they are directed at same-sex attracted young people. The elements of her argument that are particularly relevant, are that same-sex attracted young people are often
subject to oppressive (or reactive) discourses that target bodies, that are read as moving differently through the world, and the reason for this is that such bodies bring into consciousness the possibility that there are other ways of being an embodied subject (that there are other ways of being), and this realization is threatening and provokes tension (for a related discussion on 'habits' and reluctance to change drawing on Proust see, Sedgwick 1994ii: 140). As same-sex attracted subjects (as any subjects) move through the world in ways that rupture heteroprivilegist discourses they may encounter various resistances which are an effect of the tension that such difference provokes (it's worth noting though that the tension provoked by such shocks of difference can also be experienced by the disruptive same-sex attracted subject themselves - these themes will be taken up in latter sections of the text).

(N.B. Butler's theory of abjection (1993: 188) considers similar terrain and is another lens that might be deployed to illuminate anxieties that target bodies that move differently through the world. Whilst I am influenced by Butler's work, I have chosen to use the work of Grosz, in this instance, because her theorizing foregrounds and draws attention to 'the moving body' and this is in keeping with the way that sexuality has been theorized as an effect of social practices that subjects enact, in earlier sections of the text).

Same-sex attracted young people report that they encounter oppressive (or reactive) discourses in schools.

Same-sex attracted young people in heteroprivilegist school settings are disruptive because they embody the threat of an expansive difference and (following Grosz) because they rupture reactive discourses, that seek the endless repetition of similarity and the regulation, erasure and restriction of difference.

Many of the participants spoke of feeling oppressed, or of being oppressed, by discriminatory discourses. One of the most common manifestations of this was the fear of, or an actual experience of, being bullied. Participants said that they were more likely to be harassed if they stepped outside of 'gender norms', that they were more likely to be harassed if they did their gender in an expansive fashion, if they did it in a manner that would position them as different (see, Epstein and Johnson 1994: 204) (again these themes will be returned to in latter sections of the text). The ideas of Grosz that have just been canvassed offer some reasons as to why this might be the case.

The following extracts, taken from the participant interviews, illustrate different manifestations of heteroprivilegist oppression. They also point to the ways that heteroprivilegist values, that seek to regulate and oppress sexual difference, are embedded
or function within or through 'related' discourses (for a discussion around race and homophobia see, Epstein 1997: 200-201; Mac An Ghaill 1994: 163-4). Or to put it another way, they demonstrate how different discourses function together to embed and reinforce heteroprivilegist values that same-sex attracted young people (and others) find oppressive.

Louise who is 18, and in Year 12 at a Catholic, 7-12, co-ed, outer-suburban school spoke about a situation that illustrated the connections between heteroprivilegist discourses of gender and sexuality. At one point the conversation turned to whether Louise was 'out' to anyone at school. What followed was a discussion that illustrated how students that move differently through school cultures are subject to regulatory, reactive or oppressive discourses, particularly where they are read as gay, lesbian or bisexual as a result:

I Are you 'out' to other students?...Do you know any other lesbians?

L Well I'm only 'out' to one girl at school and that was pretty recently...But apart from that like apparently there are a few bi-sexual people at school but ummm...

I Apparently?

L Oh well they never told me...It's just rumoured

I What is the basis of the rumours?

L Oh well one girl I guess she looks a bit 'butch' or something but ...If someone's different...

I A bit 'butch'?

L Winter uniform you can wear a skirt or pants and she always wears pants...You know things like that...You know...I remember during mid-year exams one girl had to sit next to this supposed lesbian and she came out of the classroom and said to all of us: 'Oh I had to sit next to so and so she's such a dyke', with a lot of disgust in her voice that she had to sit next to her, not even next to because the desk was separated so...
I  There is an idea circulating about 'butchness' and what do you think that is to do with?

L  Oh just stereotyping...The short haired bleached dyke sort of thing...Just the appearance...

I  Would the response of the young woman who refused to sit next to a woman that she described as 'butch' be typical?

L  Oh yeah

I  How many 'butch' girls are there and would they encounter that sort of treatment often?

L  There would be a couple...maybe 2

I  Has that ever happened to you?.

L  No yeah...Occasionally

I  What does it mean to be labelled as 'butch'?

L  Ummm...

I  Is it a comment about sexuality or is it a comment (about gender)?

L  It's just a hateful thing...I guess it's about sexuality too it's about yuk I don't want to associate with you...Because you're different

I  So if someone was accused of being 'butch' it wouldn't mean that they were being accused of being a lesbian it would be an accusation of that they weren't being 'properly feminine'?

L  Mmmmm...Probably both
The conversation continued around a theme of 'butchness'. Later, I asked Louise if she had ever experienced harassment along similar lines:

I And people haven't said those kinds of things to you? (made comments about being 'butch')...

L Ummmm...Well they have because I actually cut my hair really short at one point (Laughing)...Which was kind of a stupid thing to do and I got kind of comments then

I Based around the haircut or the meanings of the haircut?

L The meanings...That could have been drawn from the haircut...

I And so those comments...Because you've got longer hair now...To what extent did the comments influence you (to grow your hair back)...Because you said (getting it cut)...was a dumb thing to do...

L Yeah I kind of regretted doing it...I did it during the Christmas holidays and once school had finished I cut my hair...I and then bleached it

I Laugh

L I then went back to school in the February and it was still blonde and I kind of regretted doing it because it was...The next week the second week into school I had it darkened again like back to it's natural colour...Then it wasn't so bad because it wasn't so blonde...

I So it didn't stand out as much because it wasn't blonde...So...the way that bodies look and the things that we put on bodies like the clothes and the haircuts and ideas about them being 'properly feminine' (are important in schools)...Do you think that as a lesbian that that has had an effect on the way you are as a person in school?
L  I don't wear dresses and stuff because other people want me to...I'm not going to let them dictate what I should or should not be wearing...

The conversation then moved to consider rumours and talk in school. Louise suggested a connection between looking out of the ordinary and being talked about:

I  I'm interested in 'talk'...Can you speak to that perhaps?

L  There's talk if there's something out of the normal or in relation to something that is different to what people would usually see...Just any real difference is picked out and talked about...Rumours start and they spread around the school...It doesn't usually take a lot for them to start.

Louise suggests that it is where someone 'looks different' (where what it means to look different is constructed via heteroprivilegist discourses of sexuality and gender) that rumours begin. And let's be clear here, the difference that we are talking about is looking 'too butch' or 'too camp', the difference we are talking about is an effect of subjects being seen moving through the world in a manner that ruptures heteroprivilegist discourses of gender, where to do so is to be read as queer. Thinking back to the comments of Veronica, which highlighted the regulatory work of rumour, it would seem that once you 'look different', or confirm that you are 'different', that discourse is activated that seeks the regulation of that difference. It is worth returning to Veronica's comments about rumours and regulatory speech at this point:

V  Usually I can tell (what) a person is like...usually I try to speak to them or something...And if people who know me, who know what I'm like, if they see me, then they will try to break me talking to them or they may go: 'Oh my God she's talking to, she likes this girl, beware, beware'...

I  It's almost like trying to stop you from spreading...Spreading lesbian-ness

V  Yes exactly...They don't want other people around like you or they (get) jealous. For instance, there was this girl that I liked at school and after now if there are any new people in school ahhhh...she will tell 'That girl's gay, do not go near her, she'll
try to get you or something'...So I can't speak to these new people who are coming into the school she puts like a barrier to stop

I She puts a barrier around you?

To return to Louise, her comments are also interesting as they draw attention to the linkages between heteroprivilegist discourses of gender and sexuality and to the ways that such discourses function in tandem to regulate and limit difference. (For a related discussion on the ways that racist and homophobic discourses work through each other or in tandem see, Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 163-4). Heteroprivilegist discourses of sexuality are deployed to read sexuality through the gendered performances of others. Louise's comments also draw attention to the ways that discourse is embodied and can be evident in social practices like choosing and having a haircut or choosing a particular hair colouring.

Heteroprivilegist discourses are not only a series of ideas that circulate at the level of the rational, at the immaterial level of meaning. Heteroprivilegist discourses are written on the body, are read on the body, are done by bodies, and are actively resisted by bodies as they walk, talk and have their hair coloured in outrageously expansive ways. Heteroprivilegist discourses are very much about regulating the manner in which gendered bodies take up space in the world.

I also find Louise's reference to 'seeing' very interesting and thought provoking and I think that she suggests a further reason, apart from the clash of active and reactive forces, that queer bodies often provoke tension. Louise said:

There's talk if there's something out of the normal or in relation to something that is different to what people would usually see.

Her comments draw attention to the fact that bodies that are seen to be moving differently through the world (where what it might mean to 'move differently' is constructed via heteroprivilegist discourses of gender and sexuality), can often provoke tension. Her comments generate questions to do with the relationship between tension, queer sexualities and sight.

Kelvin's (15, gay, Anglo-Celtic, year 9, outer suburban co-ed state school) comments echo the themes that emerge through Louise's comments. At one point I asked him to talk about what he thought the most significant issues for same sex attracted people in schools
might be. He suggested that 'not having anyone to talk to' and the pressure 'to act straight' (see, Clarke 1998: 61-6) were in his opinion 2 of the most pressing issues. We started talking about 'not having anyone to talk to' and the conversation meandered its way through many issues eventually returning to the idea of 'having to act straight':

K Ummm...Not not being able to talk to anyone about it...Having to act straight...'coming out'...Not being able to say anything about guys

I Not being able to talk to anyone?

K That's probably not the biggest one...The biggest one is probably just having to act straight...

Later I asked him to elaborate on that point:

I What does (acting straight) mean?

K Like acting or something macho...Like you're out there to impress someone...acting big and tough...

I So what sort of things do you do to act straight?

K Ummm...Oh even little things like I don't cross my legs at school

I You mean like I'm sitting

K Yeah...Ummm...At times you have to sort of talk differently

I How would you talk differently?

K And walk differently

I And walk differently if you were straight?

K Well like people say to me like you walk so 'femininely' and stuff like this...And I've just sort of thought I can't give a stuff anymore but sometimes you have to...You
can't speak like 'femininely'...like 'queeny'...

I And what's 'femininely' or 'queeny'?

K Like things that straight people say like 'mate' or 'bloody' or 'gooday' or stuff like that

I So is there a 'gay talk'?

K ...(later)...sometimes you have to make it a deeper voice

I Deeper...Why?

K Because it's more manly or sort of...

I (later)...In relation to all that we've been talking about...What do you change about yourself?

K It just depends on the situation...Well sometimes I change my voice...sometimes you have to change the way that you walk and stuff and not just the tone of your voice but the way that you talk (see, Nayak and Kehily 1997: 143)

I And what is motivating you to do that? Why do you want to do that?

K Ummm...I don't really like it but I just know that I have to because if they find out about me then ummm what am I going to do I'll have to leave school probably

I So you'd be scared or fearful of the reaction of other people at your school? What would you be fearful of there?

K Ummm...Probably I know I'd get bashed...

I So physical violence?

K Yeah...Verbal doesn't worry me but I know I'd definitely get bashed up...
Kelvin also provides a textbook example of the way that heteroprivilegister discourses of sexuality and gender function *through* each other to limit and oppress queer bodies (for a related discussion see, Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 165). Kelvin provides, via his reference to other students, an example of how reactive heteroprivilegister discourses are accessed by young people in an attempt to limit and constrain the expansively different bodies of same-sex attracted secondary school students. His comments also demonstrate clearly that heteroprivilegister discourses target the body and are not only concerned with the rational. Heteroprivilegister discourses are embedded in the ways that subjects talk and walk and are resisted in the ways that subjects walk and talk.

**Discourses that circle gender and discourses that circle sexuality are in relationship in complex ways.**

...it is politically and pedagogically important to stress that both gay and straight people experience their class, gender and 'race/ethnicity through sexuality.

(Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 165)

Kelvin and Louise make clear the way that sexuality is inferred through the things that bodies do. They both tell us that they consciously set about editing or censoring the messages that their bodies communicate to others as they are read through filters of gender (see also Mac An Ghaill 1994: 164). They both state that they do so because they fear what might happen to them should the secret of their sexuality become evident via the movements of their bodies. Their fears are real and are based on the observations they have made at the schools that they attend. Their decisions to police their bodies are strategic.

Kelvin and Louise provide good examples of themes to do with the necessity to regulate the body in oppressive environments that resonated through each of the interviews that I conducted. And in the process they draw attention to the linkages and tensions that circle seeing, bodies, gender and queer sexualities. Many of the participants spoke about times where they had been bullied or where they were aware that other students had been bullied because they have been perceived to be same-sex attracted. Often such bullying would occur where a young person was perceived to be 'gender non-compliant', and where such gender non-compliance would cast a shadow of doubt over that young person's (hetero)sexuality.
I take as axiomatic that the work of attempting to support the construction of school cultures that are open to sexual diversity is work that also needs to tackle the heteroprivilegism that is embedded in discourses of gender. Rupturing reactive heteroprivilegist discourses of gender, as they are evident in schools, is central to the work of freeing up notions of sexuality, just as rupturing reactive heteroprivilegist discourses of sexuality, as they are evident in schools, is central to the work of freeing up notions of gender (I am not suggesting here that discourses of gender and sexuality are in a closed relationship with each other).
Moving Bodies: Sexuality Gender and Sight

Introduction

Sexuality being invisible can only reveal itself through speech
(Finch 1993: 126)

There's talk if there's something out of the normal or in relation
to something that is different to what people would usually see.
(Louise, participant)

Louise's comments hint at another reason why bodies that are read via various discourses
as moving differently through the world provoke tension. I'd like to suggest why in the
sections that follow.

Sexuality Gender and Sight

Grosz's thoughts regarding the tension that circles active bodies, as I have already stated,
are important. She is correct, that we are fearful of bodies that move differently because
of the possibility of difference that they open up, and that therefore, such bodies are likely
to provoke tension and be a target of oppressive (reactive) discourses (Louise and Kelvin
also demonstrate this through their stories). The literature supports this and suggests, for
example, that 'queer' bodies in schools are subject to the effects of oppressive discourses
in ways that 'straight' bodies are not (the literature will be reviewed in the next section). I
think however that there is more going on here than just a fear of bodies that move
differently and that there are further factors that go towards unpacking why bodies that
are read as queer, as they move differently through the world, often encounter oppressive
discourses.

Finch, as quoted above, suggests something quite interesting about sexuality, and that is,
that sexuality is an aspect of subjectivity that is never able to be seen in isolation in the
way for example that the colour of the skin or the sex of the body can be seen in isolation
(see also Altman 1973: 14). Sexuality is an aspect of subjectivity, unlike the colour of the
skin, that can remain unseen in the form of socially constructed desires that are never
given expression.
I am not suggesting here that desire is absolutely socially constructed. Why people desire this or that I make no claim to understand. However, I think that it is clear that desires that we experience as 'natural', or as somehow 'outside of culture', are often not so. Culture is always to a degree somewhere present or somehow implicated in our desires (consider Sedgwick's essay on the distinction between natural desires "needs" and 'artificial' desires "addictions", Sedgwick 1994ii: 136). I do not want to dwell on this however, the point that I want to make here is simply that sexuality, to the extent that sexuality is about desire, can be hidden from others. Sexuality, unlike the colour of the skin, is an aspect of subjectivity that in order to be recognized, must be done.

Building on the comments of Louise and Kelvin I have argued that discourses of gender are deployed in order to read the sexuality of others. Sexuality is an aspect of subjectivity that is seen through discourses of gender. It is never seen on its own. Further, I would suggest that discourses of gender are deployed to do one's sexuality. Sexuality is an aspect of embodied subjectivity that is never done in isolation, it is always done through other discourses such as gender. Sexuality is read and done through other discourses (see Nayak and Kehily 1997: 148, quoted earlier).

The implication of this is that sexuality is always encountered or always made evident through or by colonizing other discourse (such ideas are relevant to other aspects of subjectivity also). When we see sexuality, therefore, we do not see 'it', we see it as it is done through other discourses. Sexuality is always 'hidden' in the sense that 'it' is always entwined with the discourses that are accessed to 'perform' (Butler 1990) 'it', and in the sense that 'it' is always encountered through discourses that are used to read it. (These themes will be taken up further in chapter 5). Sexuality is always seen and unseen.

I would suggest that the tension that is provoked by bodies that move 'differently' through the world, as well as being generated by the awareness that there are other ways of being and that consequently we too might become different, is also to do with the loss of an unconsciously assumed ability to read the sexuality of others accurately via discourses of gender. I would suggest that the tension that circles bodies that move differently through the world is to do with tensions that circle the desire to 'recognize, name and fix' (see also: Seidler 1989: 1-18) the meaning of an aspect of subjectivity that is mysterious because it is not able to be looked at in isolation.

Many of the young people that I interviewed, as I have indicated, spoke about encountering various discourses that attempted to regulate how they did their gender. I
think these heteroprivilegist discourses are activated, in part, around tensions to do with an inability to see sexuality and also, in part, around reactive heteroprivilegist values that are embedded in discourses that seek the repetition of what is known, rather than the construction of difference. When oppressive heteroprivilegist discourses such as these are activated by embodied subjects they can target the body in violent ways.

The more certain, regulated or prescriptive the performance of gender, therefore, the more 'certain' the subject can be of reading the hidden sexuality of another or of performing and projecting a hidden and fragmented sexuality for another with 'certainty'. I think that this desire for certainty, the desire to recognize a hidden sexuality accurately, is also pivotal when trying to unpack the factors that contribute to the oppression of same-sex attracted young people in schools.

Edelman (1994: 3-14) explores this tension and identifies it's roots in the contradictory desire to see and simultaneously not to see homosexuality. The themes that he explores are very relevant to this text. Consider the following:

"..."homosexual difference" produces the imperative to recognize and expose it precisely to the extent that it threatens to remain unmarked and undetected, and thereby to disturb the stability of the paradigms through which sexual difference can be interpreted and gender difference can be enforced."

(Edelman 1994: 11-12)

Many of the participants in this study made comments that are consistent with Edelman's thesis. In some cases they spoke of relentless questioning around their sexuality. They spoke of the desire of others to render their sexuality known. To be certain about what they were seeing or hearing. Edelman draws our attention to the tense double bind that targets same-sex attracted young people. They're damned if they do and damned if they don't. They generate tension when their sexuality is 'hidden' because others are uncertain about it, and they generate tension when their sexualities are 'seen' because of the possibilities of difference that they open up and because in being seen they render the gendered meanings of all bodies less certain.

Edelman uses the concept of the homograph to ground the idea just elaborated. He uses it as a metaphor to consider, and explore the tension that queer bodies, as read through discourses of gender, can provoke. He writes:
By exposing the non-coincidence of what appears to be the same, the homograph, like writing, confounds the security of the distinction between sameness and difference gesturing in the process toward the fictional status of logic's foundational gesture. (Edelman 1994: 13-4).

Edelman suggests, through this metaphor, that bodies that are gay, lesbian or bisexual generate tension because they (we) call into question the illusion that it is possible to categorize gendered bodies accurately. Queer bodies draw attention to the fact that while male and female bodies, as a category, may look similar, that they are indeed not. The knowledge that bodies that look similar, are in fact 'different' (by virtue of a 'hidden' sexuality), generates tension. A tension born of a fear of uncertainty; a tension born of a fear of things that are different or unknown.

The knowledge that bodies are not gendered in a universal way and that categories of gender, are not uniform, unitary or monolithic, but rather that they are fragmentary and complex, provokes tension in some subjects. Such tension, that they will go to enormous efforts to shore up the idea, and the performance of, the certain, and the uniform, by targeting those that call uniformity into question with their disruptive bodies. Such tension, that they will seek the regulation of those bodies so that they appear to be and act the same. So that the fiction of uniformity can be continued. So that they can avoid tension.

But when we consider, following Butler (1990), that subjectivity is partially an effect of what a subject 'does', then such regulatory discourses become all the more sinister because in attempting to limit what a subject 'does' their effect can be to limit what a subject might become. Discursive practices, such as those that seek to regulate the way that subjects do their gender, seek the endless repetition of the same, rather than the proliferation of different ways of being.

There is a reactive need to render difference known, to rein it in, to label it, to put edges on it. This need does target same-sex attracted young people in schools but I think it also exceeds them. When young people enact discourses that target same-sex attracted young people in schools and inflict various violences upon them they are reacting against same-sex sexualities but I think more than this; they are reacting against difference. They are demonstrating their fear of the unknown; their fear of difference, and the fear of the unknown or the fear of difference is what fuels and informs homophobic violence. I want to stress here that I am not intending to suggest that such reactive discourses are only accessed by straight students against SSA students. All young people engage with
reactive discourses; some accommodate them, some reject them. Identifying with a particular sexual label does not determine how a young person will act in this regard (see for instance pp 112-4 where a SSAY participant in this project (Dante) describes how he bullied another student who was suspected of being gay).

In an earlier project I interviewed man who identified as gay called Jonathan (Crowhurst 1993). By returning to his comments I think that I can make the points I have raised above a little more clearly. Jonathan provides an example whereby he is harassed because he is perceived to be gay. He does not confirm his gayness and I would suggest that his refusal to do so positions him as even more threatening, as even more of a source of tension than if he had spoken his gayness.

Jonathan's comments indicate (perhaps the rather obvious point) that if schools are to become better places for same-sex attracted young people, that young people need to get used to the actively expansive difference of others, where that difference exceeds the security of labels. Jonathan's comments indicate that this might require even more work than getting used to others who are different because they happen to be lesbian gay or bisexual.

Jonathan spoke of the instance that follows, as an aside, at the end of the interview. The image that he conjured up was so evocative that it bubbled away for months after the interview and has stayed with me now for years. I have returned to it time and time again as I've been studying sexualities and schools (an instance where the 'data spoke to me'). Jonathan, spoke about a situation that lends weight to Grosz's suggestions as to why bodies that move differently might become a target for reactive discourses and that also lends weight to the ideas around sight and un-named difference that I have begun to map out above. At one point Jonathan discussed how much he disliked sport (see also, Epstein and Johnson 1998: 165-6) and why this was the case:

J  I think there was a conscious decision on my part not to like sport because I was gay and...you know sport is seen as a very heterosexual activity and very macho...in that sense I felt it was a political statement on my part to distance myself from that...I would lie down on the football field

I  What sort of reaction did you get when you did that?

J  Sometimes I'd get away with it but other times people would get really angry...hit me...I remember hearing about Barry
Humphries...he would like take knitting to the football...you know stuff like that...that was a real inspiration for me to see myself sitting down in football boots knitting...Rather than say I'm different because I'm gay I could say I'm different because I don't like sport...(it) was another way of saying I'm gay.

(Crowhurst 1993: 75-6)

In this instance Jonathan uses gender to communicate a message about his sexuality. He also actively and consciously resists conforming to the requirements of heteroprivilegist discourses of gender that suggest that he do his gender in a particular way. Jonathan is consequently read as gay by other students who use similar discourses of gender to arrive at this conclusion. Jonathan encounters resistance to his performance of gender in the form of being hit.

Jonathan also encounters resistance because of the tension that his subversive and disruptive performance of gender provokes. He provokes tension because he is suspected of being gay, but he never confirms this by saying whether he is or not. Jonathan is occupying a place that poststructural theorists use the word 'undecideable' (see: Garber 1993: 328) to describe (see last chapter where this concept will be further developed). He is neither here nor there. He is neither straight nor gay. His performance, without a clarifying statement, deconstructs the binary that separates gay from straight. Jonathan is neither, he is just different (See: Edelman 1994: 3-14).

Jonathan encounters resistance because rather than coming down on one side of the fence and bringing questions around the meaning of his body to closure, he marks his difference in a manner that raises further questions about it (see also Epstein and Johnson 1998: 124-5). I am not suggesting for one second here that had he 'come out' with a statement that he might not have been hit. I think he definitely would have been. And I am also aware that his decision to mark out his difference in this way is strategic in the sense that to make a direct statement about being gay may have been too dangerous for him in the context of the school that he attended in the 1980's. I am also not advocating here that same-sex attracted young people should not 'come out' and should instead opt to occupy an undecideable place. I am attempting here to raise questions about what it is that underlies the fear of same-sex attracted bodies; and what it is that does underlie this fear I am suggesting, is a more general fear of difference.

I am arguing here that, while there is very definitely a need to work around the tension that same-sex attracted bodies provoke, there is also a need to go beyond this and to work
through the tension that bodies that are different provoke (these themes are taken up in Chapter 6). This will involve working around ambiguity and exploring the linkages that exist between discourses of gender, sexuality, sight and certainty.

This work will also involve challenging dominant notions that position sexuality as an (unconsciously assumed heterosexual) essence, that is universally shared by all. It will involve challenging discourse that proceeds from a place that positions sexualities as similar and shared and moving to a place that positions sexuality as an aspect of subjectivity that is experienced and lived in different ways by different people in different social contexts.

There are many reasons why same-sex attracted young people provoke tension and encounter harassment from others in schools. The ideas that I have briefly fleshed out above are only a few of these. The ideas that have been offered to this point will be further developed in latter stages of the text that will focus on teaching practice. I will endeavour to do this by identifying key issues as raised by the participants. I will then apply the poststructural theories that I am familiar with to these concerns in an attempt to map out an approach that might go some of the way towards improving the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people who are subject to oppressive heteroprivilegist discourses in schools. First however, I will survey a selection of the literature that suggests that same-sex attracted young people's school experiences are often problematic. I take it as axiomatic that heteroprivilegist discourses, that are constructed within and that often characterize school environments, are responsible for this state of affairs.
The Experience of LGBT Young People in Schools.

In 1978, 'The Melbourne Gay Teachers and Students Group' (MGTSG) published 'Young Gay and Proud' (MGTSG, 1978(a); see also Jaynes 2000: 7-13). A pamphlet, produced by the booklet collective of the MGTSG sets out the rationale for its publication. This rationale proposes that there are heterosexist values that permeate the subject content that young people encounter in schools and that accordingly it is not surprising to find that some students act in ways that are consistent with that heterosexism. The authors state:

Notwithstanding the proliferation of human relationships programmes in secondary schools, there is still an abysmal lack of information about homosexuality...In the vacuum there prevails a welter of misinformation, half-truths and downright lies...The (heterosexist) attitudes that most students demonstrate are understandable if not acceptable. They too have been force fed a diet of unchallenged myths by the institutions responsible for information dissemination...Schools are often passive collaborators in that process. Most teachers now recognise that racism is an ignorant and offensive trait, and such name calling as jew, wog, dago, blackie will usually not be allowed to pass. Yet the ignorant, prejudiced and intimidatory talk about homosexuality is rarely deemed worthy of examination and intervention.

(MGTSG 1978(b): 1).

Unfortunately, the themes that the Gay Teachers and Students group referred to over 20 years ago still seem to be relevant at this point in time (see Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews and Rosenthal, 1998; Crowhurst 1993; Crowhurst 1999). The authors suggest not only a lack of information relating to gay and lesbian perspectives but to a heterosexist bias in the information encountered by students.

Similarly, The NSW Anti Discrimination Board (NSW ADB) produced a report in 1982, considering facets of 'Discrimination and Homosexuality'. The report is a 651 paged phone-bookesque government funded tome of disturbing facts and figures. A large section of the report considers educative settings (NSW ADB 1982: 508-62). The Anti Discrimination Board collected information by phone from 20 teachers. The vast majority of these teachers suggested that they were either unaware of, or knew that there weren't, any resources on homosexuality in their respective school libraries (NSW ADB 1982: 508-62).
525). The majority also suggested that homosexuality was rarely if ever discussed in class (NSW ADB 1982: 525-6). It would seem that issues reported by the authors of 'Young Gay and Proud' were pertinent for this group of teachers in 1982, as well.

The Melbourne based activist group, 'Gay Men and Lesbians Against Discrimination' (GLAD), produced a report in 1994, entitled 'Not A Day Goes By'. It is based on a sample of 1002 respondents and provides a snapshot of the nature and extent of discrimination, harassment and violence reported by respondents in the early 1990's (GLAD 1994: 5). One section of the report considers educative settings. The authors report that 28% of lesbians and 25% of gay men had experienced harassment while at school or university (GLAD 1994: 9). The authors also report that there is 'a common theme (that) emerges of respondents being unhappy and uncomfortable during their years of education' (GLAD 1994: 9).

The 1990's has seen a proliferation of academic and other writings focusing on the experiences of LGBT young people in schools and other youth sector settings from within and beyond Australia (see Epstein 1994; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Epstein and Sears 1999; Harbeck 1992; Laskey and Beavis 1996; Mac An Ghaill 1994; Unks 1995). This expansion of literature has occurred in concert with, and perhaps because of, the emergence of a body of theorists, and a body of theory, concerned with questions of sexuality. Much of this writing has in some way been influenced by poststructural theory with some of this writing labelling itself 'queer theory'.

Many of the themes that emerge in the earlier literature continue to be evident in the contemporary literature. Themes relating to subject content and broader school cultures that impact in negative ways on same-sex attracted young people and which are in turn an effect of heteroprivilegest discourses continue to be prevalent. Recent reports of widespread harassment, bullying and discrimination coupled with a paucity of support services are also frequently referred to and echo earlier times (see Crowhurst 1993; Crowhurst 1999).

In 1998, in the wake of the brutal hate crime that was the murder of the American College student Matthew Shepherd, researchers at La Trobe University's, 'The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society', published a report based on a survey of 750 same-sex attracted young people aged between 14 and 21 (Hillier et al 1988: 1). The authors report that over a three year period research conducted by the centre 'has revealed that a significant minority of young people are not unequivocally heterosexual, with numbers ranging between 8 and 11% ' (Hillier et al 1988: 1). It would seem that significant numbers of young people are describing themselves as same-sex attracted and
that they are engaged in constructing sexualities that are in some ways perhaps more expansive than they may have been historically (given the poststructural framework that informs this text it will be very interesting to see whether there is an increase in the numbers of young people who label and live their sexualities in expansive ways in future research projects where young people are asked to describe or label their sexualities).

The research uncovered, (echoing the GLAD report), that one third of the respondents reported that they had been discriminated against because of their sexuality with 46% of the respondents indicating that they had been verbally abused (Hillier et al 1988: 2-3, 33). School is reported as being the place where young people were most at risk of abuse, with the report stating that: 'More young people (70%) were abused at school than anywhere else, including the streets' (Hillier et al 1988: 2, 33). The researchers continue that, 'During past research projects, we have observed that many young people display overtly homophobic attitudes. Anyone suspected of being same-sex attracted may be threatened, assaulted and excluded from activities by peers, particularly in the school environment' (Hillier et al 1988: 33).

Hillier, Harrison and Dempsey, in a number of articles that have been published drawing on the data from their 1998 study, further highlight the problematic school experiences of same-sex attracted young people (Hillier, Dempsey and Harrison, 2000: 15-23; Hillier, Harrison and Dempsey 1999: 59-74). Similarly, Misson's recent work, which in part considers the reactions of young people in classrooms to the inclusion of queer perspectives, is another example of research that would suggest that the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people in the late 1990's continues to be problematic (Misson 1999: 75-88).

The 'Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby's' (VGLRL) report: 'Enough is Enough', which sought to replicate the GLAD research referred to earlier, and to report on the extent and nature of discrimination and abuse experienced by LGBT people in Victoria in the late 1990's, contains a section on education (VGLRL 2000: 46-9). The report draws on data provided by 929 respondents (VGLRL 2000: 1). The writer states that:

* 26% of participants reported discrimination or abuse related to their education.

* Harassment by teachers and other students was the most commonly cited type of incident.

* Men were more likely to report experiences of
school-based harassment than women or transgender participants.

* These incidents ranged from non-directive homophobic comments aired in the course of classroom activities to serious verbal or physical assaults sustained over a number of years. In some instances, participants reported that the abuse occurred with the full knowledge, and even the involvement of teachers.

* The invisibility of LGBT issues in the sex education curricula of schools was often raised in the qualitative data as a cause for concern (VGLRL 2000: 46).

It would seem that the VGLRL's report is further proof that the school experiences of LGBT young people are often, and continue to be, problematic.

Themes that are evident in the (often) queer-influenced research of the 1990's and 2000's focusing on LGBT school experiences, have often been pre-figured in earlier research informed by structuralist strands of Feminism or Marxism. Themes to do with gaps, silences, harassment and the like are problematic whether you read them as a structuralist or whether you read them as a poststructuralist. Overall, the research is worrying and suggests that same-sex attracted young people encounter many difficulties within school settings as they attempt to take up space in those settings in different ways.

The literature clearly documents that queer school experiences in Australia (both historically and currently), are not as optimal as they might be and drawing on poststructural theory this is because same-sex attracted young people encounter heteroprivelegist discourses in schools which facilitate the reproduction of social practices that privilege and normalize heterosexuality and that disadvantage them. I want to stress that this is not to suggest that young people who do not identify as same-sex attracted are immune from the effects of such social practices. All young people experience constraint within heteroprivelegist environments.

I became interested in exploring how young same-sex attracted people experienced the culture that is the school. I also became interested to ask them what they might suggest to improve the experience of SSAY in schools. I decided to interview a small number of lesbian, gay and bisexual secondary school students face to face. The next section of the text will detail how I did this and the theoretical considerations that informed this process.
Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) 'The bath house'. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.
Chapter 2: Methodology

One strategy to counter the abstractness and limits of the politics of deconstructionism and psychoanalysis, is to carry out locally focused studies that hold onto the concrete material conditions of the research participants, in which social and discursive practices are played out.

(Mac an Ghaill 1994: 172)

Poststructural theory challenges notions of 'meta-narrative' or 'meta-discourse' (see Edgar and Sedgwick 1999: 253; During 1993: 15). A meta-narrative is a discourse that claims to convey the truth of any given situation, or that examines the threads of many different stories and then supports a claim to have uncovered a universal story that is applicable to all situations. Historical accounts, for instance, that purport to 'explain' the truth of the past, to render the past knowable, to bring the past to closure, or to tell the whole truth, are an example of meta-narrative (see Seidler 1989: 17). Historical accounts, informed by poststructural theory, on the other hand, allude to the gaps in historical discourse and seek to demonstrate the degree to which historical writing is indeed a product of the context in which it is written (see Reynolds 1994: 248). Poststructural historical accounts endeavour to uncover the values that are evident within histories and then to theorize the discourses that have contributed to the generation of such value laden accounts (see Gilroy in Mac an Ghaill 1994(i): 152). Poststructural writers do not position their work as meta-discourses.

Queer historians, influenced by poststructural theory, for example, expose the absence of queer perspectives evident in historical accounts and argue that this is an effect of the nexus that exists between the values embedded in discourse and the production of knowledge (see Misson 1999: 75-6). Feminist and post-colonial theorists of history do likewise (Gnew 1994: 11-15). There is an understanding and acknowledgement within such frameworks, that knowledges, such as those that are produced through social practices like research, are always incomplete.

Accordingly, the knowledge that has been generated through this research project is also partial and incomplete. That is not to question the value of the research but rather to foreground it's limits and the limits of any text or research process. One text, one writer, one sample, one research methodology, will never adequately account for the complexity of LGB(T) school experiences or provide the answer as to how the school experiences of LGB(T) secondary school students might be improved (for a related discussion on sexuality see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 2-3).
Poststructural theory also holds other implications for research, for not only do writers influenced by poststructural theory challenge the positioning of research as a value neutral social practice that uncovers knowledge or truth, but they also challenge the positioning of research as a disinterested process. Feminist poststructural theory departs from such a positioning of research. One of the aims of research, informed by such frameworks, is to expose inequality, with a view to disrupting the cultural factors that have produced it (see Grosz 1988: 92-104). Anita Harris, writing about the challenge that feminist epistemology and methodology poses to positivist scientific research, sets out these distinctions very clearly:

Feminist social research works to challenge traditional scientific epistemology and methodology, for these have been found to be inadequate as a basis for research which acknowledges constraining, albeit transformable power relations in society. Positivism and some particular uses of quantitative methods are identified as the main problems. Both encourage an unproblematic correlation between the natural world and the social world, and people and inanimate objects. Both the theory and the methods of this approach are criticized on the grounds that knowledge cannot be objective and value-free, researchers cannot be detached from subjects, and that subjects cannot be treated as objects. The feminist alternative is to contextualize and openly politicize research for the purposes of not merely understanding, but changing the status quo.

(Harris 1996: 82)

Research processes informed by feminist poststructural theory often have an agenda and are often motivated by the desire to make a contribution to drawing attention to inequalities in order that the social practices that construct inequality be interrupted. Research processes informed by feminist poststructural theory don't only aim to describe and theorize the world in all of it's complexity, they often also aim to construct knowledges that contribute to the generation of change. Feminist poststructural processes of research are 'radical' in that they seek to change the way things are (Reynolds 1995: 72; for feminist poststructural research methodologies see: Davies 1994; Epstein and Johnson 1998: 99-107; Grosz 1988: 92-104; Harris 1996: 82-90; Randell 1997). Accordingly, this text, as a report on research, is in no way a value neutral, disengaged piece of writing. I am keen that the text makes some contribution towards a broader project of social change.
My Gay Agenda

As a gay man, I imagine that I write about the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people differently than I would write about them if I were not a gay man. As a gay man who has been a teacher, and a student, I write about them with some sense of connection in these respects as well. A connection that doesn't mean that I can assume to connect with or fully appreciate the experiences of all SSAY, but a connection or point of reference nonetheless. It is a connection, or cultural sensitivity, born of a similar encounter with heteroprivilegist discourses (for a related discussion on autobiographical issues and researchers see, Epstein and Johnson 1998: 7-8; see also Davies 1993: 176, Redman 1997; 1999: 136-143).

My own experiences of gayness, in many ways, also drew me into this area of research and clarified the need for such research. So not only is it the case that through sexuality I can lay some claim to a connection of sorts with the participants but I doubt very much whether I'd even be involved in this area of research if I wasn't gay (which is a somewhat worrying admission I think). I will further consider these issues where I discuss why I have drawn on my own experiences as part of the research in this section of the text.

My main objective was to consider the experiences of the young people that I interviewed in order to draw out key themes and then to use these in order to contribute to a growing and persuasive chorus that is calling for change. I am interested in doing so because:

* the academic literature is clear that the experiences of same-sex attracted young people in schools are often problematic;
* because my experience as a gay teacher and as a gay student led me to conclude that queer school experiences were often problematic long before the literature did;
* because my gay, lesbian and bisexual friends have told me similar stories;
* because this work, up until very recently, has not been supported at all by educational bureaucracies and I like a challenge;
* and because the educational neglect that I see in this area makes me angry. Angry enough to generate the energy that is necessary to pursue a research project like this.

As a researcher I have an agenda to push and I do so unapologetically. I have a very clear 'gay agenda'. I want this research project to further expose the disadvantage that
same-sex attracted young people experience in schools in order that the text, and publications that come from it, might then be used to feed into debates to argue for more work to be done in this area. I want this research project to make some contribution to shifting resources towards work that will benefit same-sex attracted young people. I want this research project, and publications that come from it, to be used by workers to argue for change and to support arguments for the resources that might support such work to happen (for another example of research with an agenda see: Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 199: 206).

As well as this however, I have outlined, through the thesis, the merits of a pedagogical approach because my 'gay agenda' also stretches to a commitment to making a contribution to reflectively and responsively engaging in a dialogue that might shape the direction that changes in work practices might take. The latter sections of the text, dealing with issues of subject content, the importance of support and the need to pursue pedagogical practices that support questioning around bodies, is where I describe the shape that such pedagogical practices might take, and where I hope that readers of this text will engage in dialogue with it around such ideas (see: Britzman 1995: 163; see also Barthes 1990, Martino 1999, Redman 1999: 148). My 'gay agenda' therefore includes the desire to reflectively and responsively describe LGB(T) school experiences; theorize why such experiences are often problematic; and make suggestions around practice.

On being Reflective and Responsive

I use the word reflectively to convey that the thesis is a form of 'praxis', i.e. theory generated from practice (Friere 1990; Gramsci 1995). It is praxis, in that while I have very definitely been engaged in a wide reading of theoretical texts, and have generated theories and understandings from such processes, on the whole, where theory has been generated through the research, it has come about as a response to, and as a reflection on, social practices. Chapter 6, where I argue a pedagogic strategy of generating discussion around ambiguous bodies in the interests of minimizing bullying, for example, came about as a result of reflecting on my own experiences in the classroom (which were, I might add, not directly related at all to questions of bullying and its minimization) and then generating theory, and formulating a practical and theoretically informed response as a result of this reflection (see Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: xxii-iii).

I also use the word responsive to describe the text. The text is responsive in that the key themes and issues that came out of the interviewing process anchor and provide a focus for the sections of the text that outline a pedagogical approach. Following the insights of
feminist and poststructural theory, and the writings of neo-marxists such as Friere (1990), I felt that it was essential that the key themes identified by participants be responded to, and further that they drive the broad suggestions for practice outlined in the text. I will briefly outline why.

In questioning the neutrality of discourses, and in highlighting the incompleteness of knowledges generated through research, poststructural writers also challenge the positioning of 'the researcher' as 'expert'. And in doing so, the notion that 'experts' are in possession of insights that allow them to unreservedly make recommendations that impact on the lives of others, is also called into question (see Harris 1996: 82). This sets up an interesting tension for projects, such as this one, that are about challenging the status quo, and about making recommendations for change.

Traditionally 'experts' have made suggestions from positions of power, accorded to them via discourses, that other 'experts' have constructed, which have positioned the work that they do as representative of value neutral, universal laws. And the suggestions or pronouncements that experts have made, in many cases, have had a huge impact on people's lives. Historically, for example, much of the work of researchers/experts has positioned queer people as pathological or deviant, and such discourses have informed and shaped cultural responses to queer people in such a way, that they have without question, in the vast majority of cases, had a negative impact on queer people (see, Epstein and Johnson 1994: 212-3; Sedgwick 1994: 154-164; Weeks 1981: 105).

This text, following feminist and poststructural theory, seeks to rupture and disrupt such academic traditions, and the positioning of people who do research as unquestionably 'expert'. Researchers (including this one) are not infallible, they have been known to get things wrong and when someone with cultural power gets it wrong the results can be a disaster. A disaster, usually not for the researcher, but for the object of the researchers' gaze.

Research influenced by feminist poststructural theory therefore, in seeking to promote change, seeks to avoid the temptation of being overly prescriptive. And further, such research processes suggest that people who experience systems as oppressive should always play a central role in working towards change or difference, by bringing focus to the direction that such work takes. 'Experts' should not impose change on people who are oppressed, even if that imposition is well meaning. Change should happen in a collaborative manner. Change should be a collaborative process; research should be also (see Friere 1990).
In this project therefore, the suggestions of participants and the themes that emerge in the interviews, inform and anchor the text where it outlines an approach to working in this area. On one level I have tried to incorporate such notions into the methodology by including a section in the interview focus sheet asking participants for suggestions and then reporting and organizing those suggestions around key themes so that they are easily accessible and available to guide teachers who are interested in trying to implement them. Also, in keeping with the above, I have reported on participant suggestions in the section of the text that follows this.

On another level I have incorporated such notions into the project by using a semi-structured interview format in order to engage in a collaborative research process (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 5). Redman describes such interviewing processes as 'dialogic' (1999: 148). The researcher and the research participant engage in a conversation, that while it is limited because it is contextualized as 'research', is nevertheless (particularly where the research methodology is informed by feminist and poststructural theory) a somewhat plastic exchange. Plastic, in the sense that such methods avoid a situation where participants answer questions that are of interest to the researcher and instead construct a space where a conversation, of sorts, can take place. A conversation where the interests, experiences and concerns of the research participant, with input from the researcher, to a large extent, determine the shape that the dialogue between the researcher and the research participant takes (these issues will be further discussed in this section of the text). In this way participants are involved in signalling and clarifying key concerns and in shaping the direction in which work should proceed.

**Drawing out the Key Themes**

'The challenge is to speak with certainty and a certain uncertainty.'

*(Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 207)*

The 'Key Themes' that I have alluded to, that came out of the interview process, took shape slowly through the process of collaboratively working the 'data' into a usable form. The 'Key Themes' emerged as an effect of the methodological approach taken to gathering, and working with, the data. They came out of the process, rather than as a result of applying a methodological approach to the letter (the specifics of this process will be considered below).

This alludes to one of the key learnings, or insights, that I have gained through the process of writing the thesis, namely, that the methodology that a project deploys has a direct bearing on the insights or knowledge generated through the research process; that
knowledge is in fact constructed through the methodology. Methodology isn't something that a researcher does in order to gather data in order to write a report. The methodology, in very subtle ways, becomes evident in the knowledge that is constructed through the research process, and is not absolutely separate from that knowledge. The contexts and processes that govern the production of knowledges become embedded in the knowledge itself (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 173). The process is in the product. And this is as true for the knowledge that is generated through processes of research as it is true for the knowledge that is generated in classrooms.

There was however a tension in 'working the data' for common themes. Poststructural theory, with its suspicion of 'meta-narratives', reminds the researcher that what is different or contradictory within the 'data' is as valid as that which is similar or consistent within it. There is a caution that any attempt to draw together the threads of different stories, in order to weave a single, linear narrative or report, involves the imposition of an order, and the erasure of much of the complexity of participant accounts. Further, poststructural writers argue that the act of weaving together different stories can sometimes result in a text that reflects the researchers own priorities and values as much as the commonality of experience of participants in the research process (see Grosz 1988: 92-104; Misson 1999: 75-6; Reynolds 1994).

While it is important to acknowledge the limitations of imposing order on difference, politically there is a need to identify common experiences, and then to theorize the discourses or factors that might be contributing to such a shared experience in order that oppressive situations can be changed. This text, following poststructural theory, will attempt to balance the requirement not to empty the stories of their differences with the ethical and political imperative to identify areas that teachers and school systems might target if same-sex attracted young people are to have better school experiences (see Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 207). I will attempt this by using the voices of the participants through the text in an effort to convey that even though in many cases they are referring to events that are similar that there are shades of difference within their accounts.

Allowing for limitations and qualifications, the common themes that emerged across the different stories suggest something shared in the experience of these same-sex attracted young people, this commonality of experience or perception points to the work of discourse (see Kehily 1999: 141; Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 207; Crowhurst 1999: 89, 92-3). Davies (1993: 176) suggests that the stories that people tell about their experiences not only illuminate the shared discourses that people access to make sense of and communicate their experiences but also reveal the discourses through
which their experiences are constructed. This is particularly important to note given the small number of participants in this study.

Many researchers suggest that it is necessary to work with a large sample in order to generalize across populations. While feminist poststructural writers, such as Davies (1993) are suspicious of generalizations, the merits of exploring individual stories for the broader insights that they offer are not lost on such writers (see Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 199-200). The discourses through which individual stories are constructed, the texture of individual stories, are an effect of larger cultural factors. It is possible, by engaging in conversation and fleshing out the detail of participant stories, to unravel a story that exceeds the individual (see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 121-2). In short there is much to be learnt about the cultural factors that contribute to a set of experiences via the analysis of a small sample of individual stories (see Redman 1999: 146-151).

Conducting the Interviews

As with all research conducted at Melbourne University the research was approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Arts/Education) (see appendix 1). The ideas that I have briefly elaborated on above led to a research design that was very focused, involving in-depth interviews with a small sample of participants. Pragmatically this was also necessitated because, based on experience, I imagined that it would be virtually impossible to access a larger sample of same-sex attracted young people to interview face to face. The research design involved conducting interviews with 10 same-sex attracted young people who were currently enrolled in a secondary school in Victoria.

The interviews were conducted during the years 1996-98. Initially I approached queer youth support services and asked if there were any gay, lesbian or bisexual young people who would be interested in participating in the research project. A number of young people indicated interest. Ten same-sex attracted young people were eventually interviewed for this project. The participants ranged in ages from 14-18, and were all currently attending a secondary school at the time of the interview. They came from rural, semi-rural and city locations. They attended single-sex and co-educational settings. They attended State and Catholic schools.

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Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, LGB(T), Same-Sex Attracted or Queer Young People.

Gary Remafedi, in demographic work that he published in the early 1990's, found that 1.4% of his sample of 37,000 students described themselves as bisexual or homosexual
(Remafedi et al, quoted in Crowhurst 1993: 33-36). He suggested that this most probably underestimated the percentage of homosexual students due to the stigma attached to the label 'homosexual' and the reluctance on the part of students to claim that label (for 'stigma' see Emslie 1999: 160-1). None of the participants chose to describe themselves or their sexualities as 'homosexual'. Issues around labels that define sexualities are an important methodological consideration (and an important consideration for LGB(T) service provision).

Many of the participants seemed reluctant to claim labels to describe who they were for a variety of reasons, but generally, this reluctance seemed more to do with the perceived inadequacy of labels rather than a reluctance on the part of participants to claim a label bearing 'the stigma' of same-sex attraction. Some of the participants were very clear that they were same-sex attracted but disliked the label gay or lesbian. And then again, some of the participants were very clear indeed that the label lesbian, gay or bisexual was the correct one for them and were more than happy to claim it. None of the participants used the label 'queer'. All of the participants, however, were comfortable talking about being same-sex attracted (without ever using the label same-sex attracted themselves). (For 'same-sex attracted' see, Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews and Rosenthal 1998).

Overall the label same-sex attracted young person (SSAY) seems to come closest to describing how the participants made sense of their sexualities. It is also a label that allows for a degree of fluidity and complexity, without losing sight of the fact that the young people in this project share an attraction to members of the same-sex. I will use 'SSAY' as the main label to describe the participants throughout the text.

At times throughout the text however, because some of the participants were comfortable with these labels, I will also use the acronym LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). Where I do so, and I am not citing literature, I will bracket the T thus; LGB(T). I do this to indicate that while the issues that I am writing about are of relevance to transgender young people in schools, that the focus of this text is sexualities. I also do this because I did not interview a transgender young person. There is a great need for specific research into the experience of transgender young people. I bracket the (T) on occasion in this text, in order to include or bring transgender perspectives into consciousness, and to acknowledge the political links that exist between LGB communities and transgender communities, but to avoid the tokenism and the problematic assumption that transgender experience is identical to LGB experience.
I also occasionally use the label 'queer' throughout the text in line with the poststructural call to blur boundaries and disrupt binaries. Queer conveys a sense of fluidity and movement, a sense of difference, and for this reason it is a label that I find very appealing. The label queer also carries with it the challenge to think in new ways about sexualities. However, as none of the young people that I interviewed chose to use it themselves I will only use it on occasion throughout the text.

I therefore use a variety of labels throughout the text, and many of these are aligned with different theoretical approaches towards the understanding of sexuality. This is consistent with one aim of the thesis, which is to rupture the tendency of academic writing to be positioned as meta-narrative. The choice to use a variety of labels is one strategy that is intended to achieve and convey this. I have found some degree of merit in most of the theoretical approaches that I have grappled with. While each is incomplete, each adds something to the picture (even if what is added is a clearer picture of why a particular theoretical approach is an inadequate account). I use a variety of labels to indicate this.

The Sample

It was not possible, at the time of conducting the interviews (1996-8), to access same-sex attracted young people within school settings in a direct manner for a variety of ethical reasons. The main reason being that identifying participants within a school setting might render them vulnerable to harassment if they were 'outed' as a result of participating in the research (see Hillier, Harrison and Dempsey 1999: 62; see also Epstein and Johnson 1998: 100).

The other reason was that the perception of confidentiality between teachers and students might be compromised somewhat if teachers asked same-sex attracted young people who had approached them to participate in a research project. Many teacher colleagues, who were working as Student Welfare Co-ordinators at the time that I was conducting the research, expressed this point of view. They also stated that while they were supportive of the research, they would be uncomfortable asking a same-sex attracted student whether they would like to participate in research of this kind. Many did say however, that they would be happy to leave flyers, advertizing the research, lying around in their offices.

I decided against this approach, however, as I felt that it was important that participants be in contact with on-going SSAY specific support so that they could seek assistance if the interview process distressed them in any way. If participants became involved by accessing a flyer left in a public place there was no guarantee that they would be in contact with on-going support.
It was also impossible to access SSAY participants within secondary schools in any formal manner because at the time of conducting the research there wasn't a designated Project Officer (or person with SSAY student issues as part of their job description) who might have made contact with such students within the combined State wide bureaucracies of the Catholic Education Office or the Victorian Department of Education (it is worth noting here that at the time of writing that there still isn't such a person).

As I was in the process of conducting the research, I was fortunate to make contact with one teacher who had established an informal, and unacknowledged support network within her school (see also Mac an Ghaill 1994: 154). I made contact with this teacher through a LGBT teacher and youth worker community group that I co-facilitate (with Mic Emslie) called 'context' (www.vicnet.net.au/~context). She told the students who attended the group about the research that I was undertaking. Two of the students who attended this support group indicated that they would like to be part of the project. It would appear that there are students within schools who are eager to be a part of such research processes. Methodologically this is important to acknowledge. In future work I will be a little less cautious and a little more willing to accept that there are perceived benefits as well as perceived risks that accrue to research participants. I will structure the research so that it is the participants who make the decisions in this regard, keeping in mind that some participants in this study were more than willing to take a risk to tell their story, in fact some participants were very eager indeed to participate in the research.

The remainder of the participants were all members of queer youth support services that were in operation at the time that the interviews took place; or were the children of parents who attended a support group for the parents of queer young people (I use 'queer' here because these services offered support to transgender young people and queer is term that can accommodate sexuality and gender). When I began conducting the research there were four queer young people's support groups in operation across Victoria. Each of these groups was funded and operated outside of the school system or outside of State and Catholic educational bureaucracies. The group that specifically offered support and counselling to young lesbian women was run by young lesbian volunteers and received no government funding, support or guidance whatsoever.

This also imposed a limit on the number of young people that I could interview within any one service, as workers or volunteers (in a similar fashion to the student welfare co-ordinators) were quite rightfully reluctant to turn the young people who attended their support groups into 'objects' to be researched. The youth workers who assisted in gathering the data, via the access to young people that they facilitated, were very
supportive of the project and without their assistance accessing same-sex attracted young people would have been impossible. Accessing young women was particularly difficult as many queer youth services at the time were funded via HIV/AIDS money which specified male target groups (i.e. same-sex attracted young men). Funded services that specifically attempted to meet the needs of same-sex attracted young women were not in operation at the time that the data was collected.

It was important that participants be involved with some form of queer youth support service so they could access support should the interview raise any issues that caused distress or concern (on the importance of support see Crowhurst 1999: 175-6). This meant that I didn't advertise for same-sex attracted young people, through the queer press for instance, because there was no guarantee if I did so that participants would be linked to some form of on-going support (see the discussion above on schools and the use of flyers to access participants). At the time of conducting the interviews I also provided participants with various contact numbers that they could use to access other forms of support if they wanted to (I want to stress here that I am not positioning all same-sex attracted young people here as needing support).

The SSAY support services that provided participants for the research, took referrals from Catholic, Private and State schools and often provided training (in the absence of any Departmental provision around LGBT issues) around issues of sexual diversity to school communities. Generally, these youth workers spoke about their frustration with the conservatism and the reluctance of schools, and particularly educational bureaucracies, to address issues of sexual diversity. In some cases they were also deeply suspicious, and even cynical about the politics of acting as educational consultants to whole school communities when their training was as youth workers. Where were the departmental 'experts' in this area, and would this form of consultancy be occurring around any other area of difference? Without minimizing their considerable skills and knowledge in the area of sexualities I doubt whether a similar state of affairs would exist around issues of ethnicity, disability or gender.

The youth workers said that often schools would draw on discourses that removed responsibility from the school, that suggested that the task was too big for schools to deal with, or that positioned conservative parents as the reason that work could not proceed in this area. My experience of school responses to SSAY issues as a teacher and as a youth worker echo these observations. There is very definitely a need for research that documents parental attitudes around these issues (see Sumara and Davis 1999: 198-9; Seal 1999: 18). The discourse that most parents are not in favour of work in schools around sexual diversity, and are not in favour of work in schools that addresses
homophobic bullying, needs to be interrupted. But over and above this, there is a need for school communities, and for educational bureaucracies, to become clear about issues of duty of care and where their responsibilities lie (Hillier, Harrison and Dempsey 1999: 59-74). While these issues emerged through the methodological process and add a further dimension to the 'data', I digress.

That it took 18 months, during 1996-98, to find 10 same-sex attracted young people to interview indicates the degree of isolation and silence that surrounds this group of students. Currently there are 350,917 students who attend Government, Catholic and Independent secondary schools in Victoria (State Government of Victoria, Department of Education, Employment and Training 2000: 17). Hillier et al, as referred to in earlier sections of the text, have found that between 8-11% of secondary school students are not unequivocally heterosexual (Hillier et al 1998: 1). This means that there are between 28,000-38,500 same-sex attracted young people currently enrolled in secondary schools in Victoria.

It is astounding, given these figures, that it took 18 months to find 10 young people to interview face to face. It speaks, without romanticizing these young people, to the courage, resilience and uniqueness of these 10 young people. It also highlights the difficulties around making information about support available, accessible and viable to this group of often isolated and invisible young people. Similarly there are significant issues for further research, particularly for in-depth qualitative research. How might researchers access isolated young people so that their stories might be used to argue for change? And how might researchers do so efficiently and within the time lines that research funding guidelines often stipulate?

One advantage that did flow from the length of time that it took to find participants was that I had the luxury of being able to digest the interview material slowly. Themes slowly surfaced through the process of transcribing, co-editing, interviewing, listening and re-listening to the tapes of the interviews and following and linking themes through the literature. The dialogic relation between myself and the edited transcript material was heightened as a result of the length of the process and this was an effect of my decision to conduct research into the experiences of an often isolated group of young people. My connection with the 'data', I believe, was deeper as a result of this. And this highlights a further advantage of working in an in-depth fashion with a small group of participants. I would like to briefly digress to make a related, and I think important point concerning service provision.
Over the last couple of years I have been on the steering committees of a number of LGBT youth groups, funded and managed by Local Council's in Victoria. Recently (2000), I worked as a youth worker and co-facilitated one such group on a part-time basis. As such, I am a member of a committee comprised of youth workers that meets to discuss issues around running SSAY support groups monthly. The experience of workers in this area is that it is very difficult to access clients, either as a referral from another youth service or on a self-referral basis, for a variety of reasons (there are obvious echoes here with this research project).

This is a dilemma that cuts across this area of work and it raises a number of questions. How might service providers support same-sex attracted young people when in many instances those young people are so isolated and fearful of disclosing information about their sexualities that they are unable to speak to workers in order to access support or to walk through the door of a support service provider? How also might schools offer support to queer young people when in many instances the young people who most need support are unlikely to risk requesting it?

'Minus 18' is the exception to the rule and perhaps is an indication that young people will 'risk' accessing services that they see as interesting or exciting or relevant. 'Minus 18' is a 'Pink Light' disco for same-sex attracted young people who are under 18, run by the queer community. The ALSO foundation (www.also.org.au) and PFLAG (www.gaynet.com.au/pflag/) are the community groups that organize the events. The 'Minus 18' disco that was held in Melbourne on July 28 2000 attracted 150 same-sex attracted young people. 'Minus 18' (http://welcome.to/minus18/) is an example of the queer community providing support for it's own and perhaps illustrative of the importance of oppressed groups being actively involved in the construction of alternatives to oppression. There is a need for research that explores the factors that enable and facilitate SSAY to access support services just as there is a need for research that explores and analyses methodologies that facilitate and support SSAY's participation in research projects.

**Face to Face Interviews**

Much research in the area of queer school experience, has involved the use of adults who have offered retrospective accounts of their school experiences (see for example Crowhurst 1993), the observation of school situations where issues regarding queer sexuality had surfaced as a side issue, by 'accident', or at the instigation of queer students who found themselves within the research (see Walker 1988: 52-5; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 154, 173), or has involved the collection of written material via the internet or
questionnaire (Hillier et al 1998: 11). While such research has been, and continues to be, very useful indeed, I intentionally set out to interview queer secondary school students who were currently attending secondary school, and to interview them face to face as the main focus of the study design.

The interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes and were audio taped. Most of the interviews were conducted at Melbourne University or at the youth support service that the young people attended. Two of the interviews were conducted in the family home. Within a month of the interview, participants were given a transcript and asked to edit the material. I asked them to add to the material if they wanted to further clarify an issue or to mention something that they had forgotten to mention or felt strongly about. I also reminded them that they could edit out material that they had disclosed that they subsequently felt uncomfortable about (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 356-8; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 173-4). Participants were informed that I would edit the transcript material further and that the edited transcripts would then be used as the basis for various publications. Participants were reminded throughout the process that they were free to withdraw consent at any time prior to publication. Participants were also given a debriefing sheet that provided information relating to support services should the interview upset them in any way.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview format (see Crowhurst 1993: 41; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 5) (see appendix 2). At the beginning of each interview I gave participants a question sheet and explained that they could discard this if they chose to, and that there was no obligation to answer any of the questions that were listed. The question sheet considered: Subject Information, Curriculum (subject content), Peers, Teachers, School Administration and Suggestions for Improvement. Such a methodology allowed for open-ended answers to questions and further, allowed participants to digress from the prepared questions and discuss issues that were of particular relevance to them (for 'open interviews' see Redman 1999: 132-134). I approached the interviewing process as flexibly as I could. I followed the participant's lead and sought clarification where I needed to or where what the participant said interested me (see Redman 1999: 134). This meant that sometimes the participants would do likewise, that they would also ask me questions (on 'equalizing' the research experience see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 316-20). I attempted to construct an interview process that was as close to a conversational space as possible.

By allowing participants to guide the discussion I also intended to create a space where the 'data' was a record of their experiences rather than a record of answers to questions that would reflect my preoccupations or values. And in fact, a great deal of what I found
to be of the most interest, came about as a result of asides or digression where participants strayed from the pre-structured areas of investigation and spoke about issues that were relevant to them or that they felt angry about.

The interview space functioned in a 'dialogic' fashion (Britzman 1995: 1998; Martino 1999; Redman 1999: 148). While the conversations that I had with the participants were structured, to a degree, by the questions that I had framed, the flavour of the conversations, and the direction that they took were an effect of the process, and of the methodology. The material that came out of the interviews, the material that is the basis of this text, took shape in this manner. The text is very much an effect of the methodology and the methodology is in this sense 'inseparable' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1998: 1) from the text (for a related discussion on the production of gendered differences in schools see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 194).

The process of conducting the interviews was enjoyable and engaging. The participants were inspiring and their stories were full of interest and in many cases helped make sense of and ground the poststructural theory that I was working (wading) through at the time. The interviews generated 100 000 words of transcript material. This material was so rich in themes, so diverse and complex, that it is surprising to me that I was able to identify 3 key themes through it at all. Nevertheless, there were a number of key themes that emerged through the conversations that were particularly relevant to the work of teaching and that resonated through each of the interviews. The chapters that follow will outline an approach to teaching drawing on these key themes and concerns (for 'collaborative' research see also Mac an Ghaill 1994: 155). But first I would like to elaborate on a few more methodological concerns.

Other Issues: The Author in the Text

The decision to include myself in the text, as part of the research, was an effect of the methodological process rather than a deliberate strategy to rupture the binary that artificially separates the researcher from the object being researched (Harris 1996: 82). The decision to insert myself into the research came about almost by accident (on serendipity see Randell 1997).

I had identified the three key themes that emerged from the interview material, and I had started writing a chapter focusing on 'subject content'. I remembered that in an earlier project, my Masters Thesis (1993), that one of the participants spoke about how angry he was that queer perspectives were often absent from the subject content that he encountered, but how uncomfortable he would become whenever they were mentioned

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(1993: 51). At the time of writing the Masters thesis I used his comments to demonstrate that the inclusion of queer perspectives can sometimes make students uncomfortable (see also: Khayatt 1997).

Here, I revisit and rework these comments arguing the importance of constructing or referring young people to supportive spaces (on reworking earlier work see Redman 1999: 114-5). It was during this process that I began to reflect on tension. I did so by going to and drawing on my own experiences of tension. Specifically experiences of tension around sexuality and education (see also Curren 1999).

As I have indicated I am involved in co-convening a working group (www.vicnet.net.au/~context) for teachers and youth workers interested in LGBT issues. We engage in various activities such as hosting conferences, writing submissions, holding monthly meetings and giving papers at conferences. As part of the work of that group I had written a narrative, based on an experience that I'd had as a teacher, 5 years earlier (I had written notes on the incident at the time). The narrative had been sparked by the disruption that the question: 'Are you gay sir?' had raised in a class that I was teaching. The narrative also reflected on the tension that the question provoked (see Crowhurst 1999). I returned to the narrative and continued working and reflecting on it as I thought about 'tension'.

At about that time, in order to supplement my income as a community worker, I returned to work as a classroom teacher on a part-time basis, and I decided that I would like to 'come out' to students (I have funded this project entirely with part-time work. I did not attract a scholarship). Drawing on teaching experience, I decided that the best way to do this would be to 'come out' slowly. There really wasn't any laboured theoretical consideration given to this decision. It was a decision that I made on the basis of 'common sense' (see Barthes 1982: 11). I decided that in order to 'come out' slowly that I'd hint at my sexuality by playing with gender. Again, this strategy had very little to do with theory or this text, as at this stage I wasn't planning on using the material that this process generated for the thesis. I had not positioned this process as research as such.

The process of 'coming out' slowly generated a tension that I found surprising, given that the strategy that I had deployed had been an attempt to minimize tension. I found myself drawn back to the themes that I was working through in this thesis, which I was in the process of writing, at this time. I became conscious that the tension that I was managing in the classroom, might be relevant to mine for the thesis. At the time I was also reading Deborah Britzman's work (1998) and her ideas seemed very relevant.
Reflecting on my own experiences of tension around being asked: 'Are you gay sir?' made it clear that in part this tension was about the experience of straddling seemingly contradictory subject positions (see also Epstein and Johnson 1998: 122-4: 145-7). But it also made something else evident. The main issue that cut through the narrative (Crowhurst 1999) was to do with 'control', the issue of managing or securing control of the class and the tension that is provoked for a teacher when it appears that there is a danger that control will be lost. The subject position that is 'the teacher' is often done through discourses of control. Classroom management, the ability to steer a class in a particular direction, are discourses through which the subject position of 'the teacher' is constructed (see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 122: 125-8).

Reflecting on this, after writing the narrative, and drawing on Britzman's (1998) work, made it clear that working towards educative spaces that are 'of difference' is to a degree, about achieving a balance between pragmatically creating some sense of structure and relinquishing control (on the uses of narratives see Crowhurst 1999; Davies 1993; 2000i).

The decision to place myself in the text came about therefore as an afterthought. I did not initially set out to write myself into the text or to write about my own experiences. The decision to include myself in the text came about largely because of connections that I started to make across different spheres of my life which upon reflection were of such relevance to the text that it would have been senseless to leave them out (for a discussion of the use of autobiographical writing in research see Redman and Mac an Ghaill 1997).

The Revisiting and Re-Working of Participant Extracts from an Earlier Project

As indicated above as I was writing Chapter 4 and focusing on subject content I remembered participant comments about anger and discomfort that connected with the themes that I was working with in this project. In Chapter 4 particularly, I refer to and re-engage with earlier work (Crowhurst 1993). I do this for a number of reasons.

Firstly there are various connections with the earlier work that became evident through the process of writing the text. Themes that were evident in the earlier work, continue to be evident in the current work. I wanted to generate links and bridges between this study and the previous one.

Secondly my analysis of the earlier work also shifted and deepened as I engaged with more literature and as I interviewed the participants in this study. So while I do revisit participant extracts from previous work, I do so thinking very differently about their
meaning and what they might demonstrate. Where I refer to or use previous work it has been re-worked and opened up to new meanings and purposes. Where I use previous work it has been deconstructed.

And finally, where I re-work extracts from previous work to use them in this project, there is a dialogic relation or conversation established between these different projects. The new participant extracts sit in relation with and are informed by the extracts that have preceded them. The past project is embedded in, and in conversation with, the present one. The present text has been constructed out of the learnings that have been made possible by previous texts. Reworking and using extracts from one previous study, in an upfront manner in the text, acknowledges this relationship, thickens the dialogue between the two and makes this relationship more obvious to the reader of the text.

The use of Fonts

Where I have used autobiographical material, and in some other places in the text, I have used different fonts. Many feminist and poststructural writers have deployed the technique of playing with the text to infer a rejection of a patriarchal form of text (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 91-102; Davies 2000i; Du Plessis 1990; Irigaray 1993; Randell 1997). Similarly such writers also play with the text in order to indicate the different dimensions or complexity of a character (Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 360-1), or to adopt multiple positions as the author of a text within the text (see Kenway and Willis (with) Blackmore and Rennie 1997: 205; Kiley, D. 1995). Further such devices act as a metaphor in that they echo the fragmented nature of the poststructural subject (see Crowhurst 1999; Davies 2000i; Du Plessis 1990; Irigaray 1993; Kiley 1995; Randell 1997). I have used fonts in the text for all of the above reasons.

I have also used different fonts at times in the text, to work against the positioning of it as meta-narrative. The positioning of the text as meta-narrative is often achieved, in part, through the linearity of the text. Academic writers move from this rational argument, to the next, as they make their way towards the truth. The implication being that there is one way to go, one path to tread. This text deploys the use of fonts to signal that it breaks with such traditions and to imply that it makes a contribution to the area, it does not bring the area to closure. However, while the use of a variety of fonts is intended to convey that the text breaks with linear academic writings, in some sections where fonts are used, particularly in Chapter 5 where I compare sexuality to the sound of the voice, the fragmented text, paradoxically is intended to convey a very clear and very linear theoretical message.
The different fonts also serve to visually fragment the text. Chapter one outlined an argument regarding the tensions that circle sexuality, gender and vision. Essentially, the argument made being that sexuality is hidden and is only ever seen as it is done through other discourses. I argued, that within western cultures, 'the unseen' provokes tension because it can never be brought to closure within epistemological frameworks that are dependent on observation (see also Jay 1994). The use of fonts in various sections of the text is a further attempt to subtly embed such ideas through the entirety of the text. The fonts are an attempt to play with 'the look' of the text. In places the text 'looks' fragmented it does not 'look' unified. Over and above all of these objectives however, the fonts, are intended to provoke readers of the text to question the meaning they have made of it.

The use of Images

My father painted in his spare time and so the family home was always full of his works. He painted landscapes and did so for many years. He also used to frame his own paintings and those of local painters. Consequently I was surrounded by paintings of various styles for many years. I am still very interested in images and visual art and have my father to thank for this.

I have used a number of images as section breaks throughout the text and they serve a number of functions. Throughout the process of writing the thesis various images connected with themes I was exploring and consequently I have selected a few of these for inclusion in the text. The works by the artist Bridget Riley however, seem so connected with the themes explored throughout the thesis that they act almost as a visual representation of the text. Riley's paintings disrupt the viewers' ability to see the finished work. Riley paints paintings that can't be seen. Riley's works are abstract and poetic and generate questions; they are not didactic and linear. The viewer of Riley's paintings can never be sure that they have brought the meaning of a particular work to closure.

I have also used the images through the text in order that it works in a 'multilayered' fashion (see also Epstein and Johnson 1998: 200; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 3). I have used the images to construct a text that works in obvious and in subtle ways, consistent with the ideas of Elizabeth Grosz explored in Chapter 1. The images represent a subtle layer of meaning. The images are also only 'explained' at the end of the thesis, for the majority of the text, they float unexplained. And, when an explanation is eventually offered it is intentionally vague, signalling, in keeping with themes explored in the final chapter of the text, that it is the responsibility of the reader, not the writer, to carve some sense of clarity out of them.
The Participants

At this point I would like to introduce the participants and I will also include a small extract from each. The extracts are moments in the interviews that were interesting for one reason or another and that are relevant to themes that will resonate throughout the rest of the thesis. I have selected extracts to do with support, visibility, and the need for anti-harassment policies as these were the key themes that the participants suggested were important. Issues to do with subject content and gender non compliance will be included in later sections of the text so I have chosen not to include them here. I have also tried to select quotes that convey some sense of the participant. The names that are used are pseudonyms. At various times throughout the text, I will briefly re-state participant details as it has been my experience that these are difficult to retain throughout the reading of an entire text.

Violet

Violet is 16. She describes her class as 'comfortable'. She has lived most of her life in South Africa and has been living in Australia for 6 years. She is not a member of a religion but she is very interested in how people make meaning of their existence. She describes the school that she attends as conservative and says that this is consistent with it's location. The school is a 7-12, co-educational State school. Violet says that it has just reintroduced uniforms and is competing with private schools in the area. Violet describes the school as multicultural and the suburb that it is in as 'dead at night'. She describes herself as bi-sexual.

Violet was fortunate enough to have access to an informal support group that operated at her school. The reason that the group existed was, according to Violet, largely due to the efforts of one teacher who worked there. The teacher who had organized the group suggested that it was not sanctioned by the school administration or known about by the Department of Education. The teacher who ran the group said that this was the case because she felt that 'they' (the Dept) would stop the group from meeting if it's existence became an 'issue' in the school.

Violet was 'out' at the school that she attended and she made an interesting comment about how other students reacted to this:

\[ V \quad \text{Well see I think that it was pretty much evenly matched because all of the guys would think that it was a great laugh} \]
and they would say, 'Look out for the blonde one'...and ummm...and, 'Her and the other girl well they're dykes they're doing this this and this', and the other girls because of the fact that the school is quite conservative, a lot of girls sort of (decided) I just won't speak to them now and it wasn't like rude it was this nice little chill and I just thought

I And what do you think that was about, the nice little chill?

V It's sort of like we'll be seen with you but we'll let it be known that we're not that type...We'll be your friend as long as everyone knows that we are all normal and (you're not).

Later in the interview she spoke about how the other students were surprised that she didn't 'look like a dyke'. Violet also described how she 'came out' to peers:

V Well a lot of people had a problem because they said: 'But you don't look like a dyke...You look straight'...You look like a nice attractive straight girl. You don't look like some sort of butch you know the shaved head sort of butch pierced dyke...

The comments that Violet made in relation to 'looking like a Dyke' reverberated through many of the interviews. The tension and the endless questions that were provoked by the suspicion that someone might be a dyke even though they didn't 'look like one' was also a theme that echoed in different ways through the participants' stories (see Esterberg 1996: 273; Edelman 1994).

What does a dyke look like? And how might the tension that circles the need to be certain about what a dyke looks like be used to make school settings better places for same-sex attracted young people to attend. The introductory sections of this text have touched on such issues around the tensions that circle vision and sexuality at the level of theory, the second half of the text will reflect on what this might mean for practice.

Veronica

Veronica is nearly 17 and is in year 12. She was born in England and then lived in Italy with her grandparents. She moved to Australia with her grandmother three years before the interview took place. Veronica describes herself as middle class because her family can afford to go on holidays. She attends a State, single sex secondary college. She
identifies as lesbian. Veronica was a member of a peer-support group run by volunteers and funded by the queer community.

She made some comments that are interesting to ponder in light of those made by Violet. Veronica was also 'out' at school and at one point in the interview I asked her if being 'out' had made any difference to her friends:

I Did it make any difference to them that they knew that you were a lesbian?

V I guess that they couldn't believe it

I Why?

V I mean they think a lesbian she must be really butch and... You know all the stereotypes

I You don't 'look like a lesbian'

V No... You don't look like one so you can't be one

I Yeah... What's a lesbian look like?

V Exactly... So they didn't believe it and so at lunch times they would like joke joke joke and then finally they actually realized yes she's telling the truth

I Can you understand that at all? I mean where they're coming from?

V Yeah I guess 'cause if you know a person for so long then finally they tell you but with me it's very strange I have like a sixth sense I can tell gay people

I A lot of gay people say that... Go on

V (Later)... Yeah you can't be 100% sure... I don't know it's a feeling or the way that they look... It's so complicated to put this down but it's... Girls are very close to each other and
sometimes if there are two girls and they're gay or bi then there's a certain extra closeness that (is there)...Which you're sort of able to relate (to) more...

I You can recognize gay and lesbian people at 20 paces based on a feeling?

V Ummmm...Or even just by looking at them

I Body language

V Ok you say that a guy who is gay is sort of really nice and he's also girlish...Like the hand (wrist) and cute voice and all that and girls are supposed to be really butch and all that but there is always a little bit of the stereotype even across the street and if you can't see that there is an intuition that they sort of give off...And like if they look at you and just how they go about walking past you sometimes...There is a tension or there isn't from normal people...not normal

I Yeah I know what you mean and what you mean by 'normal'...

Discourses that suggest that gay and lesbian people can recognise each other at 20 paces are commonplace. 'Gaydar' is a term that most queer people would be familiar with and a term that most would accord some validity. 'Gaydar' refers to the notion that it 'takes one to know one'. What might the claim that Veronica can recognize a gay person from across the street be motivated by (see Esterberg 1996: 269)? Why is it so imperative that we can accurately recognize the things that we see? How is this similar and how is it different to the need that some straight young people have to identify gay, lesbian and bisexual people? Again, these themes have been touched on in the introductory section and will drive the second half of the text.

Sam

Sam is female, and is 16. At the time of the interview she was a student in Year 11 at a single-sex State secondary school in a semi-rural area. She describes herself as 'Australian' (Anglo-Celtic), and as having her own religion. Sam is 'out' to her parents. Sam identifies as lesbian.
Sam said one thing that really made me sit up and take notice during the course of the interview. At that point, in the interview schedule, I had interviewed a number of same-sex attracted young men. Each of these had more or less said that they detested Australian Rules football (see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 165). Sam however spoke at length about her love of football and about how she had organized a girl's football team which in her opinion was not to the liking of the school administration.

I What would you say about sport?

S Playing football probably would have started and playing women's cricket outside of school...I'd say that would have started as well...

I Started what...Started rumours?

S Yeah

I Why would that be?

S Because it's kind of...I think it would be just knowledge that girls that play women's cricket would come out lesbians...Which I mean isn't true but there are cricket teams that do have lesbians in them but hey...There could be a hockey team that could have lesbians in it too...

I You could have straight people in there too

S Yeah scary...But it's just like sport is also a big issue like because I play football...I love getting out and having a kick of the footy and taking speckyes and stuff...Male dominated sports like footy any girls that try to break that domination which I did by getting a girl's football team together...

I So that was a deliberate strategy on your part?

S Yeah I wanted to get over the male domination of footy 'cause I love getting in there and taking speckyes and stuff and I think well hey we can do that...
I And what do you like about that?

S I like rough games...

I What is it about them that you like?

S Knocking people out...No...I just like the fact of getting up and taking a mark it takes a lot to actually get up there and to actually hold the ball and that and it's just a great game...

I then asked Sam whether the Football team that she had started at school was encouraged or not:

S Not at all...When we first we would get out onto the tennis court and have a kick of the footy because my friends are mad football supporters and they love having a kick and that's just them...And us being out there in our school dresses was not seen as appropriate and we explained to our school that if they could have it at a boy's school why couldn't they have it at a girl's school? We're not doing anything wrong and they want us to play sport...There have been comments made that all we do is sit around and do nothing yet here we are getting up doing physical things...

I And they're complaining

S I think it was really in a way maybe they were thinking 'If we say something they might get a game of netball going'...But here we are getting a game of footy going and that wasn't seen as ladylike...

I And what would the meaning of a girl playing football be?

S Probably that she's gay...

Sam's comments are interesting and they connect with Violet and Veronica's comments somewhat. Sam suggests that she wants to play football because it feels good to do so. She likes using her body that way. But she is aware that the implication of using her
body that way is that it might be read as 'gay'. Where being read as 'gay' is linked to not being 'ladylike'.

Her comments are also interesting because in a round-about way they highlight issues of support. Lynne Hillier at a recent lunch time seminar spoke about places where same-sex attracted young people might find support. She suggested that often these places were not named 'same-sex attracted young person's support group' (Hillier 2000: 3/5/2000). Many lesbians, that I have mentioned Sam's comments about football to, have nodded in agreement, as they have when I have suggested that the women's cricket team that Sam plays for might also function as a support. Their nods and the comments of Lynne Hillier provoke me to wonder: What is it about certain spaces that makes them supportive? What characterizes or is common to spaces that makes them supportive of same-sex attracted young people? What is it about women's cricket clubs that attract lesbians and that offer them support?

Max

Max is 16 and female. She describes herself as not religious. She attends a co-ed, 7-12, State school in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne that she describes as very upper middle class and very conservative. Her mother's side of the family is from Sri Lanka but she also has Italian, Dutch and Welsh ancestors. She is in year 11 and describes herself as lesbian.

Max was also fortunate in that she attended the same school as Violet and had also attended the informal LGB(T) support network that operated there. She made some interesting comments in relation to how she had found the group supportive:

I Now how is school different as a result of that network?...Do you think that having that network changes your experience of school?

M It's more comfortable...I mean you've got somewhere to go

I Because school doesn't actually change in a way does it

M No

I You still have kids pushing people into lockers and calling out things
M  But you've sort of got somewhere else to deal with it and at the same time you have got support...And it's not all on you it's spread...It's more sort of general not direct

I  And you have an escape from it

M  Yeah

I  Whereas when you were in Year 8 and coming to the idea that you might be a lesbian...At that time were you aware of homophobia in the school?

M  Yeah

I  What was the experience

M  It felt like it was more directed at you and you'd really take it to heart and it would really hurt and you'd think that there really is something wrong here...It was very demeaning

I  Now does staff know about that network and is it supported by staff?

M  Yes...They just think that we are friends but there is E (staff member) and she is good help and support and

I  If people came to her they could talk to her

M  You can talk to her about it an she will if there are problems she will deal with them...She'll take people aside and talk to them and say look this is not on and she will actually talk to them and find out why (they are being homophobic)...(later)...and...Well the school does have a strong anti-bullying policy and they have a system where you can anonymously tell people about things that have happened.

Max's comments that the support group lessens the impact of homophobic harassment provide a strong argument for such groups to be started and supported in more schools.
Louise

Louise is 18, in Year 12, and attends a Catholic, 7-12, co-educational secondary college in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Louise estimates that the school has an enrolment of 1,500. She describes her class as 'average' and doesn't describe herself as religious. Louise describes herself as a lesbian and she 'came out' to her parents 4 months before the interview. She has a gay brother who is 2 years older than her and 2 younger sisters. The interview took place in the family home.

Louise made a very interesting point regarding how same-sex attracted young people might support themselves in schools. At one point in the interview Louise said:

L  On the last day of school my brother has like the dice necklace and he has one that spells queer and so I wore that one to school and I had my collar open and like people saw it and they didn't talk to me and they just stayed away...

I  Well you won't get that reaction for much longer

L  I mean I didn't care what they thought.

Louise's actions are powerful but I think that they provide a clue as to what a young person might do to gain some sense of power in a school setting. Louise wore her brother's necklace so that it was on display to the world. Other students who were not as confident as Louise, or didn't feel that it was safe enough to do as she had done, might appropriate this strategy but rework it somewhat. Louise's pendant reminds me of a crucifix, or a tattoo, in that it is a symbol that is worn on the body that means something to the wearer and that communicates a message about the wearer to others.

Same-sex attracted young people might be encouraged to design their own symbols that they could wear on their bodies, that would hold meaning for them but that might not render them vulnerable to harassment. They might be encouraged to wear queer symbols in safe ways in school environments. They might be encouraged to carry such symbols in their school bags, or to wear them under outer layers of clothing.

While having to hide a pink triangle under your singlet, in no way addresses structural issues and therefore is not 'the answer' for same-sex attracted young people in schools it
might however go some way towards giving the young person some sense of control over their bodies within an oppressive environment.

Michael

Michael is 17 years old and describes his family as 'higher class'. He is gay. He is 'out' to his parents. He currently attends a co-ed, 7-12 Catholic school. In year 7 and 8 he attended a State school which he found to be particularly homophobic and oppressive. Michael lives in a rural area and attends a school there. He is in Year 12.

At one point in the interview Michael spoke about an environment that offered him support:

M Yeah well we show dogs and there are a lot of gay men and lesbian women in (at!) dog shows...Ummm and even with me and my mum well we're basically the two that go to dog shows...We've come to terms with them...And that's actually how I came to tell mum that I was gay ummm because I was friends with this man who was about 40 I suppose and ummm I told mum: 'What do you think of him?' and like I'd sort of get her reaction from him...like how she thought of him and...then I said: 'Well I am' and she said: 'Oh well you're still the same', so...Yeah...

I So how long have you been doing the dogs?

M Oh all my life...

I So when you were 12 or 13...When you first started saying to yourself that (you were gay)...could you talk about that?

M Yeah well we were showing dogs and that's probably one of the reasons why I didn't suicide because we had the dogs and I loved them so much that I didn't want to leave them...And I haven't directly told anyone in dog shows that I am but I sort of associate with the gay men more than like...

I And has that been a positive thing?
Yeah actually it has...I don't know not directly but it has helped me to come to terms with being gay.

How?

Well by them being there I've sort of come to realise that they're normal sort of people ummm (giggle) they're still nice sort of thing...And because there's so many it's sort of nothing...That's why when I told mum well I thought that she'd be fine but she took it much worse than dad...

And when did you tell them this?

This is about a month ago...Dad sort of took it inwards he's very (quiet)...He didn't talk about it much...

The dog shows offer Michael a vehicle where he can sound out his mother on gay issues and also act as a positive discourse around being gay, lesbian or bisexual. Michael loves his dogs, and so apparently do the gay and lesbian people that he encounters at the dog shows. Michael also discovers that gay and lesbian people are 'normal' and likeable. The dog show has functioned as a support for him and has enabled him or facilitated an encounter with a discourse that challenges the negative discourses that he has usually encountered around same-sex sexualities. And as with Sam (participant), the dog shows are not a 'same-sex attracted young person's support group'.

James

James is 15, is Catholic, and states that he is middle to lower class. He describes himself as an 'Australian' (Anglo-Celtic). He attends an inner-city, co-educational State school that he estimates has an enrolment of 450 students. James is in year 10 and describes himself as gay.

During the course of the interview he spoke about how he had 'come out' to his father:

Yeah...I think I'm nearly 'out' to everyone...I find it very easy because I think that most of my family already know... Or think that I'm gay so all I have to do now is confirm it...I doubt I will anyway...
Them knowing...What would that be based on?

I don't know? After I 'came out' to my parents I asked my mum 'How did you know?'...Because when I 'came out' they said it's about time you 'came out' to us...

And how old were you when you did that?

Just turned 15...

So that's like 4 months ago

6 months...And they said they already knew a year before...

What made you 'come out' to them?

What made me 'come out' to them is that I had a group at (service provider)...I went up to ask Dad: 'How long will it take me to get to (suburb) from (suburb)?' and he said: 'What's this group about?'...and I said 'It's a 'Young and Gay Group' (pause) Dad I'm gay!'...So then he came out with: 'It's about time you told us'...

So what did they do then?...Did they drive you to the group or...?

Yeah...

So they drove you over there?

Dad did.

The moment where James says to his father 'It's a 'Young and Gay Group' (pause) Dad I'm gay!' is one of my favourite moments in the transcripts. James describes the moment as almost one of annoyance. His father wants to know where he is going, James is tired of being questioned and responds in such a matter-of-fact way that this moment is almost deadpan.
James said earlier in the interview that the support group had been very important to him because it was the first time that he had ever been with other gay people. I think it is interesting to reflect here however on the factors that were in place that enabled him to get to the support group in the first place. Supportive, non-judgmental parents or guardians are crucial. All of the participants in this study, bar Hayes, were very lucky, because they were all 'out' to parents and were all able to obtain support from them. And perhaps that is why they were able to access youth support services and also perhaps indicative of the fact that they are not representative of the most isolated group of SSAY.

James also said that he expected everyone to know he was gay, and that when he did 'come out' to people that their response was usually: 'What took you so long to tell us'. James suggests that this is because of the way that he does his gender. This is also a major theme that repeats throughout the interviews.

**Kelvin**

Kelvin is 15, and calls himself an 'Australian' (Anglo-Celtic). In relation to class he describes himself and his family as 'average'. He doesn't follow any religion. He is in Year 9, at an outer suburban, 7-12, co-educational State school with an enrolment of 1,200 students. Kelvin is gay and the interview was conducted in the family home.

Kelvin also offered an interesting story about how he 'came out' to his parents and in the process suggested that the internet is one place that same-sex attracted people are using to meet other young people:

I When did you tell your mum that you were gay?

K I didn't they just sort of found out

I How did they find out if you didn't tell them?

K Ummmm...My first boyfriend I met over the Internet and I went out one day to visit him and I didn't get home 'till really late...'Cause I told them that I was off with some other friends and they rang them up and of course they had no idea what they were talking about and ummm I got home and they asked me who I was really with...

I So you met a boyfriend through the Internet?
K  Mmmmm
I  How?
K  A chat program
I  And then you arranged to meet this person?
K  Yeah
I  Did the person know how old you were?
K  Mmmmm
I  So was this person the same age or was he older?
K  Oh he was younger
I  And so what was it like meeting him because this is the first person that you've ever met who is gay?
K  No I met this other guy, just a friend through the Internet and he was 19 and that was the first time I had met a gay person...
I  And they have both been positive experiences?
K  Yeah
I  How old were you when all of this was happening?
K  Fourteen
I  And so what was that day like...Meeting someone else...I'm interested in the guy your own age here...What was that day like? What did you chat about? Was that a good feeling?
K  Yeah
Did you like each other?

Yeah

Was it comfortable?

Yeah...I felt more comfortable about being around him than I did about being around straight people...

Was his experience the same as yours?

Yeah...Except that he was 'out' at school...

Like James, Kelvin has the support of his parents. And like James he 'came out' to them as a result of them finding out about his gayness because of something that he had done. Kelvin, actively sets about being gay, outside of the school environment, and he is assertive and confident enough to be able to confront his parents about this (most probably because they have encouraged Kelvin to be so). The important point to note here however, and that resonates across the interviews in different ways, is that 'assertiveness around sexuality' is an option that is much less available to him in school. School is potentially a much more dangerous and unsupportive place for Kelvin than meeting a stranger, in secret, an hour's train ride away from home, at the age of 14. It would seem that internet chat rooms are positioned by young gay men like Kelvin as a less dangerous and perhaps more supportive place to be gay than school.

Hayes

Hayes is 15 and of Greek, Aboriginal, Irish and English decent. He is homeless. He was of the Greek Orthodox religion but is no longer. He attends a multi-campus State co-educational secondary school with an enrolment of 1,400 students. Hayes is in year 10. He finds labels problematic but is happy to describe himself as gay.

At one point Hayes spoke passionately about the need for harassment against same-sex attracted young people to be publicly named as unacceptable by schools. In the process he spoke about his own experiences of harassment and bullying. Many of the participants in this study suggested that it was essential that schools develop anti-harassment and anti-bullying strategies and policies that were inclusive of sexual orientation:
H Well when I walk down the corridor the reasons behind it aren't good (bums to the wall) but at least I get to walk through the cracks in the corridor...

I So how do you feel when they do that?

H Sometimes I can be very hurt but I just...I'll only get annoyed and really hurt once a month...Really...And then I'll just have my cry and I'll say look it's not your fault...

I Is there a teacher at school that you think is supportive?

H He was being really supportive but then I told him that I was being spat at and stoned and I said what am I going to do?...He said 'Keep your head down Hayes'...and I said: 'Thanks...I can't keep my head down'...And the principal even told me: 'Be a mushroom'...Cause he can't ensure my safety around the school.....

I Meaning stay in the dark?

H Yeah stay in the Library and go to the canteen...And I'm not going to hide around

I How do you feel about that advice?

H I'm insulted I really am...

I Why?

H Basically their needs are more important than my needs...

I The harassers' needs?

H Yes...They need me to be out of their school, away from them...

I The school?
No the harassers...They get free use of the play equipment...It feels like what they're saying to me is all true...'Cause they're (the school is) treating me like a second class citizen...(and the harassers are getting away with it)......

Hayes indicates here an awareness of how bullying is in part to do with control and access to public space (see Diamond 1991: 157). Same-sex attracted young people are reminded in very obvious and in very many ways not to take up too much space. Later, Hayes spoke about a situation where he had been suspended from school, and in the process he suggests that there is a need for schools to state clearly that they are opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexuality, in a similar fashion to the way that they clearly state that they are opposed to discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or ability, and that there is a need for them to act where such discrimination occurs.

Every Tuesday we have an assembly they've never once even addressed the issue of leaving me alone...I've asked...

Would you like them to do that?

Yes...Publicly...To say anyone who harasses any student (is in trouble)...There was this disabled girl who was at my school and my friend who (was) actually stirring the shit out of her, the poor thing, and I said nothing (and) I got suspended...I got told if anyone harasses another student well they'll be instantly suspended...Where's my justice...If they were going to suspend people for harassing me they'd have no class sizes...But you know they're aware of that...that's why they won't suspend them...

Dante

Dante is 17 and attends a Catholic Boys' school that has an enrolment of 800 students. He is in year 12. He describes the school as slightly progressive and multicultural. Dante describes himself as middle class, Anglo-Celtic and Catholic. His father has recently died and he lives with his mother and sisters in a large city outside of Melbourne. He described himself as gay or bisexual.

Dante told an interesting story about being suspended from school for harassing another student who was suspected of being gay:
D  When I was in Year 10, I got suspended from school for calling a kid a poof out of a bus window, and he was an effeminate kid, so ummm...Because he was effeminate and because he'd been called gay so many times he went and dobbed and I got suspended and ummm...I thought that was really good...At the time I thought it was fucking ridiculous...Now I think that that's good and I was walking with an effeminate kid and ummm...the other day at school and this little kid goes (high voice) 'Hi Nick'...'Cause his name is Nick...So I turned around and smashed him in the guts and winded him and told him off and said: 'Why are you doing that for?'...And I've done that a few times now...They don't do it to me and that might piss me off because then I haven't got the opportunity to just turn around and kick someone's head in but ummm (see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 166-7)...At the same time I do it to stick up for them because I've called that many people poofs because I've thought they were gay over the years and...

I  And so when you call other people poof...What are you?...

D  Trying to save yourself because I'm gay and they won't think I'm gay because I'll give them a hard time. Just detracts attention from yourself and puts it onto someone else...

I  And what...With the effeminate guys...What sort of response does the school have to (the harassment that they endure)?

D  Detention maybe...My example I got suspended...And ummm...But they are doing it and they think that they are doing the right thing but they really haven't addressed being gay in the school at all before so like making an example of me is really stupid...'Cause they haven't taught anything about being gay or (tried to) change attitudes or anything else previously.

And there you have it. Dante hits the nail right on the head. The cynic and 'finger pointer' in me wonders out loud why the school system he is part of is not capable of similar
levels of analysis when they are capable of it and demonstrate that capability around other areas of diversity. If the school experiences of SSAY are to improve then structural factors need to be addressed.

The next chapter of the text will consider the key themes, and participant suggestions, that were generated through the research.
Chapter 3: Key Themes and Participant Perspectives

Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter the participants identified a number of key issues. Here I have identified three key issues or themes. In chapters 4, 5 and 6 these key themes will be used to anchor the discussion. The key themes that emerged from the interviews were:

* The need for a diversity of sexualities to be represented in the curriculum (specifically in subject content),

* The need for strategies and programs that support same-sex attracted young people and by implication that support and affirm sexual diversity,

* The need for anti-harassment policy.

During the interviews I also asked the participants what they would suggest might be done to make schools better for same-sex attracted young people. I have grouped their suggestions under the 3 key themes (subject content, support/affirmation of diversity, anti-harassment policy) that emerged in the interviews. The participants offered a number of practical suggestions, which were also often appropriated, in the sense that they were often based on what the young people had observed was already happening in their respective schools in relation to other areas where harassment based on an aspect of subjectivity might be encountered (e.g. gender or ethnicity). The suggestions that they made were based on what they had observed to be current professional practice in other areas concerned with enabling diversity within school cultures (see Epstein and Johnson 1998: 166-7).

Issues Around Subject Content

Most of the participants identified 'gaps' in the subject content that they had encountered across the curriculum (for these young people these gaps or absences were paradoxically very present indeed). Often these gaps were very obvious and often they were very subtle. The participants' experience of subject content was that it was 'heteroprivilegist'. The implication for schools and teachers is that once they are aware of this that they must begin the work of making the subject content that they teach more diverse. There is more
however to this than the simple inclusion of gay and lesbian perspectives (as necessary as such inclusions are) (see Martino 1999: 137; Britzman 1995: 151-165).

* 9 of the 10 young people interviewed said that schools should provide young people with information about a diversity of sexualities (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 158). Young people wanted factual information but they also drew a distinction between information about 'sex' and information about 'sexuality'. Young people wanted to discuss a range of sexualities and they saw 'sexuality' as being more complex than 'sex'.

* While they requested more ‘information’ they also called for more ‘education’. The participants indicated that they wanted to discuss and study sexuality and that this should encompass not only information about body parts and puberty and such, but that it should also entail a consideration of a diversity of complex emotions and relationships. Young people indicated that they wanted a more complex sexuality education program than they had been subjected to. And this I believe is what they are drawing attention to by marking out a distinction between 'information' and 'education' (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 156).

* Repeatedly the point was made that where class discussions or content focused on sex or sexuality that such discussions or content invariably focused on or assumed heterosexuality. This was particularly so in sex ed classes. Generally, the participants said that there was an absence of any discussion about same-sex sex in sex ed classes (see Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews and Rosenthal 1998: 61-5).

* Generally, the participants were angry and annoyed about the absence of same-sex perspectives in subject content and suggested specifically that sexuality education needs to be broader in focus and that such education should include non-heterosexual perspectives.

* Participants also indicated that when non-heterosexual expressions of sexuality were considered that often the class would become disruptive or the teacher would avoid any detailed discussion.

* Where participants did have a chance to discuss issues relevant to same-sex sexualities this was often at their own instigation or an effect of
their choice to pursue a particular topic or write an assessable piece of work focusing on a gay or lesbian theme. This was usually a positive experience.

* The participants demonstrated an awareness that non-heterosexual perspectives were relevant to include in subject areas other than sex ed.

* Generally participants suggested that there was an assumption of heterosexuality that framed the subject content that they encountered in secondary school and that educators needed to rupture this.

To this end they suggested:

* The need for subject curricula across the whole school to reflect a diversity of sexualities.

* Many participants suggested that such ‘education’ should start in primary school or in Years 7 or 8.

* Some participants also spoke of the need for more diversity in written texts specifically referring to school library collections.

The next chapter will take up the theme of ‘heteroprivilegist’ subject content in further depth. It will be linked to a discussion around the importance of support.

**The Need for Support / The Need for Schools to Affirm Diversity**

Many participants spoke of the need for and of the importance of ‘Support’. They often spoke about how beneficial it had been for them to be able ‘to talk to somebody’. Sometimes the support they spoke about was offered in the form of counselling and other times it was offered in the form of a ‘support group’. The support groups that the participants spoke about functioned in a variety of fashions and in a variety of locations. Some were conducted inside the school others beyond the school boundary. Support groups are a very important mechanism in relation to affirming and supporting diversity. The following points highlight some of the main findings about the participants and their access to and use of various supports.

* All of the participants were in contact with a support group of one form or another.
* Most of the participants, to varying degrees, were supported by parents. One participant however had been thrown out of home because he was gay.

* One of the support groups was ‘informal’ and operated within a school. The teacher who ran it didn’t advertise it and students who were part of it became aware of it as a result of talking to the teacher that facilitated it. The reason that the group operated in a ‘quiet fashion’ was so that it wouldn’t receive any negative attention, that might jeopardise its existence. The students who spoke about this group said that it had been very beneficial in the sense that it had reduced their feelings of isolation and had also contributed to making them feel stronger in the face of homophobic harassment.

* Most participants had disclosed information about their sexuality to a teacher at school. And most of the participants were able to obtain support from that teacher. Participants indicated that this was something that they found to be beneficial.

* The rest of the participants attended support groups that operated beyond the school. Many discussed why they felt this was necessary suggesting that having such a group at school might risk increasing general levels of harassment, and that individuals might be ‘outed’ by attending such a group, and then become the target of such harassment.

* One participant, who was ‘out’ at school said he would attend a support group regardless of whether it ran inside or outside of the school despite the risk (he attended a group that ran outside of his school at the time of the interview), because of the benefits of attending such a group.

* Another participant said that she felt stronger in the face of homophobic comments as a result of the support group that she attended that operated at her school.

Participants felt that it was very important that same-sex attracted young people have access to some form of support. To that end participants suggested that:

* Information about support groups should be available to students.
That this information might be made available in the form of a poster.

That this poster should be displayed in a prominent, high use area in the school and that it should be under glass to avoid vandalism.

That the poster should contain a phone number in print large enough to enable it to be read at a distance.

One participant suggested that the poster could advertise 'The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard', where young people might access:

free, anonymous phone counselling,
information,
and where they might be referred to appropriate services.

(I would suggest that the poster might also advertise the worker within the public or private bureaucracy who has specific responsibility in this area).

One participant suggested that a notice board where students could anonymously ask questions (via a question box for example), and where information could be made available in a written form in response, might be a mechanism of providing information about support services.

One participant suggested that information about support services might also be made available to students as part of a school assembly at the start of the year (or at various times throughout the year).

The same participant suggested that information about support services could also be provided to students in a written format by the school at the start of the school year. Perhaps such information could be included on a newsletter which could be distributed to the whole school community. Perhaps a small business card that listed various supports could also be produced.

Participants also suggested that where a student initiated contact with a school counsellor that confidentiality should be respected and that relevant information should be made available.
* Participants indicated that the availability of 'one to one' counselling was important. To this end they suggested that a person within the school should be advertised as being available to talk to about issues relating to sexuality.

* They also suggested that information should be made available for students to contact a person outside of the school, where they didn't feel comfortable or safe enough to do so inside the school (the aforementioned poster might serve this purpose).

* One participant suggested that schools should seek to hire gay and lesbian teachers because they could act as 'role models' and would perhaps appear to be more approachable.

* While participants were in support of 'one to one' counselling (to off load and to gain support) and saw the benefits of this, many were clear that the problems that they were encountering were an effect of oppressive structures and not an effect of their sexuality per se.

* Participants were particularly clear about this in relation to bullying and harassment. As indicated below they suggested a need for anti-harassment policies but they were also very clear, and in a number of cases very annoyed, that where they had approached staff to complain about harassment or bullying that often the solution offered was that they enter into a series of counselling sessions. Participants quite rightly pointed out that they saw this as inappropriate as they were not the ones who had the problem.

* 'One to one' counselling was seen as being of value in relation to talking through issues and gaining information and contacts but not as a solution to responding to the bullying of others.

Issues of support were identified as crucial by participants in this study. It is imperative that schools and school systems begin to remedy this gap in service provision and begin to provide and advertise such services. The importance of support as one vehicle or mechanism whereby same-sex attracted young people can do the work of taking up space in the world in a positive and expansive fashion will be considered in the next section of the text.
Issues Around Bullying and Harassment

All of the participants reported that they were the subject of bullying or harassment or that they had witnessed it first hand. All of the participants spoke angrily about what they perceived to be a lack of attention paid to bullying based on sexual orientation or the suspicion of being same-sex attracted. Many participants indicated that bullying or harassment was more likely to occur where the individual concerned was considered to be ‘gender non-compliant’.

* Many participants spoke of the need for anti-harassment policy that was inclusive of sexuality. They were very clear that where an individual was harassed or bullied that they should have recourse to action and that the school, as an institution, should support the victim of such harassment by curbing the actions of perpetrators.

* Some participants indicated, however, an awareness of the limits of policy in the absence of any other work to support sexual diversity. Most participants clearly saw the need for schools to work in a structural fashion to promote and facilitate attitudinal change. Most participants were therefore speaking in concert with the academic literature which is also clear regarding the need to work structurally to reduce harassment of whatever kind.

* One participant suggested the need for such policy to be addressed and for such policy to be advertised formally at a school assembly. He suggested, that this would lend institutional weight to anti-harassment policies focusing on sexuality and put such policies on the same footing as existing policy dealing with harassment on the basis of gender, ethnicity or religion (see Hillier, Dempsey and Harrison 2000: 22).

* Participants said that where such policy was in place that it should be enforced.

* Many participants also stated that where complaints were made that they should be documented, responded to and taken seriously.

The suggestions that the participants have made here are taken as axiomatic. Anti-harassment policies that name sexuality and that specify procedures for responding to harassment based on sexuality are essential. But it is also taken as axiomatic that if the
structural factors that produce bullying are not addressed, that policy, no matter how rigorously it is policed, will be of limited effect.

I will follow the recommendations of the participants here by attempting to theorise, in concert with the literature, why it might be that bodies that are read as or suspected of being same-sex attracted, can sometimes provoke hostility. The final chapter of the text considers this terrain and make suggestions around practice.

What Might these Key Themes and Suggestions mean for Teaching Practice?

The later chapters of the thesis use the key themes that came from the interviews, to reflect on pedagogy. The remainder of the text, is broadly in two sections. The first considers the key issues of heteroprivilegist subject content and the need for support. In relation to participant concerns around heteroprivilegist subject content I argue that:

* There is a need to support and encourage young people in the work of constructing subject contents that are open to a diversity of sexualities.

* There is a need to open subject contents by occasionally working against certainty.

In relation to participant concerns around the need for support I argue that:

* There is a need to construct spaces that are supportive of a diversity of sexualities and particularly same-sex sexualities in schools.

The second section will consider participant suggestions that there is a need for anti-bullying policy. Many of the participants suggested that bullying was a problem and that it was very likely to occur where the young person was read as 'gender non-compliant'. This section will be heavily informed by the theoretical material presented in the first section of the thesis, which attempted to briefly map out some of the reasons why this might be the case. In this section I argue that:

* In order to reduce homophobic bullying that there is a need to work through the tension that bodies that do their gender in complex ways can sometimes provoke. This section will suggest the need to work to raise questions about or complicate the gendered meanings of bodies in order to do so.
This section of the text will discuss what it might mean to complicate the meanings of gendered bodies in a classroom (and in the process complicate the sexual meanings that are read through gender) and will focus on 'the teacher's body' in order to do so. The ideas considered here, however, are relevant to many of the other texts that teachers and students work with in classrooms. This section of the text will suggest that encounters with and the management of tension are part and parcel of such work. This section will close with a lesson plan, that I used with a group of Year 7 and 8 students, and is an attempt to illustrate what this work might 'look like' in a classroom.
Chapter 4: Working Against Heteroprivilegism is as Difficult as Teaching Someone How Not to Blush.

On Issues around Subject Content.

Introduction

The introductory section of this text has detailed a selection of literature that suggests that the school experiences of same-sex attracted young people are intensely problematic. Another section of this text has listed the 3 key themes and suggestions that emerged from the interviews with the participants. This section will consider the first two of the key themes (i.e. heteroprivilegist subject content and the need for support/affirmation of diversity). This section of the text draws on and extends earlier published work (Crowhurst 1999). I also refer to comments from an earlier study which explored the educative experiences of gay secondary school students (Crowhurst 1993). Chapter 2 discusses the rationale for drawing on and reworking this material. While the earlier study focused on 'gayness' (male experience) there are points of relevance for young lesbians and for young bisexuals. The comments from the earlier study also echo those of participants in this study. The intention here is to significantly rework that material and to create a dialogue between that material and the current project.

The Awareness of an Absence of LGB(T) Perspectives in Subject Content.

In 1992, I interviewed 5 gay men aged between 19 and 24 about their memories of secondary school. When asked about curriculum, the first response of many of these participants was to refer to subject content rather than some other aspect of curriculum (see Crowhurst 1993: 46-8). The themes that emerged from these conversations were to do with: gaps, omissions and silences in subject content; values that were subtly present in subject content; and the ways that SSAY were actively engaging in processes that queered subject content.

Cameron, for instance, indicated an awareness of absences and gaps as far as GLB perspectives were concerned in the subject content that he encountered at school (Crowhurst 1993: 47). His comments encapsulated the feelings of participants in the earlier study and resonate with those in the current study. Consider his comments:

Cameron There was no coverage of lesbian and gay issues or lesbian and gay students...Homosexuality was never
discussed...I was looking forward to our year 12 sex education...where we talked about those type of things...um...and ...we got into class and the teacher said...there are two things I refuse to talk about...homosexuality and masturbation...he didn't give a reason he just wasn't going to talk about it...people weren't going to say: 'Why won't you talk about masturbation?'

I(MC original) How did you feel as a result of that?

Cameron I suppose it just adds to the whole invisibility thing...(Later)...Gay people didn't exist...except in the back of our history book there was a chapter 'Australia Today' and it had one paragraph on the Gay Liberation Movement...and of course...we didn't do that chapter...(Crowhurst 1993: 47)

This awareness of gaps and silences, echoes that which was noted by the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (1982: 526-7), the GLAD report (1994: 9-10), The Melbourne Gay Teachers Group (1978a), and continues, as I have suggested, to be a recurring issue for participants in this study (see also Epstein and Johnson 1994: 198; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 161).

Further such recollections of subject content demonstrate that young people's relationship to subject content is certainly not a passive one. Young people actively engage with subject content. Cameron, for example, reads it as a young man who identifies as gay perhaps differently to how he would read it if he identified as straight. He is aware of the heteroprivilegist values that are embedded in it, and gaps and absences to do with non-heterosexual sexualities, become paradoxically very present for him. He also rejects and has a low opinion of the discourse that is the subject content that he encountered at school as a result of this. Similarly most of the participants in the current study mentioned that they had encountered heteroprivilegist subject content.

Louise (18, Year 12 Catholic school) recalls a brief moment where subject content included lesbian perspectives. It is clear from this extract that this is not generally the case in her school. She also recalls the homophobic reaction that this provoked in other students and her teacher's response to that reaction. Many students made related comments referring to the all too brief mention of GLB perspectives and the often hostile
reactions of other students to such inclusions (this extract has also been used to demonstrate the need to consider homophobic sounds in Chapter 1). The teacher's response to the tension that is generated by queer inclusions is worth noting as well. The teacher in this instance 'manages' the tension (these themes will be returned to in this section of the text). Consider what Louise had to say:

Well...It's not really spoken about in any classes or anything...Ummmm...Actually this year in English we did a book and there was a lesbian in it but I haven't actually read the book I think that it was just mentioned that she was a lesbian you didn't find out through anything that she did but when the class found out, when the teacher pointed it out that she was a lesbian everyone was like 'Oh gross'...The teacher was like 'Come on what's your problem' because there was like one girl in class who just kept on and on about she's a lesbian and the teacher was like 'Get over it there are lesbians in society move on'...So the teacher was good but...

Dante (18, Year 12 Catholic school) recalls that the only moment where gayness was spoken about in class was in a homophobic fashion where the threat of anal sex was referred to in a discussion on drug use by a teacher. Same-sex sexualities are negatively positioned by the classroom teacher, who enacts a homophobic discourse around a trope of drug use, sex work, anal sex and gayness. It's interesting to note here that Dante doesn't recall that this moment provoked tension for other members of the class. The absence of LGB(T) perspectives is also made starker still here juxtaposed with the clarity that surrounds the rare memories of the times where LGB(T) perspectives were briefly present.

Dante The only time anything about being gay was ever mentioned...As with any other time that sex is ever mentioned you learn about anatomy not about sex(uality)...I was in year 10 and ummmmm...Our teacher was talking to us about drugs and the only thing he goes was: 'Don't start Heroin because you end up selling your bum'...And Ummmm...You know around 'beats' and stuff and that was all I can remember about our teachers ever walking into a classroom (and) saying anything about being gay or anything like that...(I) was never
taught anything about it...

I What class was that in?

Dante That was in R.E.

Sam (16, Year 11, State school) recalls that lesbian and gay perspectives were only mentioned in one PE class during the 12 years that she had attended school. When I asked her how she felt about that she suggested that she wasn't very happy. Her comments also demonstrate that encounters with heteroprivilegist subject content are not limited to students who attend Catholic schools. Heteroprivilegist subject content, it would appear, is evident across school systems.

I Did/Do any of the subjects that you have studied include content that touched on gays and lesbians?

Sam No not at all...There is one subject that you do in Year 11 VCE which is Health and that goes into sexuality but there really isn't anything at all through Years 7-10 that I have actually been (to)...

I So from Year 7-10

Sam There's nothing much said on sexuality at all...Like I've only ever seen it in the course content of Year 11...I haven't actually seen it much at all I think it was year 10 P.E. which was Health as well but...It was a lesson of well you could be gay or lesbian or things like that but it wasn't gone into depth at all...This is what you could be and that was it...Nothing at all really

I How did you feel about that?

Sam I wasn't happy...I think that it should have been done in more depth 'cause I know that aside from me that there are other people who would be having doubts and would have preferred it (if it had been) gone into (in) more depth...
Kelvin (15, State school, Year 9) reported that the only time that he could recall encountering lesbian, gay or bisexual perspectives in subject content was when speakers from outside of the school addressed the subject, as a 5 second grab in a one-off series of lessons, during an anger management program. Like many of the participants, he is angry about this. His comments also draw attention to the fact that LGBT issues, where they are included in the curriculum, are often likely to be dealt with by guest speakers or outsiders. The experiences of many of the youth workers who provided access to participants for this project, attests to this (but in the absence of any hard data on this subject whether this is the case or not is difficult to know).

There is a danger in such approaches that LGB perspectives come to be seen as 'one offs' (see Eyre 1993) and not as an everyday part of the curriculum, and further, where external presenters are used, that members of the teaching staff are positioned as having no connection with such issues. There is also a further danger in that the wider factors, evident within the school, that govern the construction of subject contents that erase queer perspectives remain unexamined.

Still, conscious of the limitations of such approaches, it is much better that young people are exposed to LGBT content in a 'one off' situation, by an outside presenter, than not at all. The danger lies in schools and school systems using such 'one off' sessions to support claims that they are fully addressing issues around sexual diversity in the curriculum and across the school culture. Consider now Kelvin's comments:

I  So can you remember any instance at all either in your primary school or your secondary school where gay and lesbian content (was mentioned)?

Kelvin  No none at all

I  So nothing?

Kelvin  Oh just recently we had this Student Welfare Program or something

I  And what was that all about?

Kelvin  They came into the school and they discussed 'Anger Management' and stuff and they had one thing in
relation to gays and lesbians and it was just: 'Can you
tell a gay or lesbian just by looking at them?' and
everyone thought 'Yes'...

I The whole class thought 'Yes' (laughs)?

Kelvin (laughs) Yes and that's all

I So that was this year?

Kelvin Yes

I So how long was the gay and lesbian part of that?

Kelvin Oh about 5 seconds

I So that would be the only mention of gay and lesbian
people that you've heard of in subject content?

Kelvin Yeah

I Well how do you feel about that?

Kelvin Ummmm...Depressed...Just alone, annoyed, I don't
really know...

The participants are speaking to an absence of gay lesbian and bisexual perspectives in
the subject content that they encountered in the various schools that they attended as
secondary school students. There may have been mention of gay and lesbian realities or
perspectives on rare occasions but on the whole they speak of encountering subject
content saturated in gaps and silences as far as queer perspectives are concerned. Further
some participants speak to an active resistance to such inclusion in some instances. As
implied above, it is important not only to be aware of this, and to address such gaps and
absences, but also to begin to analyse the factors at play in classroom and school contexts
that contribute towards the generation of such knowledges in the first place. What is it
about the way that learning is shaped and done in classrooms that produces heteropriviligist knowledges?

The Awareness of the Presence of a Heteropriviligist Bias in Subject Content
The awareness of gaps and silences also draws attention to aspects of the curriculum that are heard, seen and prioritized into presence. It is interesting to reflect on these presences for a moment for the presences that are made possible by gaps, silences, omissions and the like, are often so all pervasively present that they are not noticed at all (for a related discussion see, Misson 1999: 75-88). It's as if they were absent, as if they didn't exist. Damian, who was a participant in an earlier study (Crowhurst 1993) spoke to such themes.

Damian  The school I attended was very restrictive in a way....probably more so than a lot of other schools...we were so bigoted...and so the school was very repressive in terms of anything to do with sexuality.

I  What about heterosexuality?

Damian  It was just taken for granted...(Crowhurst 1993: 46)

You can almost see his shoulders shrug as he says: 'It (heterosexuality) was just taken for granted' and in the interview situation I can remember that they did. He is referring to his perception of an all pervasive assumption of heterosexuality, that like the language that we speak, is so ingrained and so normalized that it often goes unnoticed (see Epstein and Johnson 1994: 202). And in doing so he offers a good example of heterocentrism or heteronormativity. Damian is noticing the heteroprivilegist bias that is present in subject content, but that usually goes unnoticed (see Davies 2000i: 35).

Damian's comments echo many of the comments of the participants in this study. Many, spoke of an awareness of the value laden nature of the curriculum that they encountered with specific reference to Sexuality Education or Health Education/Personal Development programs. A number also referred to Religious Education and Personal Development programs where issues of sexuality were often specifically considered (see Hillier et al 1998: 4-5; Mac an Ghaill 1994: 157).

Louise (18, Year 12, Catholic school) identifies a heteroprivilegist bias that was evident in the sex-ed classes that she attended. Is it accurate to describe the all pervasive presence of heterosexuality that she encountered here as somehow deliberate and therefore for the course material that she encountered to be described as heterosexist, rather than heterocentric? At the point where a decision is made by a teacher to censor classroom
material, as happens here, I think it is fair to describe the course content as consciously heteropriviligist and therefore as heterosexist. The teacher, in this instance, uses power to stifle debate, and in the process limits the knowledge that is constructed within the classroom. Consider the following comments:

I

Do you think that there were times when there should have been lesbians spoken about in class but (they weren't mentioned)?

Louise

I guess in Year 7 to Year 9 you have like sex ed in school and gay couples are never spoken about I don't recall ever being told that there was such a thing but if like someone mentioned it in class the teacher would ignore it or something...

Max (16, lesbian, Year 11, State school) also suggests that where gay and lesbian sexualities were referred to in classes that they were 'brushed over'. Does the fact that gay and lesbian sexualities were 'brushed over' amount to the promotion of heterosexuality as a preferred lifestyle? Why were such perspectives not given space? Max's comments also demonstrate that where teachers unduly (consciously or unconsciously) exercise authority and control over processes of learning within classrooms that the diversity of the knowledge that is constructed within them can be limited.

I

Do you do subjects where lesbian and gay content should be part of the what is taught (but currently isn't)?

Max

The school has a sex ed program over years 7, 8 and 9...They tell you about sex and what goes on and contraception, like here's this and this and this and this but they don't actually go into gays and lesbians much they just sort of brush over it...You know they said a few little sentences maybe that I picked up on because I'd thought about it, but other than that it's not really brought up at all...

Violet (16, Year 11 State school) echoing other participants reports a bias towards heterosexuality. Again the question surfaces as to whether this bias is deliberate, and
therefore heterosexist or an unconscious happening and therefore more accurately described as heterocentric. Further, Violet draws attention to the heteroprivilegist values that are often embedded in the learning materials that are used in classrooms. Consider her comments below:

Violet  Well we have sex ed obviously at school ahhhh which starts about year 7 or whatever and we watch these cute little 'Where I Come From' cartoons and everyone sits there and moans and thinks I've seen these before...

I  And they're like...

Violet  Yeah...We're like split up into males and females so we can't discuss between genders, and it's a good idea so that we can feel more comfortable with it but I think that there should be some mixed but I think sexuality should be raised I mean it goes through puberty and so on but it doesn't bring up sexuality at all it brings up you know going through puberty and finding the opposite sex (stressed) attractive and that's how the video is

M.C.  That's the framework?

Violet  Yeah...Growing up and going through puberty and finding a lovely partner who is the opposite sex (stressed) from you and getting married and having children and reproduction and blah blah blah...I think that it is very important to have different views of sexuality right then because at that age they know about it...

Later in the interview in connection with the availability of resources Violet said:

Yeah there are hardly any books about it in our library, like there are a couple of 'Art Books' that have 2 naked females together or something but nothing sexual, it's just bodies, the main sexuality ones are just scientific or there isn't really any exploration of sexuality as such
or (when it is explored) it is put into a framework that is (reproductive and assumes heterosexuality)...

The participants' comments echo findings reported by Hillier et al, which suggest that for many LGB(T) young people that queer perspectives are missing from the sex education (and other) courses that they encounter in school (Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews and Rosenthal 1998: 61-6). The La Trobe University researchers were particularly worried about what this might mean for same-sex attracted young people as far as making informed and safe-sex decisions. They state that:

'...Another key theme of the research was information deprivation. The range and sheer number of questions young people had about their homosexual feelings and behaviours emphasised the extent to which sexual exploration was occurring without much knowledge from trusted sources (school and family)...Information regarding lesbian sexuality and safe sex was a particular absence, and young people from rural areas were disadvantaged generally compared with their urban peers when it came to gay or 'straight' sexuality information from any source...It is important that SSAY (same-sex attracted young people) are resourced to make informed decisions about their safe sex practices...' (Hillier et al 1998: 61-6; see also Epstein and Johnson 1994: 217-220).

While the implications of sexuality education subject content that is value laden as far as young people's safe-sex practices is an important consideration, here I am interested to focus on this finding from the perspective that it echoes what I have found in my study; namely, that students have encountered subject content that is heteroprivilegist. And whether that heteroprivilegism was demonstrated via subject content that was homophobic, heterosexist or heterocentric it was heteroprivilegist and problematic nevertheless.

The participants, as well as identifying absences and presences in subject content, also identify the discourses that were available to young people as they engaged in the work of constructing their sexualities. They identify how sexualities were constructed through the subject content that they encountered in their various secondary schools. They identify that they were often subject to discourses, in the form of subject content, that erased and demeaned same-sex sexualities. They identify that they were subject to discourses that in overt and in covert ways attempted to limit or control what it was possible for them to be
within the context of the school that they attended. Wayne Martino, drawing on the work of Britzman, describes such instances as being about the construction of discourse which 'others' (1999: 138-149).

Martino suggests the importance of unpacking the shape that such discourses take, and the strategies that such discourses deploy, in order that they be better understood, in order that they be ruptured and resisted. Martino suggests that it is important to think about how such discourses work and how they achieve the effects that they do. He also identifies, perhaps more importantly, that what is also occurring in moments where LGB(T) subjects are 'othered', is the simultaneous positioning of heterosexuality as that which is 'normal', 'the same' as that which is 'not other'. He suggests that discourses that 'other' also simultaneously privilege groups that are positioned by such discourse as 'the norm' and further that the establishment of such hierarchies of identity are an effect of obvious and subtle processes.

Rupturing the discourse, that is heteroprivilegist subject content, therefore requires that we work in multiple and in layered (see Grosz 1988) ways including:

* That subject content consciously become inclusive of a diversity of sexualities and gender identities.
* That discourses that position LGB(T) subjectivities as 'other' be identified and analysed.
* That homophobic discourses (such as those perpetuated and constructed by most mainstream religions) that position same-sex sexualities (and transgender subjects) as unnatural or as evil be named as such and rejected.
* That heterosexist discourses that consciously privilege heterosexualities be identified and resisted.
* That discourses that subtly construct and position heterosexuality as 'the norm' be identified, analysed and interrupted.
* That cultural factors that govern the production of heteroprivilegist knowledges be analysed and interrupted.

The participants, in drawing attention to the role that some teachers played in the erasure or avoidance of queer subject contents illuminate one factor that often governs the production of knowledge that may contribute to the reproduction of heteroprivilegist subject contents (discourses). The way that teachers exercise power over learning processes very definitely affects the subsequent production of classroom knowledges. In
the case of queer sexualities, the participants in this study have stated that in some instances teachers used their power within the classroom, for various reasons, to limit student enquiry and to close off discussion of queer issues where the consideration of such issues generated tension (and misbehaviour).

The participants draw attention to the way that the subject position of the teacher is constructed through discourses of control and management and how such discourses as they are enacted by teachers in many cases control and limit the knowledge that is constructed in classrooms. Related issues surface to do with the relationship between a teachers' ability to secure power within a classroom, and assumptions regarding the teachers' sexuality, and the temptation for teachers to participate in the reproduction of knowledges that confirm the status quo in the interests of securing control (these themes are elaborated in Chapter 6 of the thesis).

Interrupting the control that teachers often exercise over the generation of knowledges in the classroom, it would seem, is an important consideration if our aim is to work to interrupt the factors that limit the possibility of 'queer' subject contents being generated in classrooms. If subject contents are to be 'queered' then one strategy that might be deployed is to move towards a greater democratization of classroom spaces. It is vitally important to focus on what governs the contexts within which learning takes place and not only to focus on the importance of the inclusion of certain perspectives (as important as that may be) in the curriculum (these themes will be further considered below).

Subject content is both a form of discourse, and an effect of discourse, which is produced in cultural contexts that are in turn embedded with values. It is not surprising therefore, that where subject content (as a type of knowledge) is produced or constructed within cultural contexts that are embedded with heteropriviligist values, that it is likely to come to be embedded with such values itself. Where heteropriviligist discourses, that circle the production of subject content, are embedded with values that erase same-sex sexualities for example (which I would argue is generally the case), it is not surprising that the subject content produced in classrooms often comes to reflect this state of affairs (on 'power knowledge nexus' see, Misson 1999: 76). Poststructural theory however, also acknowledges the possibility of resistance, it is not inevitable that subject content produced within heteropriviligist contexts will come to be heteropriviligist itself.

The discussion so far has positioned the relationship of same-sex attracted young people to subject content as (only) being about the ways that these young people are involved in processes of making meaning of that subject content, where that subject content is taken as some sort of given. That however, is only part of the story, as subject content is not a
given, rather it is a social product that is made by students and teachers in classrooms and as such, to a degree, is dynamic and fluid (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 179; 1992: 221-3).

The participants demonstrate this and further they demonstrate how they were actively involved in the shaping of that discourse as opposed to 'just' making meaning of it. The participants spoke about engaging with the curriculum in an active fashion, not only at the level of meaning, but more importantly perhaps by actively participating in the making of the discourse that is subject content (see also Mac an Ghaill 1992: 224-7). In the process they identify another way in which subject content might be made more diverse, and they identify the active role that students play in shaping the knowledges that are produced in classrooms. And further, they demonstrate (as I have been alluding to) how important democratic classroom spaces are in relation to the generation of a diversity of knowledges. Consider for example the comments of James (15, Year 10, State school) at one point he said:

James

Well I don't think any subjects really do touch on gay or lesbian students or experiences at all...But...I have brought the topic up but they've said: 'No we don't want to talk about it because there's just not enough gay and lesbian students

I

So who did you bring that up with?

James

I brought it up twice with my History teacher last year and yeah he said we can't or I think we don't have enough time to talk about it or touch on it so

I

How did you feel about that?

James

I'm not happy about that at all I think that we should be studying gay and lesbian subjects or that we should be touching on homosexual subjects within each subject.

Not only does James identify gaps in the subject content that he encounters but he takes this up with his History teacher. He demands that his History classes take on board gay and lesbian perspectives but his teacher responds with: 'Not enough time' (see Mac an Ghaill 1994: 160). James is challenging, resisting and disrupting the heteropriviligist discourse that he is encountering in his history classes. He ruptures that discourse. He demands to change it. And in actively seeking to change the discourse that is the subject
content that he encounters in the classroom, he also actively seeks to change the knowledge that is produced in the classroom (see Sumara and Davis 1999: 200, Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 160. He seeks to queer it. He isn't successful this time as his teacher successfully resists, manages and controls his challenge but he may be next time. James' teacher has exercised control over the learning process in such a manner that the diversity of the subject content produced within the classroom has been limited. One of the factors, it would seem (as I've been arguing), that potentially limits the generation of diverse knowledges within classrooms are the power relationships that govern relations of learning.

Veronica (16, Year 12, State school) also made some very interesting points about actively shaping subject content and encountering resistance in the process. She is older than James and perhaps because of this a little more assertive. Veronica is not going to take 'no' for an answer and she is certainly not going to put up with homophobic discourse as part of being told 'no'. In the context of a discussion about instances where LGB(T) perspectives might have been mentioned but weren't she referred to an experience in an English class on current issues. Consider her comments:

Veronica  Ummmmm...What was it ?...IVF programs, and I brought some articles in about same-sex couples wanting a child and the teacher said 'I really think that is disgusting...If they want a child why don't they just go with a woman or a man'...And I just got so infuriated at (her)...

I  So that the teacher actually said that?

Veronica  Yes...In front of the class

I  And how did you respond seeing as you had brought in the article?

Veronica  I just started arguing for it...And the teacher she still couldn't understand it...They'd never say anything about two white couples adopting a black child but yet when it's same-sex issues, they do not allow it...

Veronica has introduced issues relating to queer parenting and access to IVF reproductive technologies into the discourse that is the subject content that is constructed in her
classroom, and she has encountered resistance in the form of an argument with her teacher about it in the process (for related discussions see, Sumara and Davis 1999: 200; Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 160). Like James, she is actively queering the discourse that is the subject content that is being constructed in the classroom in which she is a student. She is not engaging in a rebellion that leaves the centre untouched, she is engaging in a rebellion that changes the status quo and she’ll get her VCE (which is awarded to students who successfully complete their secondary education) in the process (see Willis 1977). Her comments also make evident that linkages that exist between the power relationships that govern the relations of learning and the generation of a diversity of knowledges within classrooms.

One effect of Veronica and James’ actions are that same-sex attracted young people and others, who are at school with them, will encounter discourse in the classroom that positions same-sex sexualities more expansively and that challenges the unexamined assumption of a heterosexuality ‘norm’. The implication of this is that same-sex attracted young people might also be afforded opportunities to live more expansively. It is worth noting here also that Veronica and James’ interventions in no way lessen the opportunities of heterosexual students to live expansive lives. Their interventions have the effect of increasing the possibility for all subjects to live more expansive lives. Their interventions are expansive they are not reactive. Sumara and Davis make a related point:

If we believe that all forms of expression are intimately connected, then we must come to agree that heteronormative structures are limiting. Interrupting heteronormativity, then, becomes an important way to broaden perception, to complexify cognition, and to amplify the imagination of learners. (Sumara and Davis 1999: 202)

Same-sex attracted young people (and others) need to be actively supported by school systems where they take the risk of challenging heteroprivilegist subject content that they encounter in classrooms. This can be as simple as making sure that when reference books are selected by the teacher from the school library to be used within the classroom for a research project, that there are books within this collection that contain information on same-sex sexualities (see Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 148-9). It can be as simple as ordering such resources for the library. It can be as simple as telling a student that the area they have chosen to investigate sounds interesting.

Teachers have many strategies that they use to encourage and support student enquiry. This support will involve a sharing of power and will require that students work
collaboratively and in different ways. This will require that teachers, in some instances, refrain from exercising power over and overly controlling or censoring the direction that student learning takes. This support will involve, in some instances therefore, a change to the way that the process of learning takes place. This support will involve a change to the factors that govern the generation of classroom knowledges.

**Teacher Facilitators**

If student enquiry, in the interests of the generation of a greater diversity of subject content, is to be facilitated and supported then there is a further precondition that must be met. Discourses that circle the work of learning position that work, in many ways, as being about a quest for certainty. Information is positioned as 'knowledge' where it is understood to be representative of fact or truth. Teachers are understood to be in possession of facts that are imparted to students, or as guides who skilfully direct students in a known direction. Teachers within such frameworks are expected to control the direction in which classroom enquiry proceeds. Students go along for the ride but they have no power as far as determining the destination. The work that happens in classrooms is very often positioned as such. Classrooms and schools are subject to and involved in the reproduction of such notions. What is often lost in such discourses however is the pivotal role that uncertainty plays in the work of learning and the often temporal or uncertain nature of ‘facts’ or understandings that have been secured.

...difference can then be constituted, following Jonathan Rutherford, 'as a motif for that uprooting of certainty. It represents an experience of change, transformations and hybridity, in vogue because it acts as a focus for all those complementary fears, anxieties, confusions, and arguments that accompany change. (Britzman 1995: 157)

Then, thinking itself, in such classroom spaces, might take the risk of refusing to secure thought and of exposing the danger in the curious insistence of positing foundational claims at all costs. (Britzman 1995: 157)

Teachers might consciously attempt to work with students in 'poetic' (Baudrillard 1993) ways, by creating opportunities for them to be uncertain about the many texts that they encounter in classrooms, and further, by creating opportunities within the classroom, to discuss the questions that such uncertainty provokes (these themes will be further developed in the final chapter of the text where Britzman's discussion of dialogic
relations is considered: see Britzman 1995: 163). Teachers might support young people so that they feel less threatened in moments where they are unsure by stressing that it is only in such moments that questions can be generated and learning can take place (see Britzman 1998). Teachers might work with students to facilitate a learning process that is open-ended and where that open-endedness is understood as being generated by uncertainty. Teachers might support young people to gently experience moments where they are not absolutely in control, in the interests of constructing a diversity of subject contents. Teachers might reposition their role as being not so much about the management of learning processes but rather as being about the support of such processes.

Specifically, in relation to sexualities, teachers might work with students so they become more accustomed to feeling uncertain about the gendered bodies, and by implication the sexualities, of others that they encounter. In the introductory sections I suggested that western cultures unconsciously attribute a universality and veracity to sight (and other forms of observation). I began to map out an argument, drawing on the above theme, suggesting that sexuality provoked certain tensions because it was an aspect of subjectivity that was not able to be seen in the way, for example, that the colour of the skin might be seen. I suggested that this, as well as a fear of expansive bodies, lay at the heart of the fear of bodies that do their gender in a non-compliant fashion. The fear of difference, while it is about bodies that are read as being different for one reason or another, is very much also about the need for, or the desire for certainty. It is important therefore that teachers work with students to rupture this need for certainty around the gendered meaning of bodies in the interests of constructing classroom spaces that are affirming of sexual diversity (see Britzman 1995: 157, 164).

It would seem that in relation to education and diversity that issues of control are important. In the interests of moving towards greater diversity within educative settings therefore teachers and young people might consciously work to rupture the tendency to unnecessarily control educative processes and attempt to become more familiar and comfortable with uncertainty. Teachers might also reposition their work as being about the support of, rather than, the management of, learning. It is important to take on board however that this is embodied work and that it will provoke a degree of discomfort and tension. Questions around discomfort and tension will now be taken up.
On The Importance of Support and Spaces that are Affirming of Sexual Diversity.

Introduction

I will now consider further issues that rupturing heteroprivilegist subject content might raise for classroom teachers and students. I will argue, in the process, that supporting same-sex attracted young people, by putting them in contact with some form of support group, is vitally important. I will draw on poststructural theory to do so.

Students' Reactions to Heteroprivilegist Subject Content

Kelvin (15, Year 9, State school) describes how it felt to be gay in a sex ed class in Year 7 where 'everybody was discussing heterosexuality'. He reports that the absence of queer perspectives meant that he felt alone. Consider his comments:

I

Now in Year 7 in that sex ed class as someone who
saw himself as gay...How did that make you feel?

Kelvin

Alone

I

Can you describe that a little?

Kelvin

I just felt that I was the only one there...'Cause they
didn't discuss anything about it and then everybody
was discussing heterosexuality...

I

So you didn't feel angry about that?

Kelvin

I suppose but...I was more annoyed.

In earlier work (Crowhurst 1993) when I asked John if he had any comments about curriculum he made similar comments:

It sucks...It really sucks...It was my major beef even back then; the
fact that...a school out in the country, which had a predominantly male
population ...I mean obviously there were going to be a lot of gay kids
there...I mean you just couldn't help it...and yet they did absolutely nothing to cater for it...(Crowhurst 1993: 46)

John understood curriculum to mean far more than subject content (he was a student teacher at the time of the interview so this is not surprising), and it is evident from his comments, that he feels angry and frustrated with the way that the school that he attended failed to support gay students. His comments suggest an unwillingness to accept that this inaction, (the gaps in service provision), was the result of a lack of awareness of the existence of gay students. John suggests a lack of will around responding to the needs of LGBT students. Whether as John says, the school did 'absolutely nothing' to support gay students is difficult to know. There could have been individuals chipping away in a manner that was unseen by him. What is possible to know however is that his call to action presents educators with a significant challenge. John's call for action requires work around attitudinal change and such work doesn't lend itself to overnight success (these themes will be returned to below).

As an ex-secondary school teacher, in the light of Kelvin and John's comments, my initial reaction is to think about moments in subject content where queer perspectives might be made present. There is much to be said for that initial reaction for there is very definitely a need for queer perspectives to be made present in subject content, even though (as previously discussed) such inclusions are limited in effect as they do not address the factors governing the production of knowledges within classrooms that facilitate the reproduction of heteroprivilegist subject content in the first instance (inclusion in the present is no guarantee of inclusion in the future). Nevertheless, John and Kelvin's school experiences would have been better if teachers had included gay, lesbian and bisexual perspectives in the subject content that they encountered. It is important to note here however, that as well as not guaranteeing the future inclusion of queer perspectives that such inclusions may not necessarily have made John and Kelvin's school experiences any more comfortable in the short term.

Attitudes, as well as being evident in discourses in the rational sense or as ideas, are also evident 'within' subjects in an embodied fashion. Attitudes, and the feelings that sometimes accompany them, are an effect of discourses that have been encountered by people, that have been learnt by them, and that have been 'taken up' by them slowly over time in such a way that they have become a very deep part of who they are. Attitudes, and feelings, are a form of deep learning, and as such they are not easily or painlessly unlearnt or replaced (Sedgewick 1993: 258).
Prejudicial attitudes, for example, may be evident in the physical reactions, anger, or discomfort that some people feel towards individuals or groups that they have learnt to negatively stereotype. I have heard some people say for example, that they feel physically ill at the thought or sight of two men kissing and I would cite this as an example of an attitude and feeling that is an effect of heteroprivilegist discourses that has been 'taken up' in an embodied way (it's interesting to note on this point that in my experience LGB(T) people do not generally report that they are subject to similar reactions around expressions of heterosexuality). Attitudes and feelings while they are in some ways very obvious are also examples of the subtle effects of discourse and suggest the importance of working for the achievement of educative cultures that are affirming of diversity in layered or multidimensional ways.

One further implication here is that in moving into such action it is important to keep in mind that working with people in order to facilitate attitudinal change, will not only involve challenging ideas that are evident in discourses (like subject content) that are seemingly 'external', but will also involve challenging discourses that have become evident 'within' people, who have learnt them and taken them up. I will now turn to reflect on two encounters with heteroprivilegist discourse in the form of subject content to further work this notion. One focuses on the reactions of (presumably) straight students to such subject content and the other considers the reaction that such an encounter can provoke in a queer student. I will then argue that this demonstrates the need to support the construction of supportive spaces for SSAY in schools.

The External Encounter

In Chapter 1, I referred to comments made by Louise (18, Year 12 Catholic school) where she recalled a brief moment where subject content included lesbian perspectives. She also recalled the homophobic reaction that this inclusion provoked in other students in the class and her teacher's response to that reaction. Louise said:

Well...It's not really spoken about in any classes or anything...Ummmmm...Actually this year in English we did a book and there was a lesbian in it but I haven't actually read the book I think that it was just mentioned that she was a lesbian you didn't find out through anything that she did but when the class found out, when the teacher pointed it out that she was a lesbian everyone was like 'Oh gross'...The teacher was like 'Come on what's your problem' because there was like one girl in class who just kept on and on about she's a lesbian and the teacher was
like 'Get over it there are lesbians in society move on'... So the teacher was good but...

In earlier work (Crowhurst 1993) participants also referred to instances where the inclusion of queer perspectives provoked a negative response from other members of the class. Louise speaks to one dimension of the structural nature of heteroprivilegism and the limits, resistances and difficulties of working against it as an individual. Her comments are echoed by many of the participants in the current study. What is remembered here is an instance where students in the class are required to consider expressions of sexuality that they are normally not required to consider. The teacher tries to engage in a discussion of lesbian-ness in a positive way, but the response that this elicits from the class is such that the discussion cannot continue (see Crowhurst 1993: 48; Kehily 1999: 142; Misson 1999: 78-86). There is also the enactment here (as has been briefly discussed previously) of a discourse that positions homosexuality as 'other' as it simultaneously positions heterosexuality as 'the norm'.

Some might try to put the response of the class down to the inexperience of an individual teacher but I am not so sure that is the case and instead would suggest that this response is to do with a transgression of sorts, and the tensions that transgressive moments can provoke. What is transgressive about this moment is that gayness has moved from private into public space, in a fashion that is positive rather than in a fashion that is negative. This is disruptive, challenges the status quo and provokes tension which manifests as misbehaviour.

Such resistance is very difficult to deal with in the classroom because it is an effect of discourses that exceed the classroom and school environment. But that does not mean that some attempt shouldn't be made to counter it (see Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee 1997: 54); that some attempt shouldn't be made to resist homophobia where it is visible. Establishing the classroom as a space where difference is respected and challenging views that don't support difference, is necessary but difficult and hard work. Establishing the classroom as a space where respectful relationships (see Britzman: 1995) are fostered and where such relations therefore govern the production of knowledges is imperative. And there is a need for policy at a school, system and classroom level that supports the construction of such spaces and such work.

Such tension also demonstrates that the class is moving into new territory and that members of the class may be experiencing tension because they are encountering uncertainty. The tension that manifests in this situation as well as being an effect of a desire to return to the status quo also signals perhaps that the class is occupying a place
where real learning can take place; a place where uncertainty fuels the generation of questions that shape meaning. And hence we arrive at a tension in this text. The tension between the desire to give away control on the one hand, and the necessity to exercise control to manage discriminatory behaviour on the other.

Where tension manifests as homophobic behaviour it must be managed by the classroom teacher. In spite of the arguments that I have made about the importance of teachers not overly controlling educative processes there are occasions (many in my experience as a classroom teacher), where negative behaviours must be curbed. In relation to issues of control therefore, it is necessary that teachers strike a balance. A balance supported with policy.

An article that I have recently written with Mic Emslie, details the lack of policy in this regard in Victoria, and how this is inconsistent with the policy approach that is taken around other areas of diversity (both policy that supports work around sexual diversity and policy that seeks to limit harassment). Here we suggest there is an urgent need for school systems and bureaucracies to address such issues and to clearly state in the form of policy that they support sexual diversity and that harassment based on a person’s sexuality will not be tolerated (Crowhurst and Emslie forthcoming). Louise shouldn’t have to put up with the homophobic comments of other students. Policy may not change the way that people feel but it certainly can impact on the way that they act, and it can certainly, as a form of discourse, position homophobic and heterosexist actions as unacceptable and unwanted.

We must be very clear with the students that we teach that homophobic outbursts of whatever kind are not acceptable and will be responded to accordingly. Individual teachers must be supported around these issues by the school that employs them and by the bureaucracy that frames the policy that the school is bound by. Students must also be aware that this is the case.

Apart from policy however, what might we do about this type of resistance? Especially when we take on board that the tension that fuels such resistance, is a necessary ingredient of educative processes around diversity and difference. I think that part of the answer is that we need to acknowledge and work through the tension that such resistance is an effect of and we need to learn the lessons that such tension offers.

Working and Tension
Louise illustrates an example of a moments where queer issues were mentioned in class and where the effect of this was to provoke resistance. The resistance referred to however originated from beyond Louise. It is a resistance that is external and in some senses it is a more obvious layer of heteroprivilegist resistance that is perhaps easier to deal with than other, more subtle types of resistance that may occur within subjects themselves.

Resistance, to subject content that is representative of a diversity of sexualities may sometimes be experienced by SSAY students 'within' themselves. In an earlier study (Crowhurst 1993), John provided an example of such resistance and I will revisit and rework his comments here as they are very relevant to the current study and illustrate this point very well. Consider his comments below:

'I always felt that I was different and you always felt that it should have been catered for...except...anytime it was broached in conversation in English or somewhere like that...then you felt they were talking about you or you started to get really embarrassed...Like I used to feel that I was going so red...and you just felt like; 'Oh God I know they're talking about me I must be the only one in class...and when you think about it you've got 25 students to a class...and on average there must be two or three students...and so I suppose looking back it was just me being paranoid most of the time.' (Crowhurst 1993: 51)

Reading John's blushing through the likes of Judith Butler (1990) returns to themes briefly considered in this section of the text and sheds a light on the degree to which discourses can be 'taken up' by people and how deeply ingrained they can subsequently become. What I am proposing here is that John's blushing is an example of heteroprivilegism, as a series of discourses, that are not only inscribed and embedded in institutions, and ideas and such, but that are also 'taken up' by subjects. What I am suggesting, following the likes of Butler, is that John's blushing, and discomfort, is an effect of a series of discourses that have been learnt by him and taken up by him. Taken up not in the way that an idea for example is taken up, but taken up by him in an embodied fashion.

When John blushes his face goes red, he feels hot, his heart beats, and he may sweat, and the awareness of this series of processes may set in chain a further series of processes that make him redder, and hotter, and sweeter. Blushing isn't something that you think, it isn't something that occurs in rational space, it is something that your body does, it is something that your body feels. I think that John's blushing, and discomfort,
demonstrates the need for structural work that takes into account the way that the body is implicated in and impacted on by heteroprivilegist discourse.

John is in the process of constructing a gayness in relationship with, heteroprivilegist discourses (such as subject content) that would seek to limit his gayness, that would seek to stop him from constructing an expansive and positive gayness. He blushes and becomes uncomfortable at the thought of moving into presence as a young gay man partially because he has constructed his gayness in accordance with a series of reactive discourses that have told him that he should only occupy space in a constrained fashion.

He is used to this space and so he doesn't feel uncomfortable in it. When he moves beyond it however, or feels that he is being moved beyond it, as he felt in class the day that queer perspectives were mentioned, he is conscious of this newness, he is conscious that he is doing his gayness differently, he is conscious that he is doing a new gayness. He is conscious that he is doing his gayness in a manner that he is not certain about. He feels uncomfortable and he blushes. Uncomfortable not only because of heteroprivilegist discourses that are seemingly 'separate' or external from him but also because of heteroprivilegist discourses that have become a deep part of the fabric of who he is, that are internal.

The fact that John is uncomfortable when gay content is mentioned in class however is not a reason to ignore or erase such perspectives. His blushing, and tension, is an effect of newness, is an effect of uncertainty, and as I have been discussing being uncertain and being tense go hand in hand with educative processes, with learning and with doing new things. While it is an important ethical consideration that such tension be managed and eased it is also an important educative consideration (as has been mentioned previously) that it be encountered.

Blushing provides an anchor for thinking about just how difficult it is to begin to work against exceedingly subtle layers of heteroprivilegism. John's blushing and discomfort demonstrates that working against heteroprivilegist discourse often involves working against attitudes and stances, that have become 'naturalized' (see Jagose 1996: 17). His blushing and discomfort illustrate that working against heteroprivilegist discourses can indeed sometimes be as difficult as trying to teach someone how not to blush.

If John's blushing offers some proof that negative discourses (such as subject content) can be 'taken up' it also offers some hope that positive discourses may also be 'taken up'. His blushing, as well as suggesting the need for work around subject content, suggests the importance of constructing spaces in schools, where the work of making
encouraging, positive and expansive discourses around sexual diversity might be supported, and where this is not possible within a particular school in the interim, to the importance of referring students to such supportive spaces beyond the school. I will now turn to consider the need for support.

The need for Support

John blushes and feels uncomfortable, as I have suggested, in part, because he has encountered certain discourses that impact on the way that he constructs his gayness, that impact on the way that he takes up space in the world as a young gay man. The task is therefore to put him in contact with spaces, or to support the construction of spaces, where he can encounter, construct and take up positive discourses. The task is to find and construct spaces where he can take up positive discourses that become a part of the fabric of who he is, that become embodied. The task is to find or construct new spaces that will support him in the work of constructing new positive gaynesses that can exist alongside and eventually take up more space in his life than the old negative ones (for a related discussion on people being in/out depending on context see: Epstein and Johnson 1994: 198-202; see also Hillier et al 1998: 6).

At this point in time I think that 'unregulated' spaces that are supportive of same-sex attracted young people are very difficult to achieve in most schools. It certainly would have been almost impossible to construct such a space in any of the schools that I have had experience working in. At this point in time it would be difficult for a student to access a support structure in a school and not be put at risk of the consequences of being 'outed' within that school as a result. Still, that is not to say that such a space is an impossibility to achieve in schools or that schools should not work in structural ways so that the achievement of such spaces might become a possibility.

It is important to acknowledge that SSAY are in many cases experiencing harassment in schools and that they often speak of isolation as being one of the worst effects of heteroprivilegist cultures. Supportive spaces might lessen this existing sense of isolation. It is important to balance the benefits with the risks. Overall however, where LGB(T) young people indicate that they have decided to take such a risk, the correct response, is to actively and structurally support their decision not as a teacher to seize control of the process and stop such a support group from beginning (see VGLRL 2000: 25-8). Where young people are prepared to take such a risk they should be supported to do so.

All of the participants in this study were in contact with one form of support or another (see Chapter 2). Max (16, Year 11, co-ed State school, lesbian) spoke about the benefits
that she had experienced as a result of attending the informal support group that a teacher had organized at her school (see also methodology chapter):

I  Now how is school different as a result of that network?...Do you think that having that network changes your experience of school?

M  It's more comfortable...I mean you've got somewhere to go

I  Because school doesn't actually change in a way does it

M  No

I  You still have kids pushing people into lockers and calling out things

M  But you've sort of got somewhere else to deal with it and at the same time you have got support...And it's not all on you it's spread...It's more sort of general not direct

I  And you have an escape from it

M  Yeah .

I  Whereas when you were in year 8 and coming to the idea that you might be a lesbian...At that time were you aware of homophobia in the school?

M  Yeah

I  What was the experience

M  It felt like it was more directed at you and you'd really take it to heart and it would really hurt and you'd think that there really is something wrong here...It was very demeaning...

Max identifies that as a result of the informal SSAY support group that runs at her school that she feels less isolated and also that when she is in this space that she feels less oppressed. Importantly, she also suggests that for her this space has had the effect of
minimizing the impact of homophobic harassment. Max was not 'out' at school and was not comfortable about disclosing her sexuality to other students. She does however risk attending this informal support group and clearly feels that the benefits that she gains from attending the group outweigh the risks. She clarifies the importance of respecting the right of young people to take some risks and the importance of supporting them around the decisions that they take. She also demonstrates that there are just as likely to be benefits as costs for SSAY from taking such risks.

James (15, gay, year 10, co-ed State school), also suggested that while he could see the difficulties of running a support group within a school setting that he would be likely to attend such a group nevertheless. He suggested that he had found the external support group that he attended of such benefit that these would outweigh the risks of attending such a group were it to run at his school. During a section of the interview focusing on improvements that might be made to schools James said:

I  Any other things apart from curriculum that might be (useful)?

J  Maybe just a gay group or something at school...But...

I  There are problems with gay groups at school...How is it a problem?

J  Yeah...Then other people would assume that you're going along to the group you must be gay...

I  So how could they be overcome?

J  Just have a teacher...Who does gay stuff...

I  A designated teacher...Maybe not a gay and lesbian officer but someone like the Equal Opportunity Officer...

J  Yeah

I  And how would people find out about that?

J  Well you could just put it up on the notice board or something...If it was just a normal teacher then there wouldn't be problems and stuff...
The conversation then turned to support groups outside of the school. James spoke about the group that he had attended:

I  How helpful has that group been?

J  It's been great...Meeting other gay people...Yeah...Getting to know other gay people as well not being surrounded by straight people as well it's totally different...

I  And it's just freer...

J  You can act how you want to act and be who you want to be and they don't care...

I  So it's not an issue...If that group was run in the school that you attend?

J  I'd probably still go anyway...'Cause since I'm 'out' I don't care what people say at the moment...So it's just fine with me...Mmmm

I  So...Some sort of service beyond the school or within the school...A contact person...

J  Maybe phone numbers for gay kids...Gay teenagers

I  On a poster or something

J  Because there's nothing at my school at all...

In concert with Max, James is clear that attending a support group had been very beneficial for him. He is also clear that if such a group ran at his school that he would attend. In the course of the conversation he also suggested that it is important that schools advertise queer supports that operate beyond the school so that young people might self-refer if they choose to.

Same-sex attracted young people require access to information regarding support groups that provide safe spaces where the work of constructing positive embodied sexualities
might take place, if such spaces are not in existence in the schools that they attend. To that end:

Support groups could be advertised in schools with the aid of a well positioned poster (under glass), that offered a phone number and a contact name,

Peer support groups could be mentioned at school assemblies,

Peer support groups could also be mentioned in classes,

Teachers in schools who might be approached by young people could act as points of referral.

However, it is imperative that schools begin to take the risk and shoulder the responsibility of constructing such spaces within their boundaries. There is a need for teachers to work to create supportive and safe spaces for SSAY within schools, and to support SSAY to create such spaces for themselves. This is so, in light of the benefits that Max and James claim for support groups, and particularly so where such spaces are called for by same-sex attracted students themselves. I am now of the opinion that where a same-sex attracted young person requests that a support group be established within the school that the school is obliged to structurally support the same-sex attracted young person, ever mindful of the risks, in that task with a view to eventually building up spaces that are affirming of sexual diversity throughout the whole school to the point where they are dominant throughout the institution.

Michelle Fine and Corrine Bertram discussing what such spaces often facilitate borrow the label 'free spaces' from Evans and Boyte, and suggest that such spaces are those 'in which historically marginalized youth and adults can reclaim identities...(and)...sculpt real and imaginary spaces for peace, solace, communion, (and) personal and collective work...' (Fine and Bertram 1999: 157-9). Fine and Bertram suggest that 'free spaces' are often not labelled 'queer youth support group', but that other spaces sometimes serve this function. Teachers and school systems might begin to identify and nurture such spaces within school communities. They might also support same-sex attracted young people to find and to access spaces that are supportive of and that celebrate sexual diversity beyond the school community. And as indicated above, they need to support young people, when they ask to construct such spaces in schools, spaces where new non-heteropriviligist discourses can be constructed and where 'non-compliant/disruptive subjects will not be needlessly regulated or constrained.
Summary

The participants in this study indicated that they had encountered heteroprivilegist subject content. While there is a need for teachers to rupture this, there is also a need to support SSAY in this work as well.

Rupturing heteroprivilegist subject content is work that may provoke resistance. Some of this resistance will be experienced by SSAY themselves in the form of a discomfort that has been learnt or 'taken-up' by them. This discomfort demonstrates the importance of constructing safe spaces where SSAY can construct sexualities in a more positive and expansive fashion.

The chapter that follows will return to theoretical concerns to persuasively work with and further explore the notion that discourses can be 'taken up' by embodied subjects.
Chapter 5: 'Fuck that does sound pretty gay'

Sexuality is like the Sound of the Voice:
Grounding Embodied Subjectivity

This chapter, drawing especially on Butler's (1990, 1993) notion of performativity, will further explore what it means to suggest that embodied subjects actively 'take up' discourse. In order to do so I will offer an example of a moment where discourse and the body are in fact 'inseparable' (Davies 2000: 71). I propose to do so in order to support arguments for structural interventions around sexualities in schools; to further the argument that I have made in the previous chapter about the importance of support; and finally in order to support arguments suggesting that approaches to supporting sexual diversity in schools need to target the body as well as the mind.

In this section I intentionally fragment the text. This decision has been influenced in the main, by Jean Baudrillard's 'Seduction' (1990; see also Davies 2000: 69-86; and Randell 1997). I have done so to signify that the thesis is not a linear account that moves from problem to solution. This chapter works in a different fashion, in a more subtle fashion, than others that make up the text. The fragmentation of the text signifies that multilayered work is required if we are to move towards educative spaces that are affirming of diversity. The section of the next chapter entitled 'Are you Gay/Sir? #1' will offer further reasons as to why I have chosen to do this.

*

This chapter is almost a collage in the sense that it links appropriated fragments of text with a minimal use of author driven text. I have done this intentionally, in keeping with one of the main theoretical arguments pursued in this text, in an effort to say something through the words of others.

In English schools there is a tendency to see questions of sexuality as something primarily to do with gays and lesbians. However, it is politically and pedagogically important to stress that both gay and straight people experience their class, gender and 'race/ethnicity through sexuality.'

(Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 165)
Dante

In the course of a conversation asking Dante about what the effects of being called a poof at school might be (if the name calling was specifically referring to a persons' sexuality) he made some comments about consciously modifying the sound of his voice. His comments were very similar to others concerning the need to police the body but for some reason they stayed with me. I pasted his comments to a wall. They remained there for a year.

Dante is 17 and attends a Catholic Boys' school in a semi rural setting in Victoria. The interview was conducted in 1997.

D  I must change my voice, I must change the way I move, talk to people. I must change the clothes I wear and stuff like that

I  I must change my voice and the way I move and stuff like that...Have you ever been aware of anything like that happening with you?

D  Yeah...In the sport I play this bloke and he was imitating me and I thought: 'fuck'n that doesn't sound like me' and ummmm...And I could never work out why he'd say it but then I was listening to ummmm...I was recording a message on the answering machine and I actually listened to myself and I thought: 'fuck that does sound pretty gay'...And like I wasn't happy with it because that's not the way that I want to sound...I just prefer a deeper voice because I reckon it sounds better

I  Yeah

D  Rather than an effeminate voice so...I don't think that it has changed dramatically but it is deeper

I  So you...Your voice would get deeper because you are getting older and bigger as well...But you...
Yeah...I was consciously making my voice deeper (see Esterberg 1996: 274)

Making your voice drop...Making it deeper...And why do you like the sound of it?

Yeah it's an authority thing...Ummmm...More people will take you seriously...They won't fuck with you...

In Chapter 4 I wrote:

John blushes and feels uncomfortable, in part, because he has taken up certain discourses that impact on the way that he constructs his gayness, that impact on the way that he takes up space in the world as a young gay man.

John's blushing or discomfort is an example of where discourses have actively been taken up by a subject. John's blushing also illustrates that this taking up is often embodied, or how discourses can become embodied (see Mauss 1992: 455 - 77).

The previous section suggested that teaching against heteroprivilegism was as difficult to do as to teach someone how not to blush.

Is blushing taught? Is it learnt? How does someone learn discomfort? How does someone 'take up' discomfort? Blushing appears to be a 'natural' (see Davies 2000: 72) occurrence. Things that feel 'natural' may be but then again they may not be.

'...the very concept of nature needs to be rethought, for the concept of nature has a history, and the figuring of nature as the blank and lifeless page, as that which is, as it were, always already dead, is decidedly modern...' (Butler 1993: 4)

In the preface to 'Mythologies', a book of essays written about current events between the years 1954-56, Roland Barthes states that:

The starting point for these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the 'naturalness' with which
newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resent seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there (Barthes 1982: 11, see also Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 115).

Barthes is interested in calling into question common sense. He is interested in unpacking notions that are understood as 'natural' in an effort to expose the linkages, to blur the boundaries that separate nature from culture.

Much of Western thinking about sexuality in the past has assumed or positioned a natural or essential sexuality

A
Self Contained,
Very Individual,
Very Separate,
Core
Sexuality

Nativism

Connell and Dowsett write that:

'At the bedrock of our culture's thinking about sexuality is the assumption that a given pattern of sexuality is native to the human constitution. We will call this position 'nativism'. It has much in common with what others call 'essentialism' but we want to stress the assumption about origin. Whether laid down by God, achieved by evolution, or settled by the hormones, the nativist assumption is that sexuality is fundamentally pre-social. Whatever society does in an attempt to control, channel or restrict, cannot alter the fundamentals of sexuality.' (Connell and Dowsett 1992: 50)

Later in the same book they state that:

'The guiding metaphor of scientific nativism,
that the body and it's natural processes provide a 'base' or 'foundation' which determines
the superstructure of social relations,
in fundamental ways
misrepresents
the relationships between bodies and social processes.'
(Connell and Dowsett 1992: 54)

Annamarie Jagose, in 'Queer Theory' says:

'...To a certain extent, debates about what constitutes homosexuality can be understood in
terms of the negotiation between so-called essentialist and constructionist positions.
Whereas Essentialists regard identity as natural, fixed and innate, Constructionists
assume identity is fluid, the effect of social conditioning and available cultural models for
understanding oneself.'
(Jagose 1996: 8)

Contemporary social theory with it's interest in Lived Sexualities' challenges essentialist
views.

Contemporary social theory is interested in
a sexuality that is:

    fluid
    contextual
    and constructed,
    but most of all
    in a sexuality
    that is about
    connection
    and
    'relationship'
(For sexuality as a 'relational construct'
see: Sumara and Davis 1999: 191; Mac an Ghaill 1994i: 165)

I will follow current thought in the Humanities and break with essentialist
understandings. I will explore the linkages between sexualities and cultures.
I will explore the subtle linkages between sexualities and cultures
AND I'd like to do so PERSUASIVELY.

I will ground this
via a consideration of
the sound of the voice.

Sexuality is constructed within relationships of various kinds. Sexuality is a product of those relationships. *Some* (...the point has never been that "everything is discursively constructed" Butler 1993: 8) of the things that we are in relationship with, if we are open to them, become part of us, and in the process we are changed. The sound of the voice is a good illustration of this.

**Lift Off**

Poststructuralism
Foucault

Feminist Poststructural Thought
Butler, Poynton

"Taking a constructionist line, Foucault argues that homosexuality is necessarily a modern formation because, while there were previously same-sex acts, there was no corresponding category of identification...Foucault's argument is premised on his assertion that around 1870, and in various medical discourses, the notion of the homosexual as an identifiable type of person begins to emerge. No longer someone who participates in certain sexual acts, the homosexual begins to be defined fundamentally in terms of those very acts...' (Jagose 1996: 10-11).

**Foucault** explores such ideas in:

- *'The History of Sexuality Vol 1'* (Foucault 1990), where he explores the linkages between the emergence of particular sexualities, and the emergence of certain discourses.

- In *'The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Vol 2'* , where he (Foucault 1992)explores the ways that people positioned the erotic and fashioned themselves
as 'types' in accordance with a particular cultural erotic ethic. One theme explored throughout the book is to do with the desirability of disciplining 'erotic' impulses. Historically, certain cultures, have created a trope linking control of others to control of the self.

- It is in *Discipline and Punish* however that Foucault (1991) really explores the notion that the fashioning of the *subject* is active work. Here he focuses on prisons and particularly on Bentham's Panopticon (a prison that allowed prisoners to be always on view via a system of back-lighting). He explores the notion that the prisoner, once aware that he (and it is usually a he if you are reading Foucault) was under surveillance would do the work of regulation voluntarily. The subject's awareness of being 'under' the gaze of a regulatory discourse has the effect of promoting the production of that same discourse.

- This is Foucault's answer to the repressive hypothesis and is consistent with his view that power circulates and contains a resistant or generative underside or potential.

Jagose surveys a number of theorists and suggests that they share a theoretical positioning of homosexuality that:

'...make(s) crucial the distinction between homosexual behaviour which is ubiquitous, and homosexual identity which evolved under specific historical conditions'. (Jagose 1996: 15)

*Later Jagose Quotes Jeffrey Weeks:*

Homosexuality has existed throughout history, in all types of society, among all social classes and people, and it has survived qualified approval, indifference and the most vicious persecution. But what have varied enormously are the ways in which various societies have regarded homosexuality, the meanings they have attached to it, and how those who were engaged in homosexual activity viewed themselves (Jagose 1996: 16).

**...BUT WHERE ARE THE BODIES?**

There is still a feeling after reading Foucault and other writers however, that sexuality is light, that it is about *passive* bodies being mapped with meaning...but...

It feels driven.
It feels natural.

As natural as breathing.

As natural as hunger.

As natural as sleep.

As natural as the sound of my voice.

Jagose quoting Halperin:

'In the late twentieth century both heterosexuality and, to a lesser extent, homosexuality have been thoroughly naturalized. This makes it difficult to think of either category as having histories, as being arbitrary or contingent. It is particularly hard to denaturalize something like sexuality, whose very claim to naturalization is intimately connected with an individual sense of self, with the way on which each of us imagines our own sexuality to be primary, elemental and private.' (Jagose 1996: 17; see also Butler 1993: 10).

What does it mean to suggest that something has been 'thoroughly naturalized'?

In 'Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity', Judith Butler (1990), in line with feminist thought, puts the body back into the text and radically reworks understandings of gender, and understandings of processes of gender, and explores the notion of embodied subjectivity in a manner that is very persuasive.

She explores 'internalization' as a strategy to avoid loss, in a discussion of Freud's ideas about the causes or origin of melancholia. She then extends this idea, critiques it and grounds it, with a consideration of the psychoanalyst Roy Schafer's notion of 'incorporation' (Butler 1990: 57-68). Incorporation speaks to 'processes of naturalization'.

Butler is interested in the transformative and subversive possibilities of 'performance' (being/moving in the world). She is interested in the possibilities of seepage in moments of performance.
She is interested in processes of acquisition. She is interested in the acquisition of depth. In the putting down or taking up of layers. In the putting down or taking up of modes of movement and modes of making sound. She is particularly interested in Drag.

'The debate over the meaning or subversive possibilities of identifications so far has left unclear exactly where those identifications are to be found. The interior psychic space in which identifications are said to be preserved makes sense only if we can understand that interior space as a phantasized locale that serves yet another psychic function. In agreement with Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok it seems, psychoanalyst Roy Schafer argues that "incorporation" is a fantasy and not a process; the interior space into which an object is taken is imagined, and imagined within a language that can conjure and reify such spaces. If the identifications sustained through melancholy are "incorporated," then the question remains: What is this incorporated space? If it is not literally within the body, perhaps it is on the body as its surface signification such that the body must itself be understood as an incorporated space.' (Butler 1990: 67)

If it is not literally **WITHIN** the body, perhaps it is **ON** the body

Briefly the idea is:

That that which is external to us,
that we are in relationship with,
is partially,
or on some level,
or sometimes,
taken up by us,
or taken up on us,
in deep,
in layered,
in subtle ways.

Where this layering happens
as a result of the work that we do
as embodied subjects in the world.

Butler makes it possible to write about deep/surfaces (see also Davies 2000i: 40), about becoming through doing (see also: Young 1990).
Cate Poynton through Lynette Finch and Anita Harris

One of the clearest and most persuasive examples of such a framework for understanding gender and sexualities and embodied subjectivities is contained in an essay written by Cate Poynton (1996).

Cate Poynton considers the sound of the material voice. She contrasts a concern with the sound of the material voice with a concern regarding the voice metaphorically (we need to hear different voices in the text). Consider the quote below:

‘The notion of voice, in critical pedagogy as in feminist theory, has come to be used primarily as a metaphor...This metaphorical use of the term voice does not seem, however, to have been paralleled by a concern with the material voice, in work of an empirical or theoretical nature in either field...This...Appears surprising, particularly given the contemporary feminist focus on questions of the body and embodiment...’

(Poynton 1996: 104)

Anita Harris

Anita Harris drawing on the work of Butler, suggests that gender isn't something that is put on over the top of a neutral body. She compares this way of thinking about gender to thinking about it as one would think about throwing on a coat or another piece of clothing. Harris suggests, following Butler, that gender isn't an ad on but rather becomes a very real part of the fabric of the material body that can not easily be cast off (Harris 1996:19; see also Davies 2000: 71). The material body that moves through the world.

The material body that takes up space in the world.

Lynette Finch’s 'The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance' (1993) traces the linkages that exist between sexualities and social class.

Finch suggests that contemporary Western sexualities (where sexuality is constructed as something done in private) have come about as a result of the dominance of middle and upper class value systems which have become embedded in public discourse. Finch uses the example of the linkages between income and the number of bedrooms in the house and the separation of children from the adult bedroom that this allowed in middle and upper class families. Finch suggests that this contributed to a middle class construction of sexuality whereby sexuality is positioned and constructed as hidden and as private. Finch
offers this as an example to illustrate an instance where class values have become embedded in sexualities.

She contrasts this with the ways that working class people, particularly young people, interested in having sex with members of the opposite sex, often did so in public places. They did so because often they had nowhere else to go, as they couldn't afford the price of the bricks that were necessary to construct a sexuality that was conducted indoors in the private space of the bedroom.

**During the course of reading the book I was positive that I read that class comes to be inscribed in the voice.**

'...These surveys commenced the articulation of the urban poor as a distinct social grouping, with describable patterns of behaviour, *speech patterns*...’ (my italics) (Finch 1993: 9)

'Voices, as embodied, participate in complex performances of gender, class, race, locale and sexuality using semiotic resources every bit as conventionalized as those involved in other forms of bodily performance.’

(Poynton 1996: 109)

I flashed back to the time that I had worked in the East-End of London as a teacher of English and Drama. I worked in two schools during the time that I was there.

My first recollection of an East End classroom was being asked:

'A'v you got an ol punch?'

A what?

and later:

'Got a wu-ler?'

Mmmm?

Later I would hear myself saying:

'It's half six'

and

'Sort of'

with a different accent.

The sound of my voice had changed.

I had changed the sound of my voice.
Class is inscribed in the sound of the voice. As is ethnicity. As is gender. As is age. As is sexuality. As is...

This inscription is not imposed from outside in a structural sense but is taken up in an active sense by the subject that has already taken up other discourses.

The sound of the voice is always heard through sound scapes of class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender...
The sound of the voice is culture is nature.
The sound of the voice is always done through sound scapes of class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender...

The sound of the voice is a hybrid.

The sound of the voice is neither culture or nature it is both and neither. It deconstructs the boundary that separates this binary.

Sexuality is like the sound of the voice.

'...to understand how sexualities are lived and experienced, we need to grasp them as they emerge within specific cultural sites (in this case, schooling), and as they are produced in and through complex interactions...'
(Redman and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 165; see also Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 268)

What does it mean to suggest that something has been thoroughly naturalized?

Considerations of Fluidity

Another notion that is current in post structural theory as it relates to sexuality is that of fluidity. The sound of the voice offers an example of a subtlety that is often missing from discussions that circle notions of fluidity that are couched within queer discourses of choice.

When I lived in England my voice changed but this wasn't the result of a conscious choice that I had made. It also wasn't the result of an imposition (see Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 23). It was however, a result of choices that I had made, on some level, to do the
work of beginning to sound different. That work then came to occupy a place of residence within or without me.

My voice changed. I acquired a new way of sounding.
My voice changed but it still felt natural.
It WAS natural.

I have had two natural voices.
One that sounded East-End Anglo Australian
and another that sounds Anglo-Australian.
The process of acquisition
was subtle and layered.
This process
wasn't one that I could consciously undo
because this subtle process,
this acquisition,
the sound sculpture
that I had constructed
was a deep part of me.

Consider the words of Roland Barthes:

'If it were possible to imagine an aesthetic of textual pleasure, it would have to include: writing aloud. This vocal writing (which is nothing like speech) is not practiced, but is doubtless what Artaud recommended and what Sollers is demanding. Let us talk about it as though it existed.

In antiquity, rhetoric included a section which is forgotten, censored by classical commentators: the actio, a group of formulae designed to allow for the corporeal exteriorization of discourse: it dealt with a theatre of expression, the actor-orator "expressing" his indignation, his compassion, etc. Writing aloud is not expressive; it leaves expression to the pheno-text, to the regular code of communication; it belongs to the geno-text, to significance; it is carried not by dramatic inflections, subtle stresses, sympathetic accents, but by the grain of the voice, which is an erotic mixture of timbre and language, and can therefore also be, along with diction, the substance of an art: the art of guiding one's body (whence its importance in Far Eastern theaters). Due allowance being made for the sounds of the language, writing aloud is not phonological but phonetic; its aim is not the clarity of messages, the theater of emotions; what it searches
for (in a perspective of bliss) are the pulsional incidents, the language lined with flesh, a
text where we can hear the grain of the throat, the patina of consonants, the
voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony: the articulation of the body, of the
tongue, not that of meaning, of language. A certain art of singing can give an idea of this
vocal writing; but since melody is dead, we may find it more easily today at the cinema.
In fact, it suffices that the cinema capture the sound of speech close up (this is, in fact,
the generalized definition of the "grain" of writing) and make us hear in their materiality,
their sensuality, the breath, the gutturals, the fleshiness of the lips, a whole presence of
the human muzzle (that the voice, that writing, be as free as, supple, lubricated, delicately
granular and vibrant as an animal's muzzle), to succeed in shifting the signified a great
distance and in throwing so to speak, the anonymous body of the actor into my ear: it
granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss.' (Barthes 1990:
66-7; see also Davies 2000i: 43)

Finally consider this extract from David Leavitt's work of fiction 'The Lost Language Of
Cranes' where he draws on a case history to tell the story of Michel the 'Crane child'.

'A baby, a boy, called Michel in the article, was born to a disorientated, possibly retarded
(sic) teenager, the child of a rape. Until he was about two years old, he lived with his
mother in a tenement next to a construction site. Every day she stumbled in and around
and out of the apartment, lost in her own madness. She was hardly aware of the child,
barely knew how to feed or care for him. The neighbors were alarmed at how Michel
screamed, but when they went to knock at the door to ask her to quiet him, often she
wasn't there. She would go out at all hours, leaving the child alone, unguarded. Then one
day, quite suddenly, the crying stopped. The child did not scream, and he did not scream
the next day either. For days there was hardly a sound. Police and social workers were
called. They found the child lying on his cot by the window. He was alive and
remarkably well, considering how severely he appeared to have been neglected. Quietly
he played on his squalid cot, stopping every few seconds to look out the window. His
play was unlike any they had ever seen. Looking out the window he would raise his
arms, then jerk them to a halt; stand up on his scrawny legs, then fall; bend and rise. He
made strange noises, a kind of screeching in his throat. What was he doing? the social
workers wondered. What kind of play could this be?

Then they looked out the window, where some cranes were in operation, lifting girders
and beams, stretching out wrecker balls on their single arms. The child was watching
the crane nearest the window. As it lifted, he lifted; as it bent, he bent; as its gears screeched,
its motor whirred, the child screeched between his teeth, whirred with his tongue.'
(Leavitt 1986: 181; the detail of the case history is given on the publications details page at the beginning of the book).

'Fuck that does sound pretty gay'

*

The next Chapter will return to consider participant concerns around bullying. I will argue that engaging in dialogue around the meanings of and possibilities of bodies (that the construction of new discourse), is essential if we hope to construct classroom spaces that are affirming of sexual diversity and if we hope to minimize homophobic bullying.
Chapter 6: Uncertain Bodies

Working through Tension

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I discussed the way that discomfort might be said to have been 'taken up' by a subject (chapter 5 further discussed the linkages between culture and embodied subjects, via a consideration of the 'sound of the voice'). I have argued that negative feelings highlight the importance of referring same-sex attracted young people to appropriate supports where they might encounter and construct positive and expansive discourses that over time become a part of the fabric of who they are.

In Chapter 6 I will focus specifically on the body in order to suggest the importance of freeing up the ways that we move through the world as gendered subjects in the interests of reducing homophobic bullying. I take on board here however, echoing themes taken up in Chapter 4, that this will be tense and at times uncomfortable work.

The 3 parts of Chapter 6 consider the tension and discomfort that can be provoked when subjects move through the world in 'different' ways and in this way they are thematically linked to John's experience of discomfort. Here I also suggest, in keeping with themes raised in Chapter 4 around the degree of control that teachers exercise over learning processes, the unavoidability of tension within any process that claims to be educative.

Chapter 6, drawing on the work of Britzman (1995, 1998), argues the importance of owning and working through tension, in the interests of constructing school and classroom cultures that are affirming of diversity.

Heteroprivilegist Discourses of Gender Police Sexuality

In Chapter 5, I focused on comments made by Dante where he spoke about concerns he had around the sound of his voice and which also illuminate the degree to which heteroprivilegist discourses of gender regulate sexuality (other sections of the text have also considered the relationship between these discourses). Dante's comments make clear the connections between discourses of sexuality and gender and in the process he identifies one of the factors that accounts for the harassment and bullying that same-sex attracted young people sometimes encounter in schools; namely that to move through the culture of the school in a manner that is read via heteroprivilegist discourses as gender
non-compliant (and therefore as queer), is to invite harassment (see Redman and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 170-1, 173). Many of the participants made similar or related comments.

Consider the comments of Michael, where he spoke about his own concerns around his own 'funny voice' and 'limp wrists'. There are strong connections here with Dante's concerns about the sound of his voice.

M     Well yeah...It is a bit of a thing for me like having the limp wrist and the voice...That's always been my main concern...My voice...

I     But your voice is fine...

M     People have always said that I've got a funny voice...I think yeah...I'd much prefer to be a manly man and to be gay than a man that looks like a woman or...acts like a woman...

I     And how important are those ideas in relation to gayness?

M     I don't know I'd just like to stay looking 'normal'...I'd just like to stay looking like a man I suppose...

I     So issues of masculinity are important?...

M     Yeah...Well as a younger person I was worried about...Like with my voice, I thought, you know what is it going to end up like?...Is it going to get really bad or?...

I     So what did you do? Did you do anything with your voice or?

M     Not really I just sort of left it as it was...

I     Is it something that you were aware of?
M I was always worried about it...Like seeing myself on a video or something...You know 'acting like a girl'...was a bit worrying...

I So when was that?

M It would have probably been grade six...You know seeing myself acting you know differently...to the 'normal' boy it was just...a bit of a shock...

I So you actually saw that in yourself?

M Mmmmm

I And so what did you do after that? Did you stop...

M Well in grade six people didn't really worry as we started to get older they sort of started to see, that's when at Public School they started picking...Ummmm...I don't know I think I probably tried to hide it more...than when I was younger...

I Because you were more aware....?

M Yeah I became more aware that I was (gay) and I tried not to show anyone that I was...

V Violet, echoed similar concerns but added a further dimension where she spoke about how even though she was 'out' at school that she still generated tension because other students were surprised that she didn't 'look like a dyke'.

V Well a lot of people had a problem because they said 'But you don't look like a dyke'...You look straight. You look like a nice attractive straight girl. You don't look like some sort of butch you know the shaved head sort of butch pierced dyke...

Violet's sexuality is a concern for other students because while she is a dyke, and while she has told other students that she is, she doesn't 'look like one'. Violet disrupts the
fiction, that is the belief, that we can read the sexuality of others with certainty by deploying discourses of gender, and in the process her 'undyke-like dyke's body' generates tension.

Kelvin discussed related terrain and in the process clearly articulated why he policed his body. Kelvin regulated the way that he walked and talked because he believed that he would be bullied to the extent where he would have to leave school if he didn't. Kelvin believed that his voice, and his walk, would single him out as gay and generate the possibility of physical and verbal violence. Consequently he decided that it was not safe or strategic to move through the school as he would otherwise have chosen to do so.

I
In relation to all that we've been talking about...What do you change about yourself? What don't you change about yourself? Do you change anything about yourself?

K
It just depends on the situation...Well sometimes I change my voice...Sometimes you have to change the way that you walk and stuff and not just the tone of your voice but the way that you talk...

I
And what is motivating you to do that? Why do you want to do that?

K
Ummmm...I don't really like it but I just know that I have to because if they find out about me then ummmm what am I going to do I'll have to leave school probably

I
So you'd be scared or fearful of the reaction of other people at your school? What would you be fearful of there?

K
Ummmm...Probably...I know I'd get bashed...

I
So physical violence?

K
Yeah...Verbal doesn't worry me but I know I'd definitely get bashed up
Finally, consider the comments of Hayes who is sneered at by a teacher who can't cope with his gender 'non-compliance'. In the course of the interview he said:

H  It's a Public School...It's very hard to go to school at times...I nearly got kicked out of school...A girl that used the same line of hair products that I used and had green hair when I had pink hair and I got sent home and I had no money because I'd just been kicked out of home to change my hair and I had to go like without an education for like three weeks...

I  Because of your hair colour?

H  Yeah I wouldn't go to a school if it wasn't co-ed...And the teachers are very homophobic

I  In what way?

H  I think...I was walking down the corridors...Painting my nails...A friend of mine bought this really 'rad' nail polish...and this teacher just looks at me like I was the scum of the earth or something and I thought you're a teacher...You're supposed to deal with students who do this not do it yourself...(see Mills 1999: 120)

I  Students?.....

H  Students who basically discriminate but the teachers are doing it themselves...How can they find what students are doing is wrong if they believe it's right themselves...Yeah...Do you want to know what recess is like now...I'm dying to tell you what recess is like...

These extracts are indicative of the feelings of all of the participants and they illustrate the way that reactive discourses of sexuality and gender function through each other to regulate queer subjects (for a discussion on the regulation of gender by professionals see, Sedgwick 1994: 154-164).
The Importance of Policy

Anti-harassment policy that specifically names bullying based on sexuality (or the 'suspicion of' being same-sex attracted) as unacceptable is essential if such harassment is to stop. It is worrying, that at this point in time, in the face of a growing body of academic research and increasing levels of awareness around these issues, that such policy does not exist at Departmental level in Victoria. The Tasmanian Education Department has recently introduced policy that could be used as an example of best practice in this regard (Dept of Education Tasmania 2000: 1).

While policy that addresses homophobic bullying is essential, work that attempts to unpack and address the causes of such harassment needs to be undertaken as well (Redman 1996: 171-173). As well as responding to incidences of harassment, and managing and stopping such harassment schools need to be proactive and reflective around these issues. One clear implication of the extracts above, in this regard, is that working to construct school cultures that enable people to free up the ways that they do their gender is crucial if school cultures are to become open to sexual diversity. In this regard, acknowledging that heteroprivilegist discourses of gender are one of the main factors that mitigate against sexual diversity is essential if same-sex attracted young people's school experiences are to become better. It is also essential to acknowledge in this regard that the work of freeing up gender will generate a degree of tension.

The role of policy therefore is inherently ambiguous in the sense that while there is a need for policy that manages and minimizes tension there is also a need for policy that will generate tension as it supports difference. In these poststructural times there is a need (as far as tension goes) for a contradictory mix of policy approaches.

Schools need to work to disrupt discourses that seek to unreasonably regulate bodies as they move through the world. This work will entail working through tension and discomfort. A tension and discomfort that, like John's blushing, is culturally induced. Parts 2 and 3 of this chapter will explore what such work might look like. They will focus on my own experiences as a classroom teacher in order to outline an approach with a broader applicability.

A brief note on 'coming out' and going through labels into difference or uncertainty.

The remaining parts of this chapter discuss two instances of tension and discomfort that came about around a choice as to how I should take up space in the world as a gay man, and around how I might strategically achieve to do this in a school setting. They are an
exploration of tension, and what tension might teach us about working with young people around sexual diversity, or around any issue of diversity in schools. In this way they are thematically linked to John's discomfort and are also an attempt to address participant concerns around bullying by working through the structural factors that cause such bullying in the first instance.

As indicated in Chapter 1 (pp 49-71) I contend that at the heart of much homophobic bullying is an anxiety to do with the way that a subject does his or her gender. Consequently, I suggest that if we are to minimize homophobic bullying that there is a need to work through issues of gender. In order for this to happen, I argue that this might entail that we actually go 'further' than 'coming out'. I argue around a strategy of ambiguity and uncertainty, in this regard, in the interests of making schools better places for LGBT young people in the long term (see Martino 1999: 138; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 269-70). I will briefly explain what I mean by this with the aid of a diagram.

If difference provokes tension and if tension moves outwards from an origin in all directions let the line below represent one strand of that movement; let this line represent tension around sexual difference, where sexual difference is read via discourses of gender. If we focus on tension around sexual difference within heteroprivilegist cultures, let us say that 0 equals minimal tension and that this place of minimal tension is occupied by a gender compliant heterosexuality. Let us now say that gender non-compliant subjects who are 'out' as lesbian, gay, bisexual (or transgender) occupy point 5 on the scale and that gender non-compliant subjects who are constructing queer or ambiguous sexualities that complicate the ability of others to read them with certainty occupy point 9 and beyond.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight gender compliant</td>
<td>LGB(T) gender non-comp</td>
<td>queer/ambiguous greater gender non-comp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working to minimize homophobic harassment and bullying, will involve not only working through the tension that the labels gay, lesbian, bisexual (and transgender) can provoke but will entail working past this point and through the more intense tension that ambiguity, difference or uncertainty can provoke.

Ultimately working to minimize homophobic harassment will involve pushing the edges of difference further and further away from a socially constructed heteroprivilegist origin, because the further into difference or uncertainty we go the more difference we can
accommodate. If gay, lesbian bisexual (and transgender) school experiences are to become better then LGB(T) students must be discursively positioned inside the outer edges of difference, and this can only happen if LGB(T) students cease to be positioned as liminal (the cost here of course is that LGB(T) subjectivities become somewhat mainstream).

We must aim to get to the place where we are comfortable with the knowledge that everyone is different and that sexuality is but one manifestation of this difference. We must get to the point where the focus broadens from a discussion about specific labels to one about respectful relationships (see Britzman 1995: 164; for a related discussion on the limits of 'role models' see, Epstein and Johnson 1994: 202). Going through labels and into uncertainty is part of the work that we need to do if we are interested in making schools safe for LGB(T) young people and playing with the gendered meanings of bodies is pivotal in this regard.

I want to stress however that this chapter is in no way written with the intention of arguing against 'coming out'. 'Coming Out' is politically important and the gains that LGBT people have made over the last 30 years would not be as great had people stayed in the closet. It is very important that people do 'come out', that schools support them where they decide to do so, and that the structural factors that enable people to 'come out' safely are further explored and encouraged.

(I also want to stress that I am not meaning to suggest here that heterosexuality is constructed easily or without tension. The line is intended to ground an idea around bodies that incite tension, and that are then targeted by oppressive discourses because of this. I am arguing through the line that gender compliant heterosexuality is usually a subjectivity that incites less tension that a non-compliant same-sex sexuality. I think that this is the case and that the literature on discrimination is clear that gender non-compliant SSAY experience discrimination on the basis of sexuality in ways that many gender compliant straight identifying young people do not. In a similarly way I would argue that transgender young people often incite more anxiety around sexuality and gender than many other young people.)

The next two sections of chapter 6 will draw on my classroom experiences to anchor a discussion about the tension that can be generated, and the lessons that can be learned, when students and teachers encounter uncertainty in the classroom.
Are You Gay/Sir? #1

Introduction

As indicated, the next two sections of chapter 6 will draw on my classroom experiences to argue a strategy of encouraging a degree of uncertainty in the classroom in the interests of constructing classroom spaces that are affirming of sexual diversity. There are also themes relating to tension, and the teachers' desire to minimize tension by controlling the classroom running through these sections.

The following sections of the text explore tension. The tension associated with the perception of occupying two seemingly contradictory places at once on the one hand, and the tension that is generated by strategically occupying 'undecidable' spaces, with appropriate structural support on the other. I argue that encounters with such tension are a necessary part of the work of improving the educative experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual (and transgender) young people. I argue through these pieces, following Britzman, that there is a need for educators to position tension as not necessarily something to be managed and controlled but rather as a necessary part of the learning process.

This section of the text is an attempt to write using many different voices. The various fonts used are an attempt to visually fragment the text, and to echo the fragmented nature of the poststructural subject, and also to signal a chorus of voices. The fonts are random. For a more detailed discussion regarding the decision to use fonts, refer to Chapter 2.

This narrative was initially written for and used within a community group and it considers one instance of my experience as a gay teacher. The narrative is written to be read aloud and in this way is linked to Chapter 5. The school where the narrative is set was very supportive of diversity and a great place to work. This chapter is a modified version of 'Are You Gay/Sir?' (Crowhurst 1999).

Narrative Work

The narrative that follows, was originally written for a discussion group. I'd just read Bronwyn Davies' 'Shards of Glass' (1993) and thought that it would be interesting to explore narrative work with the group (see also See also Redman and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 166; Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 42). Davies suggests that stories and memory work:
As a poststructural feminist, Davies is, in part, engaged in a project that attempts to unhinge biology and destiny and is a part of another that attempts to explore the linkages between biology and discourse. Davies does not ignore the materiality of the body, nor does she argue that the material body is entirely a product of discourse. The body bleeds, breathes, grows and dies; it functions in ways that exceed and/or precede discourse (see Misson 1996: 118-22). Davies writes within a framework that acknowledges that the body exists as a fact, and, as an idea, and that therefore the body as a site is partially open to possibility (see also See: Gatens 1996). Davies writes within a project that suggests that the fluidly hybrid deep surfaces of the body are, to a degree, taken up and formed in social practices that the body enacts and constructs, as it moves through culture (see Davies 2000i: 251-3; Butler 1990).

Davies, following Butler (1990) and Foucault (1990; 1991), suggests a body that is not only fluid at the level of meaning but that it is also to some extent fluid, as a material product (see also Grosz 1994; Grosz 1995; Harris 1996; Young 1990). The sound of the human voice is a good illustration of this. The sound of the human voice is an aspect of embodiment that is inscribed with culture and that is an effect of the subject engaging in processes of taking up culture. Accents, as a part of the sound of the voice, offer an example of cultural inscription and also an example of what it means to engage in processes of taking up culture. An accent is clearly a cultural construct that is taken up by subjects in a way that demonstrates a moment where the division between the body and culture is blurred (see Poynton 1996; Finch 1993: 126). Accent demonstrates a moment where culture has become part of the fabric of the material body, where culture has become an 'inseparable' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1998: 1) part of what the body does.

Davies (1993; 1994) is part of a broad project that argues that the embodied subject, is in relationship with webs of discourse, and as such, following the example of the accent, that the embodied subject is open, to some degree, to the possibilities that such webs afford (see also Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 268). She suggests that we make and position ourselves from within patterns of discourse, but that discourse itself is embedded with values and power relations (see also Aitman 1992; Harris 1996; Wexler 1992; Wyn and White 1997). Davies proposes that there is a need to change, open or rupture discourse in order to change, open or rupture the possibilities of the material body (see also Grosz 1994; Grosz 1995; Young 1990).
Subjects, are embedded in and participate in practices that reproduce discourses that are gendered and that carry meanings implicated in and constitutive of sexuality. If the cultures that embodied subjects inhabit are patriarchal or heteroprivilegist there is a likelihood that the values and relations that circle patriarchy and heteroprivilegism will be taken up in very deep ways by them. Subjects can reproduce relations that oppress and limit others. Subjects can reproduce practices that are embedded in values and relations, that leave some people feeling constrained, tense and disadvantaged.

Davies, argues that inequality is facilitated or constructed through discourse, and that therefore discourse that creates inequalities needs to be challenged. The old ways need to be deconstructed, they need to be changed. If we want to work towards diversity, if we want to occupy new spaces in the world, we need to engage in the work of rupturing the inequitable patterns that are evident in the discourses that we move through and are embedded in. And that is part of the reason why this section of the text, and some other sections, have looked a little different to a more linear text style.

As part of the work that Davies proposes it is important to begin to write in different ways. To write as praxis. It is important to try to write from the margins. To try to write in difference. To try to avoid the 'entrapment' (Sinfield 1994) of writing using a patriarchal form. To try to avoid being appropriated or consumed by dominant, ascendant or hegemonic discourses and in the process to try to avoid reproducing such discourses.

An example of this type of text is Du Plessis' Pink Guitar (1990). It is written in fragments and in many different voices, and it is truly an attempt to write from the margins, to write in difference, to avoid closure. 'The Pink Guitar' has certainly influenced parts of the narrative that follows. Similarly, Beth Randell's PhD thesis (1997), exploring women's humour, which is written as a play script and employs the device of using two voices throughout the text has also influenced the narrative that forms this section of the text (see also Irigaray 1993).

Finding Common Ground In Difference - Narratives and Politics

...It may be useful to be reminded that power is not some static or unique possession and that power 'circulates', but there is more than enough evidence to suggest that it is also 'located' to the structural advantage of key players...(Dwyer 1995: 476).

Dwyer's comments are relevant here because they highlight the fact that there is more to becoming different than a writing of the texts of new bodies. There are very real issues
around power to consider. There are reactive discourses (where discourse is understood to refer to a meaning or language and to material practices) that circle LGB(T) bodies, for example, that are embedded with values that would seek to limit and constrain such bodies.

Dwyer reminds us of the importance of remembering that while power can function, in the poststructural sense, in concert with or through new modes of discourse as an expansive, productive, generative force, that it can also function in a manner that a structuralist might describe as repressive. Dwyer reminds us that while poststructural insights into the workings of power are illuminating and valid, that we nevertheless need to be conscious of the ways in which power can function in a structural fashion, and that often we need to organize collectively in order to disrupt oppressive discourses.

Because power seems to function in multiple ways, there is a need to respond to inequality in multiple ways. This text acknowledges that structural interventions, such as changing policy and the like, are a necessary component of constructing cultures that are of difference, such interventions will not however be the focus of this section of the text. The focus here (following a more poststructurally influenced approach), is to consider the narrative of one teacher, to reflect on this narrative in light of the participant perspectives and to suggest through such reflection what that narrative might indicate as far as improving same-sex attracted school experiences are concerned.

**Narrative Work and Alliance Building**

'I favour social sketches, framed in a more narrative rather than analytic mode, as responses to specific social developments and conflicts with specific purposes in mind. I think for example of the writings, mostly essays with a strong narrative cast, most moving back and forth between the personal and the institutional...'

(Seidman 1994: 137)

How might narrative work begin to rupture discourses that seek to enshrine inequality? How might narrative work contribute to the political work of moving towards diversity? To move towards a free-er, a better, a more diverse space, it is important to explore that which is common or close, in the experiences of those who position themselves or are positioned by others as different (such ideas underpin qualitative research—the idea that narratives are both a product of discourse and a form of discourse). What is often common to those who live in difference is an awareness of the limiting effect that
discourse can exert and the tension that encounters with such discourse can provoke. What is also shared by those who are positioned by dominant discourse as different is perhaps an awareness of the mechanisms that facilitate constraint.

Through narrative work people begin to see, and to articulate, that what has happened to them has also happened to others. People begin to see the work of discourse. People begin to experience, and remember the tense pleasures of the experience, of moving in new ways, of moving beyond or through limiting structures, of becoming different. People begin to see that while such movement is a result of individual effort that there are nevertheless limits to what an individual can achieve in the face of structural factors. People begin to see the importance of forming alliances that support the building of new discourses and through this work new structures and institutions (see Davies 1993; Davies 1994; Davies 2000i: 168-9; Kehily 1999: 141; Randell 1997).

Feminist poststructural narrative work is to do with new ways of writing, reading, of engaging with text. Feminist poststructural narrative work is about undoing oppressive discourses and replacing these with discourses that facilitate expansive new ways of moving through the world as embodied subjects (see Seidman 1994: 137). Narrative work changes the way that people think about their experiences. It has also been in my experience a catalyst that has supported people to resist discourse, and that has provoked people to engage in the difficult work of moving in new ways, of making new discourse, where they feel that it is safe and strategic to do so (see Davies 2000: 70, 72).

Narrative work can also nurture the collective focus that is often necessary to challenge taken for granted practices. Narrative work is a form of praxis that is especially relevant in educative settings (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 357-9). The narrative that follows is an attempt to reflect on the experience of what it means and feels like to begin the work of moving in new ways.

The Poststructural Subject meets the Poststructural Structure - The Narrative Begins

The moment where the poststructural subject and poststructural structure meet is one that I am interested in. I am interested in it as a moment of tension, as a moment of possibility of the new, as a moment of recognition of constraint, and as a moment where the unity of the subject is called into question.

The point of tension in the narrative is the point where the teacher is asked the question: Are you gay sir? This is a moment of tension because it provokes an awareness of the split nature of the subject and it does so in such a way that this splitting is not able to be
easily resolved (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 360-1). It's a moment of tension because it is a moment that is experienced by the subject as a moment of contradiction. This tension, is a tension that is embodied, that is grounded, that manifests in heart beats, blushing (see Crowhurst 1999: 174), raised temperature, hunched shoulders, a cracking voice and the like.

This tension is also to do with the realisation that the embodied subject is presented with the possibility of taking up space in the world as a gay man in a new way. This tension is to do with the recognition of the possibility of resisting a dominant discourse that requires that gay teachers keep quiet about the fact that they are gay, that requires that they do their gayness in a particular way. This tension is about the experience of standing at the crossroads of refusal or compliance. It is also about changing or staying the same. This tension is provoked by the choice to make new discourse or to reproduce a discourse that is familiar (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 361).

*

...Meanwhile/A couple of years ago...In a fabulous state school light years away from the privilege enjoyed by private $$$chool students...

'Fag'...As I rounded the corner I could hear the giggles. I thought I knew who was responsible or at least where the sound appeared to be coming from but no proof. They were invisible...Safe in the staff room, I focused on the pile of correction that I swore I would finish two days previously...guilt guilt guilt...I'd made time for a coffee but not for...'I've left my text back in room 35'...

Back through the corridor and back into room 35. Someone had scratched an 'R' and a 'Q' on the door at lunchtime. Thank God/god they were interrupted before the 'Q' and 'R' read queer.

Sounds like I'm blowing this out of all proportion (no it doesn't) but it certainly didn't feel like that on Thursday as 'poof' (or was that 'fag' on a Wednesday? - We construct the past) echoed around the school corridor and around my head.

Five years on I think that it's interesting that there is a focus on the corridor...The area outside the classroom...The area where teachers aren't really in any sense in command of what's happening...A space that teachers walk through to get to where they are really going...To what's really important about school...To the classroom...Conversely the corridor is the space that young people fill...That they take up
with their presences...That they take up with their BODIES...Where they go from being outside to being inside the classroom...An inbetween unresolved place, neither here nor there, a borderline, a passageway...Where they go from the places they control or have more control over to the places that are seemingly (I knew they liked me) structured in favour of the teacher...In favour of the person who is enacting the role of the teacher for the people who are simultaneously engaged in enacting the role of the student...The corridor is different to the staffroom and the classroom...It's like being backstage without the red velvet curtains.

Wednesday, Period 1, I discovered a small group of students writing stories that were homophobic, sexist and violent (these 3 things go together somehow I think). I had set them a task that I thought was interesting, within a subject that I had very little interest in - that I thought was mechanical and closed.

I thought that I'd move Information Technology (I.T.) to a more creative place...I proposed that we could spend part of the term exploring the keyboard by writing creative stories...Some (not all) Year 8 boys are prone to fall into...are prone to choose to write...stories that are sexist and violent and homophobic (...and that has nothing to do with testosterone...Ever seen a fight in a gay bar?...All of those boys all of that alcohol...No...You can always get a taxi outside of a gay bar...Taxi drivers know)...The trick is to deal with the stories without appearing to censor...To appeal to their rational selves...To discuss...

Ray Misson once gave a lunch time seminar that I attended where he in part spoke of the limits of opposing prejudice using rational means...Heteroprivilegism isn't rational...It's based on fear and ignorance and tension and it is exceedingly subtle and layered...It's also something that is to do with power and the benefits that accrue to individuals that are co-opted by and allow themselves to co-opt speech and stances that are heteroprivilegist (Misson 1996)...Heteroprivilegism takes up an embodied place of residence in people...Heteroprivilegism is taken up by people in very deep ways...it is learnt in very complex subtle and deep ways...Heteroprivilegism lives in peoples heads and beyond their heads in their feelings in their gut reactions (Crowhurst 1999: 168-77)...Heteroprivilegism is learnt and taken up by straight people and by queer people...Heteroprivilegism is a construct, in a similar way that the sound of a person's voice is a construct, the deep surface that is the sound of the voice, an inbetween ambiguous space where the body and culture blend, or pass into or through each other...The sound of an accent (Poynton 1996), the sound of class (Finch 1993)...the sound of an excessively spacious gorgeous campness...To change heteroprivilegism...to change an accent...

When I presented this section of the text as a paper at a conference, a person who was listening to me read it at her said: 'If you can't use rational means to combat heteroprivilegism what can you use?'...Misson (1996: 125-8) suggests humour...So does Beth Randell (1997) in a related way in her PhD thesis focusing on humour as
feminist strategy...I think that you also need to work with and through tension and I will return to consider working through tension in more detail in the next section of the text...

Anyway...I quietly requested that these stories, the sexist, racist and homophobic ones, be erased and said that I thought that they were inappropriate. A barrage of questions followed regarding my sexuality and whether I knew or approved of gay/lesbian lifestyles (articles on LGB(T) teachers include, Crowhurst 1999: 89 - 103; Curren 1999: Epstein 1999: 25 - 42; Eyre 1993: 273-284; Khayatt 1997: 126-143; Mills 1996: 315-326; Sanders and Burke 1994: 65-77; Spraggs 1994: 179-196)...

...Are you married?

Are you gay?

Rather than sweep things under the carpet I thought I'd address some of the issues that had surfaced...Rather than say: 'Get on with your work...My private life is none of your business...See me immediately after class'...Rather than bring the issue to closure I decided to prize it open a little...But I felt uneasy...I was also aware that there would be gay students in the class and I was keen that they see that I wasn't ashamed of being gay and I hoped that if I bumped into them in a bar in 10 years time that they'd understand why I couldn't just say 'Yes I'm gay'...I was also thinking that they'd possibly be feeling self conscious and may even blush...That they'd be given away by their bodies against their will...

You might be wondering why I'm using all of these pesky fonts...Well it's to further fragment the text by visually fragmenting it as well and to suggest in the process (following poststructural theory) that subjectivity is similarly fragmented...I don't write like this all the time (not that I have a great body of published work or anything) because sometimes it's far more useful to be VERY linear...But this is very freeing...And that is what I'm writing about and I want it to be evident in the text not just something that I write a text about...I've also recently read Dean Kiley's 'and that's final' (1995) and he uses a lot of fonts...He probably has a plan that all means something that I haven't cracked but believe me there is no plan here as far as the fonts go (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 91-5)...

The thesis that I had recently written (Crowhurst 1993)...Memories of the thesis that I had recently written...The text that I had produced suggesting teachers might be visibly rushed to consciousness...At the same time I quickly glanced at the clock...30 minutes till recess...Long enough to have a good
chat/long enough to descend into chaos...Still we backed onto recess...(You've had your fun 8f, now I'll have mine)...I stepped to the edge of the spring board and decided that I could bounce a little even if I didn't dive right in and get wet...I knew this class; I had some brownie points...They knew I was soon going to be writing their reports and that what I had to say about their keyboarding skills they would carry to their graves...I was aware that I had a degree of power here...I was aware that the power that I had was not absolute...I was aware that the students had power too...I was aware that the power that circled the 'TT' room was not easy to pin down...Certainly not predictable...

The question: 'Are you gay Sir?'

...Gay/Sir...

Gay: private (well in school anyway, in the part of the school that is the classroom, the part where the students are), within this school positioned as lacking power (don't know about that one: it's not always a position that would be lacking power), not usually an aspect of subjectivity openly supported by the school at this point in time, a role that I enact.

Sir: public, authoritative: invested with the idea of power, (I know I definitely have authority problems), supported in all sorts of ways, a role that I enact...

I always had difficulty (tension) with students calling me Sir...I have always asked them not to do so...I always had tension with the thought that they might call me gay too...I used to think that my classroom was democratic...or reasonably democratic...that I didn't overtly control the learning process...That's why I used to think that I had problems with being called Sir...But now I think maybe it had something to do with the perception of a contradiction between gayness and sirmess (see also Epstein 1997: 190; Pronger 1990i: 149)...I'm sure others don't experience that tension...

I felt uneasy...My body felt tense...

Are you gay/sir?...The text that I had produced suggesting teachers might be visible rushed to consciousness...suggesting teachers might be visible...teachers...text...Are you gay/sir?...I'd always thought that I was invisible I mean I never said anything but perhaps I wasn't...They'd been reading me...walks and talks...bodies and space...they'd been reading the body I'd been moving through the school with as gay (for a discussion of similar themes see Emslie 1999: 162-3)...they'd been watching me...under surveillance (see Foucault 1991)...questioning me to let me know that they were reading the text that is my body...the text that is the teacher's body...the word spectacle is a homograph (Edelman 1994), bodies are too...discipline that excessive body...you bind a thesis...rein it in...don't let it do that...don't let it walk like that, don't let it sound like that...make it sound and walk like
this...make a different body...make it invisible...but not too invisible...keep it separate so we
know we're different from it...but rein it in at the same time...Is that a gay body?...answer
us...set us straight...something in the way she moves...are you gay/sir?...
I'm not going to tell you...

'Are you gay sir?'...I opted (with less than 2 seconds thought), for a grey, dithering, corridor of a
response, something along the lines of: 'I don't want to discuss my private life'...(still there is a lot to be
said for the grey response)...Thinking all the time about wedding rings and the easy conversations that I
had heard other staff have with students about their children and the fact that they were
married...heteroentrisms heteroentrisms heteroentrisms...

Thinking about the vast array of information that is conveyed about
heterosexually to students every day of the school week...the often
unconscious discursive positioning of it as 'the norm'...I don't care
what they do in private as long as they don't shove it down my
throat...Cliche...or...Touche...This anglo word processor doesn't have
an accent key...

Students told me that other teachers had told them whether they were
married or not or whether they had a girlfriend or boyfriend...Public
space, public speak, (fixing) the meaning of their expansively
...mmmmm...maybe not so expansively...certainly not
excessively...constructed heterosexual bodies...On the radio the other
day on 'Arts Today' on Radio National, 621 on the AM Dial, I heard
someone say that the site of any spectacle is a contested one...

They smelled a rat.

I decided that it would be unwise to make a personal statement (because I was only at the school
for a term and I had two weeks to go and this was far more complex than two weeks
would allow) and opted instead to speak of my

support for gay and lesbian people and my acquaintance with 'them'

and steadfastly refused to confirm that I was straight.

The class became very focused...
Possibly the most focused they had been all term...
The class became **tense and restless**...

_Possibly as tense and as restless as I'd seen them._

**Next Day**

The next day was **far** from pleasant

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How is it that a group of 13 year olds feel that they have the right to harass an adult based on the assumption that he is gay? How is this possible within a culture that positions 13 year olds as children and powerless and adults as powerful? What has mobilised this group to be so intolerant of difference and so eager to join together to attempt to push the person that is positioned as different into a position of subordination? What tells this group of young people that it is safe to rebel against the authority invested in the adult teacher?

Notice how when issues of power surface...When it's not a comfortable memory for the writer...That the pesky fonts disappear...That it doesn't write fun...I just did...no 'braiding' here (see Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing 1997: 106-8)

On Wednesday I was a teacher that managed somehow without resorting to violence to get a group of 13 years olds to spend 40 minutes at antiquated keyboards doing an exercise that they weren't all that thrilled about...Thursday I was someone that those same students felt they had the power to ridicule...If I knew anything I knew that this was about a shift...Something had changed and my feeling was that this might have something to do with the boundaries that police the public and the private...Something that was meant to occupy private space, was moving beyond that space, attempting to take up space elsewhere, attempting to expand/to colonise/to carve out a space within that elsewhere and in the process to make it a new space...Mardi Gras hasn't been appropriated or commodified by Channel 10, Channel 10 has been queered by it...The weather person knows that the place where the highs meet the lows is a place of turbulence...We were traversing a borderline but we weren't in the corridor...

So I decided to respond in a public fashion...Because I was 'Out' to staff members I enlisted the support of year level co-ordinators...All the time aware that I was playing the patriarchal, hierarchical, power game that had got me where I was in the first place... (see Mac An Ghaill 1994: 38; Epstein and Johnson 1998: 137-9)...I'd control, I'd manage the situation...

...I spoke to the class and said that I was unhappy with their behaviour and attitudes and I tried to twist the guilt knife by saying that I'd liked them as a class and I couldn't really understand why they had suddenly changed...
I knew they liked me...

...At the end of my chat with them I let them know however that the school as a structure wouldn't allow homophobic behaviour to go unchallenged...I let them know that I would use one structure against another...That there would be all sorts of trouble for them if they didn't decide to be nice to me...I'd use hierarchy...I'd use my trump card...I prioritized the position of the teacher, a position that I had access to, that I had colonised, because it offered me more power...Good Cop/Bad Cop...I knew they liked me/step out of line and I'll kill you...Are you gay/sir?...

So why didn't I just 'come out' in the first place...I spoke to the Deputy Principal about 'IT'...She was very supportive...I wrote a rather lengthy submission to the Equal Opportunity Committee who were in the process of re-writing the school policy...The policy is now inclusive of sexual preference/the policy is now more diverse...chip chip chip...The Deputy Principal said that she wouldn't 'come out'...but she didn't tell me not to or that she wouldn't support me if I did so in the future...I think I could have, but I'm not going to give myself a hard time about it...I think the issue is bigger than me...still I think I could have surfed the tension and emerged at a place where 'IT' was no longer an issue...I'd been 'out' in other schools...I'd never lost a job but I do know a couple of people who have left jobs because of issues relating to sexuality...I know that this is complex...I know that I'm rambling...and I know that there is also a lot to be said for occupying an ambiguous space...a lot to be said in support of the strategy of queering the text that is the body of the teacher...a lot to be said in favour of never coming out...'come out' as what?...and why should I anyway?...

Friday: Jason...(who had been away on Wednesday or was that Thursday?)...said in class...That he'd heard that I'd had a bit of a hard time on Wednesday/Monday?...Yes Jason...Keep going with your work...I'm very busy thinking about what I'm going to write about you in your report!...click click click...(times 30)...Have a good term break 8f...I feel like I'm crawling to them but they have been nice to me today...
Summary

This narrative has been an attempt to explore the tension of moving through the culture that is the school as a gay teacher. It has been an attempt to explore what can happen when the subject experiences the tension of occupying space in a manner that provokes a feeling of contradiction for one reason or another. It has also been an attempt to explore the tension and various resistances ('internal' and 'external'), that accompany the possibility of moving through the world in a different way, that accompany the possibility of doing new discourse, that accompany the possibility of change. What might this narrative offer in relation to thinking through processes of constructing classroom spaces that are of difference?

This narrative points to the tendency for people to struggle to make meaning of the bodies that they are in relationship with. This is so because in making sense of others we engage in the work of constructing and making sense of ourselves. When the work of making sense of another, or of the self, is made difficult because of perceived contradictions, tension can be the result. Tension is sometimes the product of a refusal to accept the complexity and contradictions of those that we are in relationship with and sometimes the product of a refusal to accept the complexity and contradictions of ourselves. The tension that accompanies complexity can also provoke the subject to work towards a moment of clarity that may enable a decision to change (see next section).

There is a need in schools, to continue to work to open up the possible meanings of bodies (to continue to work to open up the possible meanings of teacher's bodies), in an effort to convey to students some of the diverse possibilities that are available to them as embodied subjects, and particularly in an effort to improve the school experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual (and transgender) young people. There is a need to work with young people in schools to explore complexity, contradiction, and the possibilities of difference.

The narrative, suggests the need for all teachers (not only teachers who would describe themselves as queer or LGBT) to actively work to incite students to read them as complex, to read them as contradictory, to read them as different, and in doing so it also suggests the need to work through or past or to complicate the binary that, in many ways, artificially separates straight and gay. This is the focus of the section that follows. The narrative, also suggests that there is a need to acknowledge that the tension that can accompany such provocation is structural in nature and that individuals engaging in the work of making structural change therefore need to be structurally supported. The section
that follows will consider what it might mean to work to 'open up the possible meanings of bodies' in a classroom setting.

This section, looks different. It employs different fonts in an effort to visually fragment the text. Visually the text is a metaphor that echoes poststructuralism's challenge to discourses that would assert a unified subject. There is more, however to discourse than text on pages. Discourse also refers to social practices, refers to how we, as embodied subjects, take up space in the world. Opening discourse is also therefore very much about opening up or challenging the ways that we take up space in the world. Opening discourse is very much about disrupting material practices that the body enacts. Opening discourse is very much about freeing up the body, about moving in new ways, about moving differently.

The last part of this chapter will take up these themes and suggest that the tension that such work provokes needs to be worked through and embraced as well as managed or controlled.
Are You Gay/Sir? #2

Introduction

The body which fails to submit to the law or occupies that law in a mode contrary to its dictate, thus loses its sure footing - its cultural gravity - ...Such bodies contest the norms that govern the intelligibility of sex. (my italics)
(Butler 1993: 139)

Many participants indicated that students who were read as gender 'non-compliant' were often harassed by other students. This section of Chapter 6 builds on the last to suggest that if we hope to reduce such harassment that schools need to work with students so that they become more comfortable with the fact that people move through the world in different ways. It is taken as axiomatic that tension around 'gender non-compliance' is one effect of heteroprivilegist discourse. This section of the text will consider how a classroom teacher might begin the work of rupturing such discourse in an attempt to reduce levels of harassment in the long term.

Further, in relation to tension, I will suggest that while on the one hand there is a need to support change via the management of tension that on the other there is a need to generate change via the gentle provocation of tension. There is a need to achieve a balance between seemingly contradictory stances in this regard. This section of the text will focus on the generation, rather than on the management of tension.

In, 'Are You Gay/Sir? # 1' the narrative considered a teachers' experience of fragmentation and the tension that often accompanies such an experience. The narrative explores a process whereby the tension that is generated is minimized. The teacher does this by drawing on the power at his disposal. The teacher in taking on the responsibility for managing or 'solving' this tension, is also taking ownership of it. In part, this is as it should be; teachers do have a responsibility to manage tension. However, this section of the text will argue, drawing on the work of Deborah Britzman, that this responsibility needs to be shared or owned by students as well.

This section of the text will work with the notion that it is via encounters with tension, and by working through such tension, that the subject can emerge at a place of provisional clarity. A clarity which is the result of, and that allows for, an expansion of relations of difference, rather than a clarity achieved via the safety of closure. This final
section of the text is written with the intention of provoking discussion and generating
questions.

A note on intention

'Are you gay/sir? #1', was written 5 years before this piece, and my feeling after
having written it, was that there is a need to move slowly in pursuit of the objective of
achieving sexual diversity in schools and in classrooms. I was also certain that it was
important that students encounter LGBT teachers and that this too may need to occur
slowly.

In 1999 I was working in a secondary school in Melbourne and I decided that I would
like to 'come out' to students. In order to do so I worked to call the meaning of my
body into question in an attempt to hint to the students that I might be gay so that some
time in the future I might disclose that fact without causing too many waves. It was my
intention to 'come out' slowly.

What I wasn't aware of as I was doing this however was that in throwing out hints
about my sexuality, by playing with gender, and then not answering the questions that
this provoked directly, that I had inadvertently moved into a realm that generates more
tension; I had moved into the realm of ambiguity (see Butler 1993: 139). During the
year I was constantly surprised at the seemingly endless curiosity and tension that my
refusal to confirm or deny my gayness provoked. I began thinking through this using
poststructural theory.

Uncertain Destinations: Being Lost

'Stan' (the names used in this section of the text are fictional) was a student at the inner-
city community school where I worked on a part-time basis in 1999. Founded in the
1970's, the school was influenced by neo-marxist and feminist political philosophy and
continues in that tradition. It is self consciously a school that seeks to be 'alternative'
and to offer an educative experience that is different, to students who feel that they too
are different.

Stan, is a 'challenging' student (as are many of the other students at the school), and
has been described by another teacher as: 'a student who works the room'. He has been
there, and done that, and doesn't hesitate to let you know it. You can imagine my
surprise then, when I had Stan literally hopping all over me, in a moment reminiscent
of a 5 year old waiting for Santa, on an excursion to a stormwater drain that runs the
length of the Tullamarine Tollway (which we were visiting as we were doing a unit on 'the environment'). How had I managed this? How had I constructed this activity so that Stan didn't offer his usual: 'This is shit', assessment of the activity?

I had managed this by 'camping' the excursion up. I had managed this by refusing to tell the class anything about where we were going or why we were going there. The only information that the students were given was that we were going somewhere, that they weren't to swear at anyone on the way, and that it would be something that they would always remember as one of the highlights of their years at school. The students were left in the dark, the destination was unknown, and this was a state of affairs that I had manipulated.

The unknown destination provoked a deluge of questions from all of the students in the class. A deluge of questions from students who, like Stan, were very difficult to impress or engage. The deluge of questions was an effect of students not knowing where we were going, an effect of students being unable to clearly anticipate a destination, it was perhaps an effect of students feeling a little 'lost'. The students were frustrated with my refusal to bring clarity to the situation but they were also surprisingly excited and tense. (The notion that the unknown - difference, contradiction, ambiguity, complexity - provokes tension is also central to this text).

I don't think that there is anything particularly inventive about the strategy of not pre-empting the destination of a particular excursion or meaning of a particular text. The work of teaching is very much about encouraging students to become active learners and this means supporting students to risk asking questions. What may be inventive, however, is how the practice of asking questions is positioned within this text as not only to do with the uncovering of knowledge but also to do with the construction of knowledge (these themes will be further explored in this section of the text).

**Aichhorn Through Britzman: On Being Lost**

'it has to do with considering the logic of the student and allowing this logic to guide the work of making education. Teachers might then see a great deal of their work as a problem of redirecting the address of anxiety (beginning with their own), as opposed to viewing the circulation of anxiety as an interruption of education. But in doing so, the teacher must become interested in embodying, purposefully, an ambivalent position, entertaining some promises, foreclosing others'. (Britzman 1998: 46)
Deborah Britzman, writing as a feminist, from a psychoanalytic perspective, considers the work of Aichhorn (Britzman 1998: 45-7). Aichhorn worked with young offenders and utilised psychoanalytic theories in an effort to reduce their tendencies to engage in behaviours such as fighting or stealing. Britzman reports that Aichhorn framed his work with young people from the perspective that they had lost their way.

Aichhorn interpreted the actions of the young people that he came into contact with as symptomatic of an experience of being lost (Britzman 1998: 45). He suggests that when these young people felt that they were lost, this provoked anxiety and that in order to reduce this anxiety, the young person would engage in behaviour that provided a sense of control, and the illusion of direction.

Britzman reports, that rather than work to reduce anxiety, by acting as an authority figure and devising strategies to assist the young person to stop engaging in anti-social behaviour, that Aichhorn, would incite anxiety through the 'symptom', 'until the symptom (could) no longer serve its purpose of achieving satisfaction' (Britzman 1998: 46) by masking the subject’s sense of being lost.

So, if a young person was seeing Aichhorn because of a problem with stealing, Aichhorn wouldn’t berate the young person for this but rather would encourage them to engage in the behaviour, so that the behaviour in question might no longer be able to serve the function of masking a young persons' feeling of being lost. Aichhorn refused to play the part of the authority figure in his dealings with young people, and instead insisted that the anxiety that was provoked by encouraging the young person to engage in certain behaviours be ‘addressed' (Britzman 1998: 46) back to the self, be addressed back to the young person.

Aichhorn suggests that young people embrace and acknowledge anxiety and then make some decisions in the face of it rather than avoid it by engaging in behaviour that is known, that is controllable and that offers the reward of reducing anxiety. Aichhorn suggests that they find their way, that they cease to be lost. He suggests that they find new ways of reducing anxiety that are not anti-social. Aichhorn also suggests by implication that the tension and discomfort that accompanies the feeling of being lost is the motivating force that drives one to attempt to cease being lost.

There are limits with Aichhorn’s work because as a psychoanalyst he individualises the source of certain behaviours. There may very well be people who steal to gain a sense of control over their lives but similarly there may also be many others who steal...
because they are poor. There are structural reasons as well as reasons located within individuals that account for why they might steal. While his ideas pose many ethical dilemmas, certain aspects of his work (when read and appropriated with a sociological bent) are of particular relevance to the concerns of LGB(T) young people in schools. Specifically, the aspects of Aichhorn's approach that are of interest are:

* His willingness to engage the subject in a process that involves acknowledging and embracing tension,

* His refusal to signpost a direction that the subject should take,

* And his willingness to provoke a situation that builds tension which requires that the subject make decisions in order to deal with this.

Aichhorn's ideas are very relevant to the task of attempting to think through approaches to the achievement of school cultures that are open to expressions of sexual diversity. The implications of his ideas for work around sexual diversity are that if difference provokes tension that there is a need to visit rather than run from such tense places, and further his approach suggests the importance of examining and reworking the discourses that support such tension in the first place. Following Aichhorn there is a need to acknowledge tension, to unpack it and to work through it if school cultures are to become truly open to sexual diversity. There is also a need to acknowledge the issues that tension signals and to locate these issues with the tense subject and with the context that the tense subject is inhabiting and not with the person who is positioned as being 'different' (for a related discussion see Nayak and Kehily 1997: 155).

People who are suspected of being lesbian, gay or bisexual can on occasion provoke tension in others. This tension (as has been explored in the introductory sections) is in part to do with the way that queer bodies rupture a heteroprivilegist framing of bodies that seeks to render all bodies heterosexual (known) by ensuring a clear distinction between gendered bodies. This tension is to do with the fragmented nature of subjectivity. This tension is also to do with the desire to render the sexual meaning and possibilities of bodies known. I would briefly like to outline and revisit the theoretical arguments that elaborate on such ideas.

A Brief Summary of why LGB(T) sexualities can provoke tension.
Sexuality is an attribute of subjectivity that is never glimpsed or done directly. It is always read or done through related discourses such as gender. Sexuality is therefore always in some senses hidden even as it is evident.

We read sexuality, which cannot be seen directly, through various discourses. Some of the most important discourses in this regard are discourses of gender. For example, if a subject does their gender in a particular way, we read them, deploying gender discourses embedded with heteroprivilegist values, as displaying, being or having a particular sexuality. If a young man is read via heteroprivilegist discourses of gender as 'effeminate' or a young woman as 'butch' we use this information to draw conclusions about their sexuality (see Nayak and Kehily 1997: 148).

The sexuality that we see and think that we recognize, on the bodies of those around us, while it is there, is always at the same time hidden, always implicated in another discourse, always never quite able to be seen. What we see when we see sexuality is hybridity.

Sexuality is never therefore able to be observed in isolation or in some pure untainted meta form. And as such, because it is not able to be seen directly, is an aspect of subjectivity that inhabits the realm of the irrational, the monster, the mysterious, the demonic or the divine. Sexuality is a force or will that can never be brought to closure within Western epistemological frameworks because 'it' is impossible to observe (see Foucault 1965; Jay 1994; Seidler 1989: 1-18).

Similarly, sexuality is an aspect of subjectivity that is done through cultural discourses such as gender. Sexuality is never done by itself. It is always done or achieved through and in concert with related discourses which are available to be taken up by the embodied subject (see Redman and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 165; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 1997: 268). We read and do our sexualities through discourses that are available to us. And, in the process of taking up subject positions made available to us by discourse, or accommodating the way that we are positioned as subjects by discourse, those same discourses become a deep part of the fabric of who we are (see Butler 1990).

The 'effeminate' young gay man and the 'butch' young dyke are doing their sexualities through available discourses of gender. And they do so because they feel that this is how they want to be, because it feels right for them and because they are aware that they can. Their genders and sexualities are achieved through each other, they are enmeshed, they are hybrid.
I would suggest that this hybridity, is part of the reason why bodies that move differently provoke tension. More generally, I would suggest that this highlights why it might be that in situations where people are uncertain about what they are observing, they are likely to be tense, or why it might be that in situations where they encounter behaviours that they don't recognize or that they are unfamiliar with that they are likely to feel tense. I would suggest that in part such tension is to do with an inability to render known that which is unseen and that which is signified by certain behaviours (Edelman 1994: 3-14).

The participants in this study in calling for anti-bullying and harassment policies, are wanting to be protected from abuse, but they are also wanting to claim their right to move differently through the world. They are wanting to claim the right to be different. Supporting their right to move differently will require the management of tension but will also, as indicated earlier, require that tension be embraced, acknowledged and worked through. Working with students, around the tension that different bodies can provoke, having theorized or thought through where such tension might come from is very necessary work. The section that follows will explore what that work might look like in a classroom.

Working With These Ideas Around the Body in the Classroom

Earlier in this section of this Chapter I wrote about a student called Stan. He was a member of a class that I taught called 'Investigations'. The members of the class were in Years 7 and 8 and aged between 13 and 14. 'Investigations' was a humanities/drama class. At the beginning of the year I asked the students what they might be interested in studying throughout the year. They suggested that they would like to consider environmental issues. The first half of the year we considered the effects that we have on the environment and the second half of the year we considered the effects that the environment has on us.

The lesson plan that follows was taught in the first month of the course. It aims to explore the word 'environment' and to introduce the notion that actions that impact on the environment are a result of choices that people make. I am trying to introduce here the idea that the environment that we have is the one that we have made.

The lesson is also an attempt to broaden the students' understanding of the concept of 'the environment'. Many students will write or speak about 'trees' and 'rivers' but fewer think outside of these areas. The lesson attempts this broadening by introducing
the idea that 'noise' is part of the environment that we move through. The theme of tension is also introduced here, in an attempt to draw out the links between tension and decision making.

As well as all of the above, the lesson also aims to raise questions around my gender and by implication my sexuality, in order that I might slowly 'come out' to students. As this is part of a drama-humanities course I am also wanting the students to engage in a 'Role Play'. The lesson plan that follows was prepared for a double lesson and while it attempts to do all of the above, here I will focus on it's objectives in relation to sexuality.

The Lesson Plan

* Year 7 and 8 'Investigations' 'Issue' Sheet

The other week I was in the shower at the gym and I was very tired. I had done a workout and was hot and sweaty. My friends Mic and Chris were there too. They were also hot and sweaty.

Anyway...While I was in the shower, just enjoying the water and feeling a little pleased with myself because I'd done such a fabulous workout a group of 15 year old guys invaded the change rooms...And invaded is certainly the right word...You should have heard the noise that that group were making...I've got a bit of a thing about people taking up all of the sound space in a place...I've got a bit of a thing about people assuming that they're the only ones that matter as far as noise is concerned...Anyway they were very loud...

I couldn't hear myself think and I couldn't hear what Chris was saying and I was annoyed because Chris is pretty funny at the best of times (although he does have his serious moments), and from the look on Mic's face it looked as though he had said something funny....

Anyway I called out to the young guys:

Put a sock in it...
You're giving me a **headache**

Chris and Mic said that I was getting old... The young guys quietened down (good) but I'm not sure that I handled the situation as well as I might have...

What do you think?
And what has noise in the showers got to do with an environmental issue anyway?

**Questions**

* Describe a time when you had an issue with someone.
* How did you resolve the issue?
* How did you work through the issue?
* What do you think working through an issue entails?
* Can you always work through an issue?
* Describe a time when you had an issue that you were not able to resolve.
* Describe a time when you had an issue that you didn't think that you'd be able to resolve but that you were able to resolve in the end.
* How did you feel when you were in the process of working through the issue?
* Did you feel tense or nervous?

**Task**

Role play 'an issue'

*

**Discussion of Lesson Plan**

Certain elements of this lesson are intended to provoke students to question (or foreground) the sexuality of the teacher. Specifically the elements are:

* That there are 3 men in a shower,
* The nakedness of the teacher and his friends,
* The suggestion that I have just done a 'fabulous' workout,
* The use of the words 'hot and sweaty',
* The whispered joke - indicating a degree of intimacy,
The fact that this scenario is offered as an autobiographical account and therefore offers a sense of permission to question aspects of the teachers life that are positioned as 'private'.

The six instances above are intended to entice students to read the text that is my body as gay (by playing with gender), or at least to generate a few questions in that regard. The objective of this exercise being to hint about my sexuality, to surf the tension that 'gayness' can provoke in a school and then eventually to 'come out' to students.

There are also other elements being explored here to do with contradiction and multiplicity. The lesson works with the idea that people are complex and are not easily labelled or bought to closure and students are confronted with this without any attempt on the part of the teacher during the lesson to clarify the situation. The devices deployed to play with such ideas are:

* Setting the scene in a gym where 'The Gym' is positioned by the students that are in this class as a fairly macho place and then introducing the idea of gay men (who are discursively positioned as not macho) being at the gym.

* Positioning 'Chris' in a contradictory fashion within the story - i.e. as funny and as serious.

* Positioning the teacher in a contradictory fashion in that he is simultaneously sure that the volume of the young men's voices are intrusive and also unsure about his response to the level of their voices.

* Offering a multiple positioning of the teacher via the story as the person who is the teacher that they know and also as a person who has a life outside of the classroom that they do not have access to.

This lesson, as anticipated, generated many questions about my sexuality but, as indicated earlier, I had decided not to respond to such questions immediately. My refusal to confirm or deny whether or not I was gay provoked a degree of tension. At times enough tension to call a student back after class. While my sexuality was not the only focus for the students it was certainly of more interest than any other aspect of my 'private life' and was the main issue that students would ask about in 'private'
conversation during yard duty and such. Having said that however, students were usually far too busy organizing and negotiating their own lives to be overly concerned with or interested in mine.

As the year progressed, and their questions persisted, it became clear to me that the tension that I had managed to generate was an effect of ambiguity. Ambiguity around my sexuality which I had provoked by playing with gender (see also Epstein and Johnson 1998: 124-5). It became clear to me that if schools were ever to become better places for same-sex attracted young people that they would need to take on board the linkages between gender and sexuality and the ways that gender and sexuality regulate each other. It also became clear to me, that the strategy of requiring students to own their tension and the strategy of requiring students to find their own way through this tension was necessary if schools were ever to become better places for same-sex attracted young people. Encountering tension is a necessary part of the long haul that is constructing classroom and other school spaces that are of difference.

Further, my experience demonstrates that generating questions around sexuality has the effect of opening up a space where discussion can take place, particularly where young people have a good working relationship with a teacher and feel that they have permission to ask such questions. Opening up such spaces in schools, opening up conversational spaces where 'difficult' issues or questions can be discussed, while this can be uncomfortable, is crucial if LGB(T) young people are to be able to access support should they need it and crucial if 'other' students are to become more comfortable around difference and if they are to be supported to work through the tension that difference can generate.

Working towards being openly LGB(T) in a school, generating the impression that you might be, or projecting a degree of sexual ambiguity is important, not in the sense that it offers young people a 'role model' but because in doing so conversational spaces are opened up and within such spaces, within such tense spaces, the possibility of supporting young people as they encounter difference becomes a possibility.

**Extending the Idea**

I have discussed this section of the text with a number of people (Helen Cahill, Peter Dwyer, Mic Emslie, Warrick Glynn, Ray Misson, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, Johanna Wyn) and it has also been the basis of a number of workshops and presentations. Often the response to it has been: 'Do you think that this type of approach would be possible
in all schools?’ or ‘I like this idea and I can see where you are coming from but I wouldn’t be prepared to do this myself.

I agree that the approach outlined might not be possible to attempt in all school settings. And as the writer of this text, and as the teacher who put this approach 'to the test' in a secondary school, I am not even sure that I would be prepared to render my body undecided in all schools, or that I would have the patience and energy to work through the tension that this approach demands again, but I am aware that this is nevertheless, where I need to set my sights.

This is work that should not be attempted in isolation. Queering the text that is the body of the teacher will generate tension and resistance and individuals who engage in such work need to be fully supported through that tension. They also need to be continually reminded that the work that they are taking on is about challenging structural factors and that while there are gains that individuals can make that these are limited. There is a very real danger, in outlining an approach where the discussion is anchored around one body, or one experience, that the issue can be individualized. This is not the intention here.

I have intentionally used the word 'approach' in the preceding paragraphs. For while it may be difficult to render my body undecided again and again (remembering that the focus here is on bodies) such ideas are applicable to other types of texts. Young people can be introduced to 'embodied' characters in written texts that are complex and that are multidimensional. Young people in classrooms can encounter difference and 'undecideability' (Garber 1993) in many guises. They can come into contact with characters in texts that they simultaneously like and dislike, that they can’t easily categorize. Young people can be given opportunities to experience the tension that an encounter with ambiguity can provoke and they can also begin to see that tension signals the need for work. The text that is the body of the teacher (and I do want to stress 'the body' here) is an important site to consider but consciously working to open up this text also suggests the importance of working in similar ways in order to open up the many other texts that students come into contact with in the classroom or within school cultures (see Gilbert and Taylor 1991: 144-51, particularly 150-1; Martino 1994: 46-7; Pallotta-Chiarolli 1994: 97-99, 109). Consciously working to complicate texts (be they bodies or written texts) is a strategy that can be incorporated into teaching in order to generate questions, and to nurture the construction of classroom cultures that are conducive to the conversation that questions generate.
The notion of fostering 'conversational spaces' within classrooms echoes Britzman's consideration of 'dialogic relations' (Britzman 1995: 163). To explain this concept Britzman suggests thinking about the act of reading as being about a dialogue or conversation between the reader and the text (see also Barthes 1990). Britzman positions reading as being about a relationship between the text and the reader and it is within this relationship (to a degree), that the meaning of the text is constructed. She suggests that such a framing of learning, as a relational dialogic process, where questions provoke discussion, and generate meanings, should guide the work of teachers.

Teachers have always encouraged dialogue, have always encouraged young people to ask questions, and so perhaps some readers of this text may respond to the call to encourage such dialogue with: 'Tell us something we don't know' or, 'But we do this already'. The poststructural notion of dialogic relations or conversational spaces however, departs from a structuralist call for young people to be supported to ask questions, in a number of respects.

Traditionally, discussion, or the asking of questions, within a classroom context, has aimed at the uncovering of knowledge. Students have been guided by teachers towards an end point, where that end point has often been positioned as 'the truth' of a given situation. The aim of dialogue within a classroom has been to arrive at a pre-determined destination known by the teacher.

The dialogic relation that Britzman proposes is substantially different in aim and effect. Britzman writes from within a framework that decentres knowledge. Knowledge is understood to be socially constructed within cultural contexts. The dialogic relations that Britzman discusses are not to do with the uncovering of 'truth', but rather are concerned about relations of learning (social practices) within classrooms, where certain knowledges, or discourses (such as subject content) are constructed. The dialogic relations that Britzman proposes, are not therefore to do with the uncovering of knowledges but rather are about the conditions that govern the shared endeavour that is the production of knowledges. Knowledges that are understood to be fluid, open-ended and decentred, and that are in turn an effect of social practices, such as the asking of questions, enacted by embodied subjects.

We need to work to construct classroom and school spaces that are supportive of such enquiry and where young people feel safe enough to experience being lost in a text or in an idea. We need to work to construct classroom and school spaces that nurture enquiry and that gently provoke students to risk asking complex and at times unanswerable
questions. We need to construct classroom spaces that acknowledge that the cost and risk of chasing answers to difficult questions is change. We need to construct classroom spaces that acknowledge that the cost and risk of chasing answers to difficult questions is the threat or the possibility of becoming different.

And in order for this to happen we need to think about how our classrooms are organized, how we foster co-operative learning and how as teachers we need to view power as an expansive potential to be shared, rather than as a possession to be secured (for democratic teacher-student relations see Mac an Ghaill 1992: 224-7, 231; 1994: 180; Mills 1996: 319). We need to consider all of these issues if schools are indeed to become better places for all students but particularly for LGB(T) young people and for other students who are positioned as 'different'.

A Closing Statement - Ambiguity Provokes Clarity

Often the solution to a subjects' experience of a tension provoked by an encounter with the ambiguity or difference of another does not rest with that other becoming clear, does not rest with that other taking on the responsibility of becoming different. Often the solution rests with the subject working through confusion, with the subject becoming clear, with the subject choosing to become different.

The encounter with the tension that ambiguity can provoke is also sometimes paradoxically the catalyst that facilitates the achievement of a provisional clarity. And, in this there is an echo of the pedagogical paradox that it is only in embracing the tension of ignorance, that it is only in spaces that are tense and confusing, in spaces that are unknown, that questions can be asked and that the desire to work towards the clarity of new, albeit partial and provisional understandings, can take place.
Bridget Riley's 'Blaze 4' is one of my favourite paintings. I've never seen the original, but I plan to. It resonates with themes that are evident throughout the text. It is impossible to focus on. It complicates the act of seeing. The idea that a painter, could make a work that can't be seen, is captivating and clever. 'Blaze 4' cannot be brought to closure. 'Blaze 4' does not resolve. It is poetic and seductive.
When I first saw Durer's 'The bath house' I was convinced that the two characters in the foreground were 'gay'. Empty cups and fruit and a lot of intense eye contact. Beyond the image of the bathhouse another figure is depicted. He or she watches what goes on inside.
Bridget Riley's 'Opening' is an image of a diamond inside a square. It also unsettles the eye. At times the diamond seems bordered or flattened or somehow constrained by the square that surrounds it and at other times it appears to hover and move slightly above it. It seems to shift from one position to the another. The diamond in the image moves. It lifts. The image seems generative.
The smoking woman, in Julian Kingma’s photograph, renders visible that which is usually not.
Bridget Riley's 'Streak 2' unsettles the eye, but also seems to move. It pulsates on the page (even though it is only reproduced in detail and in black and white at that). This is a two dimensional, seemingly fixed image that flows.

Dan Gawthrop is wickedly camp. He doesn't pose he struts. He is playfully provocative and is not asking for permission to be so. Dan Gawthrop waves hello, smiles, stares straight at us, and challenges the viewer to 'deal with it'.
Bibliography


Duggan, L. (1994), Queering the State, Social Text, Summer, 1-14.


Hillier, L. and Harrison, L. (under review), *Discovering the Fault Lines: same-sex attracted young people, resistance and change*.


25 March, 1996

Dr J Wyn and Dr P Dwyer
Youth Research Centre
Department of Education Policy and Management

Dear Dr Wyn and Dr Dwyer

Thank you for your letter addressing the concerns of the Sub-Committee regarding this project and the copy of the revised application form. Members found this information most helpful.

I am pleased to advise that at the 14 March 1996 meeting of the Arts and Education Human Ethics Sub-Committee the project "The educational experiences and outcomes of lesbian and gay adolescents" (Wyn/Dwyer/Crowhurst) was given final approval subject to the following:

that the section on Informed Consent/Assent in the Information to Student sheet as be amended, as the first and third paragraphs are contradictory. It was suggested that the word "normally" could be inserted into the first sentence i.e. "The University normally requires...", and that the phrase "can only proceed if there is" could be replaced by "should have".

Please forward a copy of the amendment sections to this office.

A copy of the approved application form is attached.

Please be aware that the Human Research Ethics Committee requires all researchers to submit an annual report on each of their projects at the end of every year.

On behalf of the Sub-Committee I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Murphy
Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics

enc

cc: Head of Department
INTERVIEW FOCUS SHEET

I will be using a research technique called the 'Semi-Structured Interview' to access your stories. The 'semi-structured interview' is a guided conversation focusing on a few specific areas but which doesn’t attempt to limit what you might want to say.

The areas that I think might be interesting to talk about are things such as:

1. **Subject Information**: Without using your real name or giving any obvious hints that might allow someone to guess who you are:
   1. How would you describe yourself in terms of such things as Age; Class; Gender; Ethnicity; Religion; Sexuality?
   2. What type of school do you attend? Could you describe it briefly without mentioning it's name? Is it a Private or a Public school? Is it a religious school?

2. **Curriculum**: an example of a topic that you might want to discuss might be:
   1. Do any of the subjects that you study include content that touches on gay or lesbian experience?
   2. How does your school community acknowledge gay and lesbian students?

3. **Peers**: If you can generalize about the attitudes of other students:
   1. What feelings do you have about the ways that they think about lesbian or gay students or adolescents?
   2. Are you aware of any other lesbian or gay students at your school?
   3. Would you think it would be a good idea to 'come out' at school?

4. **Teachers**: I'm interested in some comments about your teachers:
   1. What are the attitudes of your teachers like?
   2. How have you arrived at that conclusion?
   3. Are all of your teachers similar in their views?
   4. Are some teachers better than others?
   5. Would you ever come out to a teacher?
5 Administration: I'm interested in some thoughts about your school administration:
1/ What is the Administration like at your school?
2/ Are you aware of any attitudes that the Administration had regarding lesbian or gay sexualities?
3/ How are you aware of these attitudes? Remember not to mention the name of the school that you attended.

6 Improvement:
1/ Do you think that lesbian and gay students need a better school experience? If so:
2/ What do you think might be done to improve the experience of lesbian and gay students in Secondary Schools?

7 General Statement:
1/ Overall how do you feel about the way you have been treated as a lesbian or gay student by the school that you attend? Remember to try to avoid mentioning any specifics as it's important to guard your anonymity.

When we arrange the interview I will give you a question sheet identical to the one outlined above. This will be used to guide the discussion but you are free to alter the questions or add to them as you see fit.
Author/s: 
Crowhurst, Michael

Title: 
Working through tension: a response to the concerns of lesbian, gay and bisexual secondary school students

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