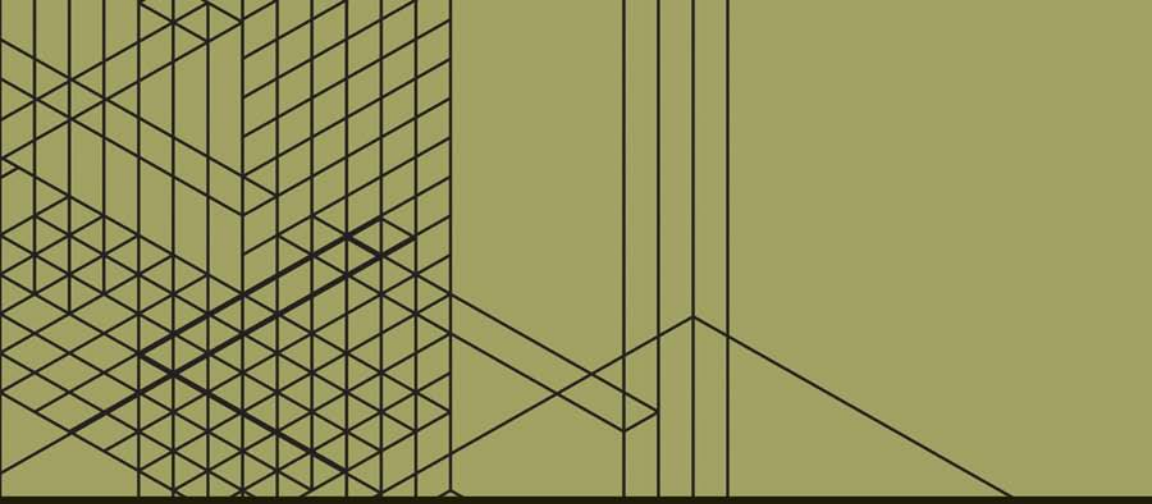
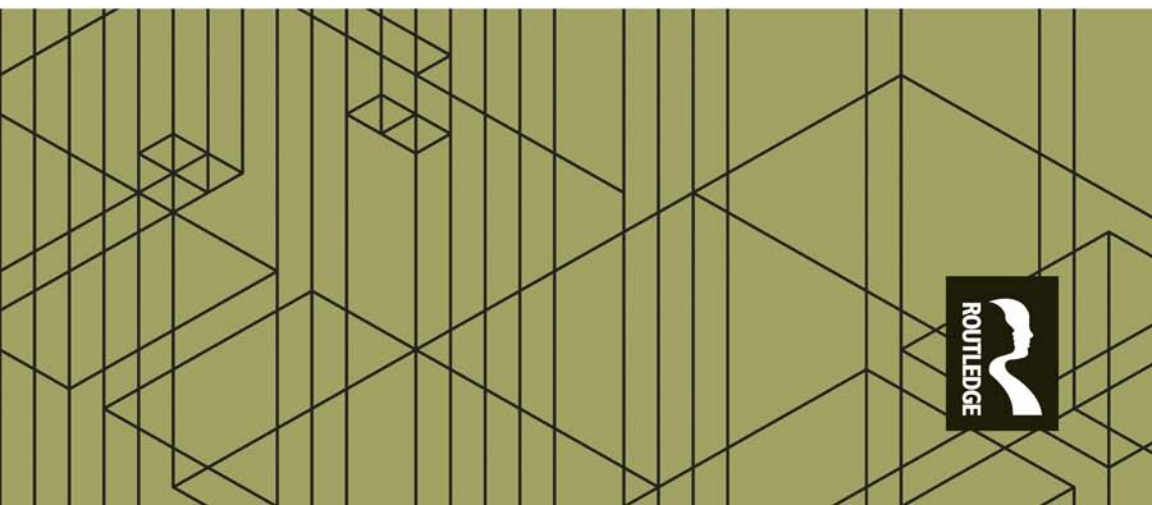


Routledge Critical Studies in Gender and Sexuality in Education

GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY IN A CULTURE OF LIMITATION

STUDENT AND TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOLS

Tania Ferfolja and Jacqueline Ullman



Gender and Sexuality Diversity in a Culture of Limitation

Gender and Sexuality Diversity in a Culture of Limitation provides an outstanding and insightful critique of the ways that contemporary education is impacted by a range of political, social and cultural influences that inform the approaches that schools take in relation to gender and sexuality diversity.

By applying feminist poststructural and Foucauldian frameworks, the book examines the ongoing impact of broader socio-cultural discourse on the lives of gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers. Beginning with an overview of the impact of how a culture of limitation is realised in Australia, the focus moves beyond this context to examine state and federal policies from comparable societies in countries including the US and the UK and their effect on the production of knowledges and what's permissible to include in educational curriculum. This research-driven book thus provides a comparative, international overview of the current state of gender and sexuality diversity in schools, and convincingly demonstrates that despite some empowerment of gender and sexuality diverse individuals, silencing and marginalisation remain powerful forces.

This book will be of great interest to graduate and postgraduate students, academics, professionals and policy makers interested in the field of gender and sexuality in education. It is essential reading for those involved in pre-service and in-service teacher education, diversity education, the sociology of education, as well as education more generally.

Tania Ferfolja is Associate Professor in the School of Education at Western Sydney University, Australia, and a senior researcher in the Centre for Educational Research.

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Gender and Sexuality Diversity in a Culture of Limitation

Student and Teacher Experiences in Schools

Tania Ferfolja and Jacqueline Ullman

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This book is dedicated to all the gender and sexuality diverse young people who are trapped within systems that marginalise them, including schools, and to those we have lost in the struggle.

Contents

Preface

We both started our careers as secondary school teachers, intent on creating equitable learning environments and desirous to make a difference in the lives of young people in the less privileged schools in which we were employed. Our schools, despite their relative poverty, were places of vibrancy with many dedicated teachers, serving families who wanted the best for their children; however, given the silences surrounding gender norms and the hidden curriculum of hetero/cisnormativity, our schools were also hotbeds of heterosexism, cisgenderism, homophobia and transphobia. This was in the 1990s. Working in two different countries, Australia and the United States, our personal conversations since then, reflecting on our early years as teachers, illustrate how students and teachers who identified, or were labelled as, gender and sexuality diverse, were so similarly treated in completely separate parts of the world. Discrimination was both personalised and systemic.

Many years on, both of us now immersed in research in the field of gender and sexuality diversity in educational spaces, we know that in the second half of the second decade of the 21st century, many of the marginalising forces that were at play then in relation to gender and sexuality diversity still exist in schools. These manifest in different guises, but inequity is still clearly apparent; gender and sexuality diverse young people and their families are often on the fringes of school communities and gender and sexuality diverse teachers are still compelled to "manage" their identities in many school workplaces despite more socially progressive changes in the broader socio-cultural milieu. As pre-service teacher educators, we are regularly faced with the confusion of novice teachers who feel unsure about how to create an inclusive classroom for gender and sexuality diverse students and their families. Our pre-service teachers are often stymied by anxiety and fear about what they can do, immersed as they are in a culture that, on the one hand, increasingly accepts gender and sexuality diversity but, on the other, continues to perpetuate understandings about these communities as taboo knowledge for young people.

These fears and what occurs in schools in relation to gender and sexuality diversity are propagated by what we term a *culture of limitation*. Although histories of discrimination and their legacies continue to contribute to discourses that marginalise, we believe that a culture of limitation maintains inequities in the everyday lives of gender and sexuality diverse people. To explore its operations, we variously draw on the work of other academics and writers that have sought to document the sociopolitical and cultural terrain in which gender and sexuality diverse people exist. We know this landscape is messy, uneven, contextual, historically contingent and globally influenced and that, even as some forces seek to silence, dominate and marginalise, a powerful resistance is apparent and enormous gains have been made

In this book we grapple with what is occurring in schools in relation to gender and sexuality diversity inclusion by drawing on our combined research of over 30 years investigating the experiences of teachers, students and parents, while performing policy and curriculum analyses. We draw on large-scale quantitative studies, our own and those of others, and report from our qualitative research to provide more nuanced understandings of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities in education; we incorporate incidences and events that have occurred in the broader social context which, we argue, have historically influenced, and continue to influence, education and what can be spoken of in schools. Much of our research has been conducted in the Australian state of New South Wales, and thus, our discussion often reflects this history of research; however, in light of broader work in the field we know that the examples and experiences on which we draw similarly exist in other Australian states, as well as other parts of the world.

While the primary aim of this book is to "connect the dots" between a culture of limitation which surrounds gender and sexuality diversity, the silencing and marginalisation of gender and sexuality diversity in schools, and related social and wellbeing outcomes for members of the school community, we, nevertheless, remain optimistic for a more inclusive and affirming future. Our explorations of locations where state/federal school policies clearly articulate gender and sexuality diversity and where accountability for what happens in the classroom appears to be embedded in reforms, offer room for hope and evidence a resistance to a limiting, silencing culture.

We hope that you find this book useful in your own endeavours to enable recognition of gender and sexuality diversity in schools and facilitate the creation of equitable school environments as places of learning for children, workplaces for educators and trust for families.

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the generosity of the students, teachers and parents and caregivers who have, over many years, entrusted their experiences of education with us. We hope this book does justice to your stories which in and of themselves are a form of activism.

We'd like to thank Wayne Martino for inviting us to contribute to this important series. We still recall the first time we first discussed the potential for this book in a small bar in Newtown, NSW. Little did we know about the journey that we would embark upon in the production of this manuscript. We'd also like to thank Debbie Ollis for her support of our work generally and for sharing her knowledge and expertise in this project in the Foreword.

We'd also like to acknowledge the patience and support of our partners, families, friends and non-human companions during this time, and thank each other for the mutual support, critique, discussion and cocktails we have shared throughout the process. We'd also like to acknowledge TFB—without you, we don't know where we'd be now but likely we would be sunning ourselves on a beach in Bali somewhere.

If you are reading this book, we'd like to thank you for your interest in the lives of gender and sexuality diverse people; it is people like you who help change the world for the better.

We would like to thank Routledge for their interest in this publication and also the *Australian Journal for Teacher Education*, for the copyright permission to reprint portions of the following article: Ullman, J., & Ferfolja, T. (2016). The Elephant in the (Class)Room: Parental Perceptions of LGBTQ-inclusivity in K-12 Educational Contexts. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *41*(10), 15–29. Portions of Ullman, J. (2015a). *Free2Be?: Exploring the schooling experiences of Australia's sexuality and gender diverse secondary school students*. Penrith, NSW: Centre for Educational Research, School of Education, Western Sydney University, have also been reprinted here.

Foreword

The Morrison government's introduction of a "Religious Discrimination Bill" (2019) is a timely reminder of the importance of Tania Ferfolja's and Jacqueline Ullman's new book. *Gender and Sexuality Diversity in a Culture of Limitation: Student and Teacher Experiences in Schools* is a thorough exploration of gender and sexuality diversity in Australian schools, in the context of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, characteristic of the current Morrison Bill being proposed for introduction in 2020. Drawing on current Australian and international research, this timely resource raises questions about the experience of gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers in schools and some of the challenges Australia faces in this realm as we enter a new decade. It is a distressing reminder of how the inclusive practices instigated in the late 1990s and early 2000s can be dismantled so readily.

Ferfolja and Ullman have provided an important contextual piece, a rich and challenging historical journey through some of the social, cultural and legal barriers for gender and sexuality diverse individuals. They begin by contextualising this through a gender equity lens that illustrates the way, what they call a "culture of limitation", plays out in relation to gender in a so-called progressive society. This enables the reader to scaffold the impact of feminism and feminist understandings of gender, normativity and power on the way that gender and sexuality diversity has been understood and discriminated against in education. This produces a logical cultural backdrop to the plight of gender and sexuality diverse people, by connecting with issues of marriage equality and gender-based violence as a means of illustrating the foundational framework. They provide an engaging and concise summary of the situation for women in Australia in the context of the culture of limitation. The reference to Julia Gillard's misogyny speech in 2017 is an excellent way to illustrate how Australia's "institutionalised misogyny and rampant sexism was on display for the world to witness" (p. 15).

The central theme running throughout the book is that "although there exists in Australia a 'culture of limitation' that manifests in a range of inequities" (p. 13) for students, teachers, families, school communities,

curriculum and policy, "including those that produce knowledges that discriminate against and marginalise people" (p. 13), there is hope of change. They argue that the culture of limitation can and must be resisted and challenged. Drawing on the work of Nicholas (2019), Wailing (2017) and Bellanta (2016), they illustrate the way imbedded cultural understandings related to colonialism, race, heteronormativity and gender function as a limitation to equality and inclusion.

This is an important book for policy makers, practitioners and researchers interested in the history of, and inclusive practice around, gender and sexuality diversity in schools. Chapter 2 details the implications of the culture of limitation on the reality of school-based education, education more broadly and the history of why we are where we are in 2020, providing a window into the ways that moral panic has and continues to play out in Australia, as well as within the UK and the US. Drawing on examples of the media frenzies created around educationally inspired resources such as *Play School* and the award-winning documentary *Gayby Baby*, Ferfolja and Ullman provide important illustrations of how moral panic can be intrinsically linked to education, curriculum and schools through the culture of limitation and the impact this has on teachers' willingness to address gender and sexuality diversity inclusively. The analysis they provide of the dismantling of the *Safe Schools* initiative in New South Wales (NSW) is an illuminating example of how Australia has in fact gone backwards in the agency to build inclusion in this area. Two decades ago, when I was developing policy and resources that were inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity (see *Talking Sexual Health* 1999 and *Catching On* 2004), the state of New South Wales was a leader in the field. The NSW education department developed one of the first inclusive resources (*Mates*), and commissioned state-wide workshops for departmental employees in education and health who then supported schools to implement the *Talking Sexual Health* (2001) curriculum resources. The authors' exploration of this history and shifts within NSW importantly highlights the seminal work that Lynne Hillier, Lyn Harrison and the team at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society undertook 20 years ago when they first documented the experience of gender and sexuality diverse students in Australian schools (1998). Their work was instrumental in the, then, Commonwealth government funding a national framework, resources and professional development for teachers to address the discrimination and abuse taking place in the apparently "safe and supportive" environment of schooling.

Ferfolja and Ullman examine the Australian and international data on the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students and school communities in Chapter 3. This chapter provides an extensive and valuable overview of the empirical evidence in relation to the experience of gender and sexuality diverse students in Australian schools. Both authors have

extensive knowledge of the research and field, having conducted research in the field and contributed to key conversations on these topics—both academic and social—over the past 20 years. Although there is proof of positive change for gender and sexuality diverse people and families in Australia, demonstrated recently by the marriage equality vote, the data presented in this chapter is very confronting. For, although many of us have been actively working to address the level of abuse and discrimination for gender and sexuality diverse students, teachers and communities for the past two decades, little seems to have changed in the level of discrimination, abuse and invisibility experienced by students and imbedded in practices.

The authors cite one exception to this and provide a detailed picture of the experience in the state of Victoria. It tells the story of hope in which some positive change can occur when an education department has a long history of sexuality education policy that is inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity; where government agencies that support schools, universities and non-government organisations work together with a common commitment and purpose; and where together they are willing to confront and counter related moral panics in the media. The overview and research in this chapter is invaluable to those wanting a history of the field and a clear picture of the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse young people and for those researching in schools, developing resources, programs and professional learning and training in gender and sexuality diversity.

The authors provide an excellent critique of the ways that current bullying programs that purport to address gender and sexuality diversity can inadvertently contribute to further marginalisation. They draw on the work of Jessica Ringrose and Elizabeth Payne, among others, who have actively challenged mainstream bullying practitioners and policy makers by exposing and challenging the focus in these programs on pathologising the individual victim and/or bully. Such programs often fail to use the language of gender and sexuality diversity, thereby rendering it invisible. Moreover, Ferfolja and Ullman point to the successes of education programs that work by improving students' knowledge of gender and sexuality as a social and cultural phenomenon rather than focusing solely on the individual's experience of bullying. Examples of this can be found in a number of Victorian state sexuality education resources, including the most recent respectful relationships resources (*Building Respectful Relationships*, 2016). The curriculum resource *All of Us* developed by the Safe Schools Coalition in Victoria is another example of this approach and all Victorian secondary schools have access to it. Anecdotal research indicates that *All of Us* is well-used by schools and that its approach to considering gender and sexuality diversity-related bullying promotes safer school climates; nevertheless, it has been vilified by politicians and

conservative academics for directly addressing and affirming this area of social diversity.

Very little is written about the experience of teachers and how and why they provide (or fail to provide) inclusive approaches to gender and sexuality diversity in schools. What we do know is health teachers lack confidence, fear they are not authorised to positively educate about gender and sexuality diversity and worry about the consequences from their employers and families within their communities. These issues are intensified for teachers who identify as gender and sexuality diverse, who have the additional challenge of possible discrimination and abuse based on their diversity. In Chapter 4, the authors highlight the impact of heteronormativity and homonormativity on teachers' ability or willingness to educate and work openly to address gender and sexuality diversity. They point out that education around gender and sexuality diversity is emotional work and becomes even more challenging when personal and professional lives interlink. They point to the tension for many gender and sexuality teachers about being open while facing the reality of potential discrimination, abuse and, for some, concerns about job security.

This story is well-timed as the Australian educational community grapples with the implications, contradictions and discrimination that gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers may experience as a result of the potential introduction of a pending religious discrimination bill. This could once again put young people and teachers back in the closet and, thus, must be challenged and fought. Tania Ferfolja and Jacqueline Ullman, however, give us hope by providing examples of research, policy and activism that is occurring globally. As such, the book will be a welcomed and important contribution to the field.

This important book is a comprehensive overview of the issues pertinent to gender and sexuality diversity in school-based education. It is a must read for pre-service teacher education programs in health, sexuality education and student wellbeing. It provides the latest research on the experience of gender and sexuality diverse students, teachers, curriculum and policy and will be of great use to social scientists, academics and researchers in the field. The central theme around the impact of a culture of limitation provides a clear framework for practitioners to broaden their understandings of the complex historical and cultural contexts which enable discrimination and abuse to continue despite the fact that 20 years of research, curriculum development and broader inclusive polices and laws have enshrined support and inclusion for those who are gender and sexuality diverse. The book questions the structures and processes for recognising and addressing continued abuse and discrimination, providing a compelling argument for a human rights framework in the field of education.

Debbie Ollis

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1 Australia and a Culture of Limitation for Gender and Sexuality Diversity

Introduction

Australia, historically, has been positioned as an egalitarian society, where resources and opportunities are readily available to all and where success can be achieved through hard work. This image of Australia as a socially progressive nation where democratic freedoms support a culture of enabling and equity is, to a degree, reflected in reality. Moreover, Australia's standard of living is one of the highest in the world. It ranks in the upper echelons in terms of civic engagement, wealth and income, environment, health, housing, employment, education, personal wellbeing and security and social relations (OECD, n.d.) and is ranked ninth in the world as a full democracy (ABC News, 2019). Australia demonstrates a "solid record of protecting civil and political rights, with robust institutions and a vibrant press and civil society that act as a check on government power" (Human Rights Watch, 2016). It is also a country that has managed the relatively successful integration of a multicultural, multi-ethnic population. Indeed, Australia has a lot to boast about.

Yet, there is potential for the further development of a truly ethical nation that supports people and planet. Prejudice and discrimination towards minority groups is apparent, exacerbated through problematic discourses positioning some as Other. There exists what we have loosely termed, and what we shall go on to describe in this book, a culture of limitation that perpetuates prejudices and where many who are privileged have reconstituted their experiences within counter-discourses of disadvantage. For example, a history of racism is evident despite the myth of a "Fair go for all" and Australia as the "Lucky Country", and "ideas and values associated with these myths . . . continue to resonate with Australians" (Moran, 2011, p. 2157). Racism was apparent from the earliest interactions of the British "colonisers" with Aboriginal people's culture and through the ensuing colonial policies of protectionism,

dispossession and genocide (de Plevitz, 2007). In fact, many Aboriginal peoples still live in substandard accommodation in underserviced communities (Lowell et al., 2018; Zufferey & Parkes, 2019), have lower rates of educational attendance and school completion, higher rates of poor health and a reduced lifespan compared to non-Aboriginal people (Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). The government's tardiness in addressing issues related to Aboriginal peoples' rights was recently criticised by Human Rights Watch (2016).

Racism is woven in the nation's historical settler colony and its geographic status as an island continent, which, arguably, has nurtured particular Othering discourses to arise. This is distinctly visible through the government's bi-partisan practice of the mandatory processing and offshore detention of asylum seekers along with a refusal to permit resettlement in Australia; a policy that has gained some popularity through racist rhetoric, while simultaneously tarnishing Australia's human rights record and drawing international condemnation of the practice (Tazreiter, 2017). There is resentment of those who are disadvantaged and who are perceived as not "contributing" adequately to the nation or being self-supportive.

Gender and sexuality diverse individuals have also been Othered and have been, historically, a discrimination target. It is true considerable activism and education over the past 40 years have enabled gender and sexuality diverse communities to become more mainstream and socially acceptable. As Reynolds points out, "the differences between gay and straight have narrowed" (2013, p. 159; Lea, De Wit, & Reynolds, 2015). In fact, researchers talk of a "post-gay" era, where parity with heterosexuals, legally, socially and institutionally, has become a growing reality and where younger people perceive their sexual subjectivity as more fluid and as less central to their identity (Lea et al., 2015). However, it must be pointed out, this progress has not been uni-directional and "change at both an individual and social level is uneven", often experiencing socio-cultural and political resistance (Reynolds & Robinson, 2016, p. 163). In fact, Australia is somewhat conflicted and contradictory when it comes to gender and sexuality diverse[1] subjectivities. Legacies of prejudice and discrimination simmer in pockets of the broader population under a veneer of social acceptance and public celebration. Thus, gender and sexuality diverse individuals and communities remain convenient "objects of loathing" (Brown, 2006, p. 697) for certain groups, organisations and movements (Gray & Nicholas, 2019) who continue to use them for wedge-politicking, self-aggrandisement and as pawns to further particular agendas (Robinson, 2008; Shannon & Smith, 2017).

It can be argued such derision of difference is a feature of the intersections of a global intensification of neoconservative and neoliberal discourse—an uneasy alliance due to their inherently conflicting positions but, nevertheless, an alliance which has proved productive in various quarters (Apple, 2006; Brown, 2006). These rationalities are often entwined with discourses of fundamentalist religion[2] as well as an increase in populism and nationalism (Browne & Nash, 2017). Despite this global trend, individual countries demonstrate their own essence of resistance to equity in relation to diversity. In Australia, for instance, there exists a particular brand of masculinity historically cultivated through the nation's penal origins, as well as a heteropatriarchal and "settler colonial culture" (Gray & Nicholas, 2019, p. 278) enabling misogyny, entitlement and fear of difference to operate and which, in the main, remains accepted and unquestioned by the broader populace as something inherent to the culture and uniquely Australian.

The intersections of these kinds of phenomena create what we have loosely termed in this book as a "culture of limitation". This culture of limitation is a messy plethora of perspectives, beliefs and attitudes which come together at various points and contexts where they thwart the country's development towards becoming a more progressive and equitable society. In many ways, as shall be shown, a culture of limitation subjugates diverse peoples and renders precarious the hard-won gains towards equity, particularly by sexuality and gender-diverse communities and their allies.

Resistance towards gender and sexuality diversity inclusion is, arguably, nowhere more pronounced in Australia than in the education of young people. In this book, starting in Chapter 2, we explore how the inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse individuals and related school-based curriculum content is constructed as contentious and inappropriate for children and youth, fuelling public hysteria and debate which reflects experiences of such inclusionary endeavours elsewhere in the world. We highlight an opportunistic and relentless surveillance and punishment (Foucault, 1978), silencing and in/visibilising metered out through hyperbole, aggressive pursuit and political interventions undertaken, in the main, by individuals, groups and organisations who perpetuate, or are positioned within, a culture of limitation. We argue these actions result in a general belief by many teachers, school administrators and educational bureaucrats that addressing gender and sexuality diversity with children and young people is inappropriate and likely to result in parental, community and media-fuelled backlash, threatening the reputation of schools and the credibility and employment stability of teachers.

These beliefs and public displays of animosity have implications for the lives of gender and sexuality diverse people, including students and teachers in schools, whose experiences are briefly explored in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. As such, the culture of limitation impacts on the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in myriad ways, undermining equitable curriculum development, thwarting potential progressive pedagogies, policies and practices, and constructing impediments for student learning and teachers' employment experiences. For those who are gender and sexuality diverse, or questioning their identity, this has well-researched ramifications for health and wellbeing, academic progress, as well as social, personal and/or professional outcomes among other things (Silenzio, Pena, Duberstein, Cerel, & Knox, 2007; Ullman, 2015).

Despite the impact of a culture of limitation on school inclusion of gender and sexuality-related content and subjectivities in Australia and indeed across other similar landscapes internationally, resistance to cissexism, heterosexism and related discriminations is growing in an endeavour to produce a more educated and socially harmonious world. Both in Australia and internationally, there exist political leaders, educators, parents,[3] students and others, who recognise such knowledge and understanding is critical and who are agitating for change. Thus, there are pockets of activity where affirming programs and approaches are being developed, trialled and implemented in schools. Although there is often a fear by teachers and schools of parental/caregiver and community retribution if gender and sexuality diversity is broached in the classroom (DePalma & Jennett, 2013; Ollis, Harrison, & Maharaj, 2013; Smith et al., 2011), simultaneously many parents/caregivers welcome such inclusions in their child's education; these are often the voices who are overwhelmed by a culture of limitation. The last chapter of this book provides a space for these often-silenced parent voices and details some of the progressive Australian and international educational contexts where this work is being developed and implemented despite the presence of a culture of limitation in situ.

This chapter begins with an exploration of how we see a culture of limitation. We then detail the theoretical perspectives on which this book is based utilising feminist poststructural and Foucauldian understandings of discourse, power, knowledge, subjectivity and agency. These concepts are used to illustrate how limitations are manifested in Australia broadly in relation to gender, and, then, more specifically in relation to gender and sexuality diversities, and within a complex socio-political and cultural milieu. Although in many ways a culture of limitation is present across other nations to which we allude, this chapter focuses on the machinations of the Australian context. It is to an exploration of these interwoven concepts that this discussion now turns.

Australia's Culture of Limitation

Despite Australia's generally democratic ethos, a culture of limitation impacts on equity and is particularly enlivened when dealing with issues pertaining to gender and sexuality diversity. It is dynamic and complex and has, over time, varied in its potency and impact, depending on the historical and political moment; however, in the first two decades of the 21st century a particular culture of limitation is conspicuous in Australian society. Here, a culture of limitation is perpetuated by factions who disagree with diversity, who fear diversity, who do not understand diversity or who resist any challenge to the status quo and the power inherent in aligning with it. Those who transgress the constructed values perpetuated by a culture of limitation are marginalised. After all, for those accustomed to privilege and where such privilege is imperceptible to those who possess it, not only recognising but also what may be construed as *enabling* the rights of others who do not reflect the dominant culture threaten one's general way of life (Nicholas, 2019).

Thus, there is a social undercurrent that resists diversity while maintaining the normative; this undercurrent is discernible in everyday materialities and is ensconced in pockets of the national psyche. It is resistant to equity and belies the historical mythological refrain of Australia as providing a "fair go" for all (Nicholas, 2019). In this context, moves to enhance equity of access are demonised as "political correctness" and rejected. In this environment, those who call out inequity are positioned as "snowflakes"—hypersensitive, progressive, left-leaning individuals who are unable to withstand or ignore criticism and verbal assault (Gray & Nicholas, 2019). There exists an underlying discourse of bigotry and of "telling it like it (apparently) is"; this is not to say there are no counter-discourses in operation, however, it enables many to be indifferent about, and even contemptuous of, the individuals who experience discrimination and inequities, particularly in relation to access and outcome. Those who do not conform to the status quo are discursively positioned in deficit. These attitudes both reflect and contribute to Australia's culture of limitation.

Australia's culture of limitation is infused with a particular type of masculinity. The nation's histories of Indigenous dispossession and the brutality they experienced by early "pioneers" (Bellanta, 2016; Nicholas, 2019), coupled with the nation's colonial beginnings as a penal colony, have produced and reinforced a masculinist culture which is often aggressive, brash, entitled and misogynistic. Australia has a history of constructing dominant forms of masculinity as "virile" and "vigorous", "do-ers rather than dreamers" (Bellanta, 2016, p. 410), where "emotional restraint in men" (p. 404) was valorised and sentimentality mocked as womanly; indeed, all things perceived as feminine, including feminised expressions of masculinity, were derided. In various ways, the legacy of

this brand of hegemonic masculinity lives on, where male prejudices and chauvinism are often socially tolerated and there is flight from all things feminine, including gay men. As Kimmel (2010) points out, men cohere over "sexism and homophobia" and a "shared contempt for and rage at women and gay men" (p. 52). An essentialist perspective coupled with the perception of "categorical differences between women and men, gays and straights" works to bond many heterosexual men and "reaffirm their masculinity" (Kimmel, 2010, p. 52).

As will be illustrated later in this book, the culture of limitation impacts directly and indirectly on people's potential and their futures, on social harmony, on being able to think critically about social issues, on civic evolvement and on moving towards a society that ensures all have equitable access, opportunity, outcomes and resources. It impacts on schools and teachers whose work is shaped by the socio-political milieu in which they are situated (Dunn, Sondel, & Baggett, 2019). It thwarts progressive education initiatives and influences the curriculum and what is deemed possible, while undermining teacher professionalism, student learning and the safety and sense of belonging of minority students and teachers in schools (Connell, 2013). Indeed, anything *social* about education has been invariably hijacked by a changing landscape that increasingly demands "traditionalism, standardisation, productivity, marketisation, and economic needs" (Apple, 2006, p. 22)—namely the result of a self-interested relationship between neoliberalism and neoconservatism. It is to these "political rationalities" (Brown, 2006, p. 690), and how they contribute to a culture of limitation, that this discussion now turns.

Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism and Their Contribution to a Culture of Limitation

The culture of limitation is a messy entity constituted in language, attitudes, perspectives and actions that draw on, and are positioned within, neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities, which often, yet selectively, pander to fundamentalist religious viewpoints and an entitled masculinity. The combination of these logics creates fertile ground for the growth of a restrictive social agenda that targets (in the case of neoconservatism), and discounts (in the case of neoliberalism), the gender and sexuality diverse subject.

On the one hand, neoliberalism reifies individualism for a "free" market economy; an agenda discussed shortly. On the other hand, neoconservatism relies selectively on state interference to regulate and censor particular demographics of the populace harkening back to select traditional values and beliefs (Apple, 2006; Brown, 2006); promotes a "governance modelled on church authority and a normative social fabric of self-sacrifice and long term filial loyalty" (Brown, 2006, p. 692), using religion opportunistically to widen its popular foundation (Apple, 2001); and often draws on patriarchal, sexist, racist and homophobic

attitudes which have been historically well-entrenched in Australia. Neoconservatism aims to produce a particular type of political subject and culture, positioning "itself as the guardian and advocate of a potentially vanishing past and present, and a righteous bulwark against loss" whilst resisting "serious contenders for an alternative futurity" (Brown, 2006, p. 700).

Neoconservative values are presented as a panacea for addressing (and potentially avoiding) social "issues" while simultaneously ensuring maintenance of the status quo—despite the inequities they present. As such, the nuclear family is constructed as the ideal economic, morally celebrated and socially viable unit that functions as a paradigm for broader patriarchal state social systems—the latter of which are also afforded moral authority (Brown, 2006). Within this framing is the perpetuation of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990) which includes the performance of largely traditional gender roles and expectations and an enforced, rigid association between sex, gender and (hetero)sexuality.

Neoliberalism has established itself in and through education, government practices and all areas of public (and private) life in "every society under neoliberal control" (Connell, 2013, p. 100). Espousing the benefits of privatisation (including the privatisation of public goods and services) and the free market, and purporting to offer freedom and individual choice, neoliberalism is now taken for granted and is often presented as "a way of being reasonable and of promoting universally desirable forms of economic expansion and democratic government globally" (Duggan, 2002, p. 177). Neoliberalism now constitutes the dominant economic and socio-political discourse structuring Australia's way of life, is peddled as common sense (Türken, Nafstad, Blakar, & Roen, 2016) and frames the functioning and expectations of education. As Connell (2013) argues, within this system, "education has been defined as an industry, and educational institutions have been forced to conduct themselves more and more like profit-seeking firms" (p. 102). Managerialism in education and other institutions has increased, creating workplaces of declining democracy, who serve "customers"; this is evident in both the public school sector which is state-funded as well as in the expansive private school sector in Australia, where fees are demanded for service and where schools advertise for students within a free market education economy. Overlaid is the growth of the religious school sector, another feature of privatisation (Maddox, cited in Rasmussen, 2017, p. 9).

A feature of neoliberalism in education is that schools create "human capital" (Apple, 2006, p. 23) through the production of neoliberal subjects who are prepared for a neoliberal workforce. These individuals need to be work-ready, flexible, internationally literate, self-regulating, personally responsible, resourceful, independent, entrepreneurial (Apple, 2001; Brown, 2006; Down, 2009) and "autonomous yet governable via continual self-monitoring and self-disciplining" (Türken et al., 2016, p. 34).

Neoliberalism works as a disciplinary power, training individuals into particular ways of being (Foucault, 1979). Moreover, the production of neoliberal subjects simultaneously and by default requires the production of *heterosexual* subjects, although this production is obfuscated through discourses that normalise and position as common sense these neoliberal demands. As Griffin (2007, p. 221) points out:

> The heteronormative reproduction of gender identity/identities is crucial to/in neo-liberalism because it allows for the maintenance of a particular neo-liberal vision of economic activity, one that is both masculinised and ethnocentric. Herein, heterosexuality is normalised as universal, and the constraints by which bodies are predicated to function through heterosexualised and essentialised discursive boundaries, "natural facts" and gender/sex categories are rather effectively hidden from the agenda of economic discourse.

As such, schools are required to yield a socially conforming—that is, heterosexual and cisgender—workforce for a highly competitive, global market. In doing so, school education endeavours to force young people into particular categories "so that they are legible, employable, and legitimately recognised by the state and future employers" (Woolley, 2017, p. 87) and ostensibly can be locked into the system.

Within this logic, teachers are expected to fulfil a range of accountabilities, performance measures and operational targets, the success of which is quintessentially determined by nationally implemented, competitive testing regimes of students and ranking of schools (Apple, 2001; Connell, 2013). Accordingly, teachers implement a market-driven curriculum which has resulted in its narrowing and where issues of equity in education are largely superfluous to the neoliberal agenda, since they are irrelevant to the needs of the market (Connell, 2013). As public education in Australia is being increasingly surveilled through testing, schools both formally and informally "compete"; as a result, teachers often "teach to the test" (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013, p. 301). In this climate, schools compete for "students, marks and money", and parent consumers "exercise 'choice'" between schools (Connell, 2013, p. 103).

Thus, as Woolley (2017) argues, "True to neo-liberalism's colours, the hidden agenda of schooling reproduces binary gender and heteronormativity through mechanisms of surveillance in line with the purposes of education aimed at preparing a literate and disciplined workforce" (Woolley, 2017, p. 86). A central feature of neoliberalism is the notion of individualism, self-accountability, entrepreneurship and personal (re) creation that reflects the status quo; considering this, rather unsurprisingly, social problems in education are attributed to "deficient individuals rather than addressing structural problems in education" (Woolley, 2017, p. 91).

Moreover, as the neoliberal subject is individually responsible, they are also required to identify solutions to discrimination enacted against them. As Brown (2006, p. 704) states, "As neoliberalism converts every political or social problem into market terms, it converts them to individual problems with market solutions". In schools, this means the targets of cissexist or homophobic/heterosexist violence become responsible for such behaviour (Payne & Smith, 2018; Ringrose & Renold, 2010) and are expected to address or accommodate the situation, preferably in "tidy" and simplistic ways that can easily be distilled into metrics for accountability purposes (Ullman, 2018). Blame is apportioned to those involved in the exchange, rather than being seen as an institutional or structural problem that needs addressing; indeed, to address inequity or to promote equity from a structural perspective would potentially destabilise the status quo. It is easier and less threatening to the status quo to construct discrimination as an isolated and individual event and a concern only to the people directly involved in the altercation; that is, the perpetrator and the victim (Ullman, 2018; Woolley, 2017). How this operates to the detriment and marginalisation of gender and sexuality diverse young people is further explored in Chapter 3.

Neoliberal discourse which calls for "personal responsibility may thus be used to justify growing inequalities" through its failure to interrogate the broader social power dynamics (Türken et al., 2016, p. 38). Thus, a culture of limitation which is constituted within neoliberal and neoconservative agendas is not conducive to social justice objectives, either in the educational or broader social milieu. As Gray and Nicholas (2019) point out, neoliberalism has resulted in an "emptying out [of] identity politics from social institutions such as education" (p. 279). Ironically, although neoliberalism purports a rhetoric of "freedom to be", only particular kinds of subjects can readily reflect or fit its demands; the preponderance of meritocratic discourses in which the gains and successes of the individual are steeped forces others who are less fortunate and with less capital, and those who lose, to the margins. How this is perpetuated can be analysed using particular theoretical concepts. These are explored in the next section.

A Culture of Limitation and Other Theoretical Tools

Discourse

A culture of limitation is apparent in potent racist, sexist, homophobic and classist discourses that subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) divide people and disenfranchise subjects who are not heterosexual, cisgender, white, Christian, middle class and male. It should be noted that the term discourse is used in this book in the Foucauldian (1978) sense, and refers to the ways an object, person, community or practice is spoken, written or thought about, and constituted through language (Weedon, 1987).

Socio-cultural and politically dominant discourses are not immutable truths; nor are they fixed or stable. Rather, they are historically, culturally and politically contingent, as are the knowledges and "truths" they produce. Within this framework, discourses convey understandings of what is valid and correct, and construct "ways of being and acting [that are] good and right" (Bendix Petersen, 2015, p. 64). They institute "knowledges" about a subject and these knowledges "engender a series of effects" (Bendix Petersen, 2015, p. 63). Equally, and of great importance to the analysis and stance taken in this book, discourses are constituted through "things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden" (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Discourses, particularly those which are dominant, are anchored in powerful public institutions, such as the media, politics, education, religion, medicine and so forth; and it is from these institutions they gain their power and reinforce their material base (Weedon, 1987). Mass media and the ways it promulgates ideas and "contribut[es] to meaning construction in society" (Türken et al., p. 36) is of particular relevance to this book, especially in the ways it can influence the construction, circulation and work of a culture of limitation.

Despite its seeming authority, and at times, omnipotence, no discourse is all-powerful; multiple discourses about any one thing interact in a discursive field competing for prominence and ascendency in relation to other discourses. Thus, discourse can be defied and resisted (Foucault, 1978). However, dominant discourses reinforce each other and function together to "literally misrecognize those with the least power in order to construct and maintain the privilege of the dominant culture" (Camicia, 2016, p. vii). Thus, some discourses in certain contexts can have greater power and influence than others. In this way, discourse can influence the culture that dominates the national psyche, constructing and reinforcing particular knowledges (whether accurate or not) and their associated power relations in regard to marginalised subjectivities and communities; this discourse/power/knowledge nexus can serve to both initiate and reinforce discrimination, or conversely to alleviate and halt it.

Critically, subjectivity is intimately constituted in the discourses readily available in various contexts and historical junctures. As a result, subjectivity is not fixed but is relational, fluid, unstable and constantly in the making. Both the positioning and reading of one's subjectivity is dependent on the discourses in which it is positioned at any point—either by self or others (Rawlings, 2016). Thus, a culture of limitation and how it operates in relation to gender and sexuality diversity may constitute the manner in which such subjectivities are perceived and treated by others as well as how the subject positions oneself in particular contexts such as schooling environments.

Discourses that reify traditional, heterosexually headed family and patriarchal values while marginalising gender and sexuality diversity have for decades been present in Australian society and visible in

schooling contexts, constituted by, and empowered through, particular forms of language and sentiment. In recent times, and reflecting a culture of limitation as experienced in Australia and other nations, such language has been articulated and normalised by popular media "shock jocks", politicians, journalists and high-powered vocal, and often morally and/or religiously conservative, lobbyists and community leaders (Gray & Nicholas, 2019). These individuals and groups, in the name of "free speech", reject "political correctness"; a strategic, political position that gained momentum and power over the last two decades. In doing so, affective experiences of insult and marginalisation are re-cast as unimportant and hypersensitive while "political correctness" is situated as oppressive (Flood, 2004, cited in Gray & Nicholas, 2019, p. 273). The resistance to "political correctness", in many cases, vindicated policies, practices and opinions that discriminated against disenfranchised groups and individuals seeking to change the socio-cultural climate in relation to equity. The legacy of this rhetorical tool is witnessed through its recurrent use by neoconservatives to thwart progress on numerous equity issues, including gender and sexuality diversity—particularly, but not only, in school education.

Thus, politicians, media commentators and others have been known to declare with impunity irresponsible and even inaccurate information in relation to gender and sexuality diversity (as well as other minority groups), as will be illustrated later in this chapter (Gray & Nicholas, 2019). At other times, fundamental facts have been omitted or silences used in an attempt to maintain existing heteronormative power relations and to thwart efforts for an equitable, empathetic, supportive and cohesive social fabric. There is a frequent practice of the dismissal of inequities and their ramifications, even in light of resounding evidence suggesting a need for political or policy action. Such silencing can also be used as a powerful tool and is critically integral to discourse. As Foucault (1978) points out:

> Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say.
>
> (p. 27)

In relation to gender and sexuality, discriminatory discourses reinforce and reify the "normality" and "naturalness" of heterosexuality and cisgender subjectivities, constituting all other sexualities and non-normative genders as abnormal, immoral, anti-religious and socially dangerous. As

such, they are potentially corruptive of the child subject who, in dominant Western social constructions, is positioned as virtuous, naïve, irrational and vulnerable to adult "corruptions" (Robinson, 2008; Robinson & Davies, 2008, 2018). Dominant heteronormative discourse produces and reifies particular knowledges and understandings that elevate some subjectivities and simultaneously subjugate others. These knowledges are defined within sexual and gender binary categories (heterosexual/homosexual and male/female) which position one side of the binary as legitimate and, thus, more powerful. Additionally, and importantly, little attention has been paid to the broad spectrum of gender and sexuality diversities, ignoring those who stand outside the categories. As one shall observe, however, acknowledging the limitations of the binary in Australian political discourse has been resisted at the highest level of government (Butson, 2018; Baxendale, 2018; Topsfield, 2018) and has proven problematic personally for gender and sexuality diverse individuals and for education more broadly, where a move to silence gender and sexuality diversity and maintain its invisibility is in play. This regressive stance is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Ultimately, being positioned in dominant discourses renders one as normal, unmarked and thus privileged (Foucault, 1978), able to define and categorise the Other. However, the normalised subject is a cultural product rather than essential in nature (Camicia, 2016); a subject perceived as not only useful, but critical to the continuance of the endemic (hetero)sexist and cisgender social order. Those who challenge (hetero) normative and cisgender ways of being are surveilled and policed (Foucault, 1978) and are "subject to disciplining forces that reproduce heteronormativity and gender conformity . . . punish[ing] those who fall outside particular norms" (Woolley, 2017 p. 84). Rawlings (2016), drawing on Butler (1990), explains how those who are located in the dominant heteronormative discourse regulate others to maintain the integrity of gender and sexual performativity. As she explains:

> These processes become a "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1990, p. 140) which constitute a repeated performance as a truth, and consequently as a verifying authority. In other words, as values are formed, fortified and iterated, they encourage the collective knowledge that they are immovable and definitive, and consequently reaffirm their own production.
>
> (Rawlings, 2016, p. 10)

Power, Subjectivity and Agency

Individuals and communities located in dominant discourse generally have greater access to power than those in marginalised positions, although this is dependent on context. Power does not operate in a

top-down fashion, from a single point, or from a sovereign, nor is it possessed. Foucault states, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Thus, it should not be assumed that those who live on the fringes of society, who are not constituted within dominant discourse, or who are marginalised by the mechanics of a culture of limitation, are powerless. Nor should it be assumed that those who perpetuate a culture of limitation are all-powerful despite their frequent association with neoliberal and neoconservative political rationalities. Power is intricate; it is a productive, multifarious complex of forces (Foucault, 1978). These forces are "whatever serves to put an object into motion, *regardless* of the origin or source of that force" (Lynch, 2014, p. 20, emphasis in original).

Power is omnipresent, constantly produced from anywhere and everywhere and emerges in, and is exercised through, social relations and exchanges. As it operates at all levels, disenfranchised and non-normalised subjects (Foucault, 1978) are also able to challenge it. Although individuals are constituted in discourse, they can still act intentionally (Lynch, 2014). To paraphrase Weedon (1987), individuals are agentic and have the capacity to resist and innovate which can arise from the confrontation of incongruous subject locations in discourse. Lynch (2014), drawing on Foucault, argues:

> Power is exercised . . . in the very interplay of force and resistance; this interplay is present in all social interactions; . . . force and resistance are manifest even in micro-interactions between individuals as well as states; . . . and while each person may choose to apply force or resist, the ultimate outcome of the relation cannot be controlled by one party.
>
> (p. 24)

Thus, a central theme of this book is although there exists in Australia a culture of limitation that manifests in a range of inequities, including those producing knowledges that discriminate against and marginalise people, those subjects and institutions who contribute to the culture of limitation are not all-powerful entities that cannot be resisted or challenged. From the outset, this is a critical perspective that must be acknowledged; as Foucault (1978) points out, "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95), and this resistance is realised at all levels in the social field—including schools. Despite the ongoing conservatism of many educational institutions, resistance exists in relation to the perpetual reification and normalisation of heterosexuality and cisgender subjectivities at the expense of non-normative subjects.

It is critical to acknowledge that the derision of gender and sexuality diversity is related to heterosexism and sexism (Pharr, 1997), and by extension, misogyny. Patriarchy and the nuclear family, concepts largely

embraced by neoconservative and religious discourses, reify observance to traditional heterosexist gender roles. These position particular types of polarised cismasculinity and cisfemininity, which are assumedly determined at and by birth, as natural and normal, and where femininity and all things associated with it, including gay men, are disparaged and subjugated. Individuals who transgress gender and sexual roles are policed and punished, in the Foucauldian sense, using sexist and homo/transphobic discrimination. In this way, individuals "learn" their rightful place from the early years of life through dominant discourses that construct particular forms of the feminine which are always constructed as subordinate to the masculine. It is unsurprising to note, those who are more conservative are "more likely to display prejudice toward gender nonconformists in part due to their greater endorsement of binary gender beliefs" (Prusaczk & Hodson, 2019, p. 438).

While Connell (1995) has acknowledged the existence of multiple masculinities, the dominant, hegemonic masculinity operates as an idealised, cultural standard. In their examination of anti-gay assailants, Franklin (1998) notes a distinctive antifemininity norm (Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985, cited in Franklin, 1998), "emphasizing male dominance and female submission" (p. 7) which sits at the heart of hegemonic male culture and, by extension, offers an explanatory tool for understanding both homophobia and misogynistic practices. She argues, "The consistent correlation found between gender stereotyping and heterosexism further bolsters the proposition that heterosexism is but one component of a broader ideology of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 7).

The discussion in the next section affords a brief insight into the ways women who transgress the narrow range of roles in Australia are positioned reflecting a culture of limitation and illustrates how sexism and misogyny operate in both the public and private sphere. These attitudes towards girls and women cultivate fertile ground for the marginalisation of those subjectivities who fail to fulfil gender and sexual norms, providing some critical glimpses for the reader into this aspect of Australian culture.

Insights into the Feminine: Inequity as Normalis/ing/ed Practice

Australia's culture of limitation is also reflected in the way the nation lags behind much of the world in relation to many issues pertaining to gender equity despite its wealth, legislated equal access and rights, relative freedom of women and image of a general cosmopolitanism. There is misrecognition of the multiple ways gendered violence is normalised through both legislated and everyday sexism, including prevailing barriers that work against women in terms of financial reward for labour, reproductive rights, domestic and other forms of violence, and the right

to full involvement in public life (Summers, 2017). Despite the Whitlam Labor government's progressive influence in the early 1970s of seeking, through the industrial court, the award of "equal pay for work of equal value" (Summers, 2017, p. 4), a continuing gender-related pay gap of 14% prevails four decades later (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2019). Australia is ranked 39th in terms of equity in labour force participation (World Economic Forum, 2018). Women continue to contribute to most of the unpaid domestic duties. They possess approximately half or less, of the retirement savings level of men (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016) and are more likely to live in poverty throughout their lives and in older age, with one in three Australian women retiring with no superannuation (Ruppanner, 2017) and with women over 55 being the fastest growing group in terms of homelessness. Despite such realities, a counter-discourse is in operation that denies such figures, claiming they are exaggerated, manipulated or are a waste of funding; this discourse is perpetuated by the men's movement and is a global phenomenon (Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Lefkovitz, 2018; Schmitz, 2016).

Australian women have little official input into public life: they are under-represented on Boards of Directors of Public companies, totalling 26.2% of Directors in 2018 (Australian Human Rights commission, 2018). Only 37% of those in parliamentary positions are women (Hough, 2019). Additionally, only once in its history has Australia elected a female head of state. Prime Minister Julia Gillard remained in office for a period of three years from 2010–2013. This was a considerable feat considering the degree to which she was subjected to ongoing sexist harassment and innuendo. Ms Gillard was repeatedly attacked by other politicians, by the press and by the public and this harassment and discrimination was based on her sex, which included graphic sexualised cartoons and memes. Although politics is known for its offences, as Summers explains:

> what is NOT normal is the way in which the prime minister is attacked, vilified or demeaned in ways that are specifically related to her sex (or, if you like, her gender). . . . What I want to establish is the extent to which the prime minister is being treated unfairly as a woman and because she's a woman. I want to identify ways in which Julia Gillard, Australia's first female prime minister, is being persecuted both because she is a woman AND in ways that would be impossible to apply to a man.
>
> (Summers, 2012)

Institutionalised misogyny and rampant sexism was on display for the world to witness, constituting discourses that subjugated women and positioned public femininity, particularly that which is strong and visible, as open to degradation and harassment.

Open expressions of violence towards women, particularly those who are confident or outspoken, is not uncommon. For example, radio commentator Alan Jones most recently stated that the Australian Prime Minister should "shove a sock" down the throat of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in response to comments she made regarding Australia's (in)action on climate change (Winter, 2019). The president of a major football club stated he wished to see a female journalist, Caroline Wilson, "dunked and held under icy water" after she "had written a column suggesting the Collingwood president should consider a succession plan to a new leader of the club" (Gleeson, 2016, para 1). Further abuse was directed at Van Badham, a Melbourne-based writer, after publicly clashing with "shock jock Steve Price"—a television personality and ex-footballer—about the incident (Anonymous, 2016). After the clash, Badham reportedly was subjected to comments via social media, such as she "need[ed] a hole drilled in her", and that "she deserved a good slap" (Anonymous, 2016). The range of hostile responses towards these women is indicative of the surveillance and policing of gender expectations and the punishment, in the Foucauldian sense, of those who either challenge or transgress dominant discourses of femininity and women's "rightful place". Although such vitriol has not necessarily silenced these public women, it can, and undoubtedly does, have an effect on others in terms of the socially constructed borders in which women can "safely" exist. Butler's (1990) concept of performative repetition is useful here; it is not until women can repeatedly perform their place in public spaces without being demeaned and attacked that such performances will become normalised and discursively reconstituted as of the feminine. Social power, voice and visibility in the public sphere is still a male prerogative in Australia, and is reinforced by a culture of limitation, seemingly reinforced by neoconservative (and religious) discourses that perpetuate the naturalness of the traditional, heteronormative "family" unit; neoliberalism's reliance on the maintenance of the status quo for the neoliberal workforce, and a particular culture of masculinity (although not necessarily universally embraced) that perpetuates the subjugation of women. It should be noted, such issues are compounded when intersected with other sites of difference and marginalisation such as race and minority religion.

Discrimination and violence against women is also perpetuated in the private sphere and is recognised as a significant social problem (Neave, Faulkner, & Nicholson, 2016). Approximately one third of Australian women have experienced violence of a physical nature, and one fifth have experienced violence of a sexual nature. Many of these incidents occur in the home (Bugeja et al., 2013). In Australia, each week approximately one woman is murdered by their partner (Australian Institute of Health, 2019). In 2007–2008 more than half of all homicides in Australia were family violence incidents (Bugeja et al., 2013), although this

is not particular to Australia. For instance, in the US, Canada, Israel and South Africa, between 40 and 70% of femicides are carried out by intimate partner violence (UN Women, 2010). Despite impacting the long-term physical and mental health of survivors as well as the children who live in households where family violence occurs, it is an area that has been inadequately addressed by Australian governments and was, at various points, subjected to funding cuts (Phillips, 2008; Pain, 2014). Despite some government interventions (Bugeja et al., 2013), many shelters and support services struggle financially and there is a reported need for improvements in information gathering, service provisions and court structures and processes to ensure the safety of the mostly female victims of family violence (Neave et al., 2016).

Sexism and discrimination in the everyday lives of women and girls is realised and experienced as an affective and embodied reality. Research examining the gendered experiences of 600 girls and young women aged between 15 and 19 years of age found one third felt "it would be easier to get their dream job if they were male" and "62% agreed 'girls often feel pressured to take part in sexual activities with their boyfriend or husband'" (Plan International and Our Watch, 2016, p. 7). Seventy percent recognised females are frequently the subject of online bullying. More than two thirds felt boys or their brothers did not do their share of housework. A significant proportion felt they should not, as females, travel alone (23%) or be out after dark (30%) (Plan International and Our Watch, 2016, p. 7). Young women reported being "rated" by boys at school and felt that greater value was placed on their looks than their ability. *In fact, only 14% of the participants believed they have the same life opportunities as males* (authors' emphasis). These findings suggest even young Australian women are clearly aware of an underlying culture that is inequitable and restrictive for women.

The most current National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) (Politoff et al., 2019) which surveyed more than 17,500 Australians aged 16 years and older, found young women aged 18–24 were the most likely to have experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey, with 38% of the cohort reporting violence of a sexual nature (p. 5). While we might imagine younger generations of Australian males to be more aware of the negative impact of gender normative stereotypes and the gendered nature of violence, particularly given the #metoo movement on social media and subsequent media visibility, the study's findings hint at some regression. Of the 16–25 year olds surveyed, more than half of young men believe "many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia" (52%) and nearly a third feel "women exaggerate the problem of male violence" (31%) (Politoff et al., 2019, pp. 22, 27). The authors found the strongest predictors of attitudes supportive of violence against women include: "attitudes that endorse gender inequality" and "having a low

level of understanding of violence against women" (p. 6). When confronted with these statistics on national radio after the public launch of the report, and asked whether he would address anti-domestic violence education in schools, Australian Education Minister Dan Tehan first pointed out that there are "a lot of ideas put forward" about curriculum content. He then continued with: "One of the things we do have to do though is make sure that teachers and principals can focus on 'the basics'" (Karvelas, 2019). Such a response is remarkable given that curriculum content addressing students' social, moral and ethical learning appears in both the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for all Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) endorsed by all Australian Educational Ministers and within the named general capabilities the Australian national curriculum (Australian Curriculum, n.d.). Such sidestepping and refusal to engage with empirical data is symptomatic of the culture of limitation where issues of social equity being focused on in education are modulated and where possible structural changes to redress interpersonal violence that potentially would shift an ingrained power dynamic are ignored. In other words, codes of care and conduct for relationships and, specifically, attitudes towards and treatment of women, would fall outside the purview of a "basic" education and that this information extends beyond what students need to know.

Each of these examples provide a mere glimpse into a culture of limitation that negatively impacts marginalised people. It constrains full participation in social, political and economic life and affects progressive thinking, and the potential for a richer, more inclusive socio-cultural environment. Dealing with or even acknowledging issues of in/equity is often positioned by right-wing and neoconservative groups as capitulating to the discourses of the excessively liberal minded; strategies that maintain the status quo. It is against this social framing of the culture of limitation this chapter now turns to understand the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse people; arguably one of the most historically maligned and socially ostracised communities in Australia.

Gender and Sexuality Diversity Discrimination in Australia—Historical and Other Insights

Over the last decade or so, Australia has increasingly embraced gender and sexuality diversity in the social milieu; the result of years of public activism, education and lobbying. This outcome has been hard won. Gender and sexuality diverse people have experienced decades of discrimination, prejudice, exclusion, violence and Othering in Australia. As Reynolds and Robinson (2016) point out, in the past, "intimate relationships between those of the same sex were hidden, criminalised, classified and stigmatised" (p. 1). Although the climate has changed, this discussion will demonstrate how discrimination and prejudice in terms of the

gender and sexuality diverse community remains in the nation's psyche. Nowhere is this more manifest than in school education where gender and sexuality diverse inclusions have been subject to, and impacted by, the culture of limitation. This has taken shape in the form of polemic and hyperbolic public "debates" and moral panics fuelled largely by select neoconservative politicians who demonstrate little understanding of gender and sexuality diversity-related issues or care for gender and sexuality diverse people, religious lobby groups who appear to rely on fear and often uninformed arguments to support discrimination and right-wing, mainstream media who use the topic to create headlines (Law, 2017) while disseminating limiting ideas about difference. The media's power is immense; the institution offers "ways of seeing and understanding the world", contributes to the formation of discourse and operates in the construction of subjects (Türken et al., 2016, p. 36). This reality has been fortified by the growth of social media in the last two decades or so. Although public debate is expected and important to a democratic society, these debates and the way in which they play out, as shall be seen, impact thousands of gender and sexuality diverse young people and their families, and create uncertainty for teachers, including those who are gender and sexuality diverse; they also generate confusion in relation to curriculum. This affects the education and understandings of literally generations of young people. Before embarking on a discussion of how this plays out, it is important to understand some of the historical context for gender and sexuality diverse people in Australia.

A Brief Look at Histories of Gender and Sexuality Diversity

Institutionalised discrimination against sexuality diversity stems back to the 1500s when anal sex became illegal in Britain. These laws were introduced into Australia when it was colonised by the British in 1788. In 1901, when Australia became a federation, variations of British law were legislated across states and territories. Anal sex was considered a capital crime which, over time and dependent on state, was variously reduced to long-term prison sentences. Collective activism gradually instigated change. For example, in 1968 in Canberra, the Homosexual Law Reform Society was formed; other activist groups developed over the ensuing decades (SBS, 2017). In 1978, in New South Wales the Sydney Gay Solidarity Group staged a march in commemoration of the 1969 Stonewall Riot[4] that occurred in New York and sought reform to legislation that discriminated against gay men and lesbians (SBS, 2017). This non-violent march of 500 people, culminated in 53 arrests, police brutality and incarceration of some of the protest participants (Carbery, 1995; Reynolds & Robinson, 2016, p. 64). Over the last four decades the march has, paradoxically, developed into a month-long celebration of sexuality and gender diversity, drawing hundreds of thousands of international visitors

and local spectators and providing substantial economic benefits to the state of NSW. There is some irony here considering that in terms of education and policy in schools related to gender and sexuality diversity, NSW remains one of the more conservative jurisdictions.

Legislation has been slow to change in Australia. For example, it was not until 1982 that the state of NSW passed laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals, although homosexual acts were not decriminalised in NSW, for instance, until 1984; such legislation and its date of repeal varied across states.[5] A decade later, the federal government passed the Human Rights (Sexual Conduct Act) which overrode state legislation relating to adult sexual behaviours. However, other discriminatory laws largely remained in place until as late as 2009 when the Rudd Labor government amended 85 federal laws to remove discrimination against same-sex couples in areas such as tax, social security and health (Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby, 2008; SBS, 2017). Four years later the Gillard Labor government amended the Sex Discrimination Act to make it "unlawful to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. However, such laws are not universally applicable in that religious schools and hospitals are exempted from gender identity and orientation protections, but aged-care providers are not" (SBS, 2017). In 2016, nearly four decades after the first Mardi Gras ended in police brutality, the NSW state government and police apologised for the violence and arrests incurred at that protest rally (SBS, 2017). Such shifts point to an awareness of the impact of discriminatory behaviours, particularly when sanctioned by institutional powers.

Despite changes to legislation, discrimination, harassment and violence continue to be directed towards the gender and sexuality diverse community. Formally amending legislation does not necessarily result in immediate change in public sentiment (Khayatt, 1992; Neary, 2013) and illustrates how power is not held by a single sovereign, but operates in a more tentacle-like fashion (Foucault, 1978). For example, between the 1970s and early 2000s, 88 deaths from possible gay hate crime occurred in NSW, mostly in the eastern suburbs of Sydney and surrounds. These were ineffectually investigated and underwent review by the NSW Police Taskforce, including 30 unsolved cases. The deaths ranged from apparent suicides to violent murders. It has been reported there was "little effort to prevent this wave of crime confronting [the gay] community, and there has been a subsequent lack of resources given to delivering justice for these men" (Benny-Morrison, 2016). During this period of time, gangs of youths roamed suburbs in the eastern beaches, looking for victims to "poofter-bash". Although a few were convicted of their crimes (Anonymous, 1982), very few have been brought to justice for their involvement and there had reportedly been limited police effort to catch the offenders (Benny-Morrison, 2016). Media reports claim police neglectfully lost vital evidence (Dow, 2016). Moreover, at the time, coverage of the murders,

bashings and disappearances was sparse, highlighting a socially endemic homophobia. Dow (2016) reports how one victim's brother stated: "I'm unsure what role homophobia played in the 1980s . . . but it certainly seemed that the police systematically avoided investigating the deaths of gay men, or men presumed to be gay". Although the nation, including Sydney, is far more tolerant to, and accepting of, gender and sexuality diversity now, and overt homo/transphobia of this nature is thankfully far less, resistance to these forms of difference occurs in subtler ways.

Gender and sexuality diverse people's rights are often positioned as a moral and/or religious issue rather than one of human rights and gender, and sexuality diverse people and their relationships are used for political expediency. Although due process must be followed, a majority government with a conservative agenda can repeal hard-won rights by changing legislation. Such tactics were recently seen in the US context where the Trump Republican government, coming to power in January 2017, endeavoured, among other things, to wind back the rights of gender and sexuality diverse people. This included attempting to reinstate a ban on trans people serving openly in the military; appointing anti-gender and sexuality diverse conservatives to the Supreme Court; and overturning Obama-initiated guidance to federally funded K-12 schools to protect trans students (see www.vox.com/identities/2018/1/22/16905658/trump-lgbtq-anniversary). Similarly, in Australia, in 2004, the Conservative Howard Liberal government amended the Marriage Act to explicitly define marriage as the "Union of *a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others*, voluntarily entered into for life" (SBS, 2017, authors' italics; Johnson & Tremblay, 2018). This occurred in direct response to public activism for marriage equality which was increasingly accepted internationally. This change meant the Australian Capital Territory's progressive passing of same-sex marriage legislation in 2004 was nullified by the High Court as legislation enshrined federally prohibits states from contravention (SBS, 2017). It was not until 2017 that marriage equality became legally enshrined in Australian law—a publicly antagonistic and personally damaging event discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Other attempts by conservative governments have been made to regulate or regress gender and sexuality diverse people's rights. For example, the Howard government reportedly took "action to prevent single and lesbian women from accessing in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment" (Zinn, 2002, p. 1054). Three years later, that same government announced their intention to implement a national ban on same-sex couples from adopting; this never eventuated as that government experienced defeat in the 2007 election. Since then, individual states have changed their laws to enable same-sex couples to adopt.

Australia unfortunately does not possess a Human Rights Act or a Bill of Rights like other liberal, democratic nations "that frames discussions of civil rights" (Perales, Bouma, & Campbell, 2019, p. 14); in fact, it

is the only democratic country in the world devoid of such laws (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.; Williams & Reynolds, 2017). Although laws could still be passed by Parliament, a Human Rights Act would result in a more transparent government and increased respect for human rights in legislation, policy development and government delivery of services (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.). This would potentially provide some assurances and security to marginalised individuals and communities and could stave off the decline in Australia's human rights record, which former president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, recently stated was "regressing on almost every front" (Slezak, 2017). The current omission of a Human Rights Act means Australian Parliaments are enacting laws that negatively impact on human rights. Williams (2016) reports that there are "350 instances of laws that arguably encroach upon rights and freedoms essential to the maintenance of a healthy democracy" (p. 19). Most of these laws have been endorsed since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in the US in 2001. As Williams points out, since then, Parliament has been "less willing to exercise self-restraint by not passing laws that undermine Australia's democratic system" (Williams, 2016, p. 19).

Marriage Equality and the Non-Binding Postal Vote

Legislative changes like those outlined herald, to some degree, a new era for gender and sexuality diverse communities, yet, the struggle for equal recognition lingers. During mid-2017, a heated argument about marriage equality in Australia reached its peak and "elicited substantial debates dominated by religious voices", who claimed marriage was a sacred and heterosexual institution; this was despite the fact that in 2016 less than 25% of weddings in Australia were conducted by religious bodies (Perales et al., 2019, p. 107). The then Turnbull government, seemingly in an attempt to appease religious conservatives, and factional disputes within the Liberal/National Party, spent $122 million on a non-binding, marriage equality postal vote survey which was sent to all Australians listed on the electoral role, rather than allowing a conscience vote in Parliament (Gravelle & Carson, 2019). As Karlsen and Villadsen (2008, p. 347) state, "In liberal democracies, dialogue is always brought forward as a solution to problems of management, power, and cooperation, and when dialogue fails the suggested miracle cure is almost without exception more dialogue".

The postal vote, indeed, provided more dialogue with the decision for its fate being opened up to the populace who could be seen to determine the outcome while also exercising their democratic rights and "freedom of speech". The government appeared to leave the verdict of this civil rights issue to the individual (despite ongoing political interference in the process by members of parliament), positioning the outcome as one of

self-determination and choice, key elements in neoliberal discourse. The everyday Australian was constructed as deserving a "voice" on the topic and that all opinions, no matter how divisive or ill-informed, were worthy. This facilitated an onslaught of homophobic abuse and permitted people who have no understanding or knowledge of the gender and sexuality diverse community to be swayed by fear campaigns. Sub-surface problematic attitudes were openly spoken, re-inscribing the gender and sexuality diverse community in negative and destructive discourses. As Perales et al. (2019) also point out, "religious groups rallied their constituents in an endeavour to direct the broader social outcome, "violating the doctrine of religious restraint" (p. 126). Despite the positive result and marriage equality becoming enshrined in legislation, "religious leaders expressed disappointment and the desire for (even more) freedom to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people" (Perales et al., 2019, p. 114). Since then, there has been an ongoing, active and contentious campaign to increase protections for religious freedoms (Taylor, 2019), although protections for religion already exist in current legislation. Again, the gender and sexuality diverse communities are at the centre of this public "debate" with many in the community feeling vulnerable and attacked according to a study of 4,500 LGBTIQ+ participants and their allies (Potts, 2019). At the time of writing, the outcome of this debate is yet to be determined, however, such changes will likely enable people to discriminate with even greater impunity against gender and sexuality diverse individuals and communities (see Chapters 3 and 4 for further discussion about this legislation).

Thus, the process of the postal vote engaged with and simultaneously reinforced a culture of limitation in Australia. Its impact was socially divisive, cutting "across the traditional left-right ideological divide" (Gravelle & Carson, 2019, p. 189). The process created considerable emotional harm within the gender and sexuality diverse community—an already marginalised group. As Craw (2017) stated in an online opinion piece:

> Having witnessed first-hand the vitriol stirred up during the UK's Brexit referendum, it's all too familiar to see echoes of the ugly division played out in Australia. While the question and the method might be different, the simultaneously spineless and hubristic decision of political leaders to place the question [of marriage equality] in public hands out of a short-sighted desire for preservation has driven a wedge through society that impacts those most vulnerable to it.

It should be noted, no other legislation of any nature has ever been brought to the Australian people in this way. It should also be noted, despite the political rhetoric stating that Australians could have a "measured" debate about the issue, the Parliament also saw a need to rush

through special protections for the life of the campaign, to "ban vilification, intimidation and threats" (Koziol & Massola, 2017). The negative impact on the gender and sexuality diverse community during the polling period of nearly two months was palpable; they were subjected daily to hate speech, misleading advertising that screened on air and swamped social media and derogatory comments by those who opposed marriage equality or those who simply rejected gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities. Relationships with family, friends and colleagues were ruptured and many gender and sexuality diverse individuals felt unsafe undertaking their everyday activities (Ecker & Bennett, 2017).

Although there was abuse from both sides of the debate, the gender and sexuality diverse community who has experienced marginalisation for decades, interpersonally as well as through socio-cultural and political institutions, was yet again a target, openly and violently re/constituted in discriminatory discourses; the "vote", despite the emergency protection laws passed through Parliament, enabled a near limitless opportunity for vitriol, misinformation and media-fuelled hysteria. For example, on talk back radio, a caller rang an "ABC Melbourne program to praise Hitler's treatment of gay people" (Carmody, 2017), which involved the internment of gender and sexuality diverse people in concentration camps during World War II. Gay pride flags were burnt in people's front yards (Schenk, 2017). Individuals were physically attacked and antiquated discourses of gender and sexuality diverse people as paedophiles resurfaced (Reynolds, Kourbaridis, & Brook, 2017), as did misinformation through the "No" campaign's attempts to garner support. As Allan Fels, Co-chair of Australia's Mental Health Commission stated in the press, gender and sexuality diverse people:

> have been experiencing damaging behaviour in their workplaces, communities and in social and traditional media. . . . The Commission is alarmed about the potential negative health impacts these debates are having on individuals, couples and families who face scrutiny and judgment.
>
> (Craw, 2017)

Other mental health support organisations attested to a significant increase in demand for their services after the postal vote became government strategy, with one service, ReachOut, highlighting how "young gay people report[ed] feeling scared and tired of personal attacks" (Gartrell, 2017, para 3). Similarly, gender and sexuality diverse teachers reported an increased sense of vulnerability and scrutiny in the school context—their workplace—during that period of time (Ullman & Smith, 2018). Of interest was the responses to this kind of information by those in the nation's leadership, many of whom displayed no understanding of the long-term impacts of discrimination, particularly when experienced by

disenfranchised minority groups over decades. For instance, one senator tweeted, "Can't we just all grow a spine and grow up? The debate hasn't been that bad" (Karp, 2017, para 5). Similarly, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, reflected on how he was sick of the whole debate and wanted people to "Just get out of my face" (The Bulletin, 2017, para 7). It was somewhat ironic that he felt this way considering it was the coalition party of which he was a member who thrust the campaign onto the public and onto one of the most historically and persistently maligned groups in the country. Those who are discursively privileged often do not engage critically with the disenfranchised; their discursive power and subject positioning do not require a reflexive analysis.

Although power is experienced at all levels in society, even by those who are marginalised, politicians with unrestricted access to the media are extremely influential and are in an easy position to perpetuate particular discourses—whether equitable or not. In their exploration of right-wing violence in Germany, Koopmans and Olzak (2004) refer to the impact of "discursive opportunities" to describe the ways that media attention, public reactions by third parties, and public controversies surrounding the targets of violence can encourage violent acts in a society (p. 199). Their analysis of bias-based violent events found that both front-page newspaper visibility of bias-based violence and "consonance"—media-based claims *against* minority group targets by influential individuals—raises rates of police-reported violence.

Thus, when politicians legitimise bias against minority groups through, for example, questioning their moral code, refusing to enact protective measures or provide protective resources (or reversing/removing existing measures and/or resources), the social repercussions reverberate throughout the community. Research exploring Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data from the US has shown that when US President Donald Trump tweets anti-Muslim sentiments, hate crimes increase (Müller & Schwarz, 2018). Likewise, in that country, hate crimes against transgender individuals have been rising since the start of Trump's presidency (Pitofsky, 2018), coinciding with his administration's vocal removal of gender identity as an identified and protected area relevant to sex discrimination and the subsequent nationwide debates on the rights of transgender individuals to use the bathroom associated with their identified gender. The culture of limitation may present in different ways internationally, but the effects on the marginalised are similar.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 provided some understandings of the Australian context and the theoretical concepts shaping the discussions in this book. It illustrated how a culture of limitation present in Australia impacts the lives of gender and sexuality diverse people. However, its influences and effects are

perhaps felt nowhere more acutely than in the K-12 educational context where it can in/directly impact school curriculum, affect policy, practice and culture and contribute to the workplace experiences of gender and sexuality diverse school employees. In moving forward, the following chapters focus on the implications of a culture of limitation on schools, students and teachers.

Notes

1. The term gender and sexuality diverse/diversity is used throughout this book to denote all individuals who do not necessarily ascribe to strictly cisgender and heterosexual norms. Other terms, such as the acronym LGBT/LGBTQ/LGBTQIA+, may also be used but this is generally only when referring to the work/research/writing of others who have employed these acronyms.
2. The authors recognise not all people who are religious are anti-diversity, homophobic or transphobic and there is a broad range of religious belief.
3. The term "parents" is used throughout this book to represent all parents, biological or otherwise, of school-aged young people, including carers, guardians and extended family.
4. The Stonewall Riot was a spontaneous uprising by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities against a police raid at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village in New York City in 1969. The start of the gay liberation movement is in many ways attributed to this event.
5. Australian states, in the main, repealed anti-sodomy laws between 1976 and 1990. Tasmania maintained such laws until as late as 1997, when it was forced by the Federal Government and the United Nations Human Rights Committee to repeal them.

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2 Moral Panic and a Culture of Limitation

Implications for Curriculum Development

Introduction

The previous chapter explored the notion of a culture of limitation and illustrated some of the ways it operates in Australia generally, and in relation to gender and sexuality diversity more specifically. This chapter narrows the focus to examine how a culture of limitation intersects with gender and sexuality diversity in education to negatively affect the operations of schools, including what is incorporated into official curriculum. A culture of limitation, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality diversity, is discernible in the education of young people and arguably is, at least partially, the result of the prominent moral panics about the inclusion of related content that have arisen over approximately the last two decades. These moral panics have, in the main, been fuelled by neoconservative and religious individuals, groups and political factions and often delivered oxygen by the right-wing press as well as social media. However, Australia is not alone; similar struggles in terms of gender and sexuality diversity inclusions appear to be an international phenomenon and are evident in other comparable countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. Some of these cases will also be alluded to in this chapter, illustrating that although Australia demonstrates its own particular brand of a culture of limitation, similar restrictive cultures are evident elsewhere which impede the educational possibilities of young people.

Considering the deleterious impact of homo/transphobia on individuals and the global research that documents the omnipresence of such discrimination in schools (Bradlow, Bartram, Guasp, & Jadva, 2017; Hillier et al., 2010; Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018; Ullman, 2015), as well as the increasing number of youth self-identifying as not exclusively heterosexual (Fisher et al., 2019; Hillier et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2016; Mitchell, Patrick, Heywood, Blackman, & Pitts, 2014), it is difficult to comprehend the rationality of these ongoing debates or vindicate the seeming inevitable genuflection to a culture of limitation that occurs by governments and Departments of Education

when debate arises. There is now ample research evidence to support the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity-related content in the curriculum to reduce discrimination and inequity in schools (Baams, Dubas, & van Aken, 2017; Ong, Hodge, & Hart, 2014; Seelman, Forge, Walls, & Bridges, 2015). This would have positive outcomes for young people; by extension, it would also be conducive to greater inclusion and justice in the workplace for gender and sexuality diverse teachers—topics explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

Yet, governments and educational authorities remain largely remiss in their support for gender and sexuality diversity in the curriculum, providing little, if any, guidance for pedagogues to include such content and leaving decisions related to inclusion largely up to individual schools and teachers who are required to consider the ethos of the local community prior broaching the topic (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016). How this is done and the implications of the approach are explored later in this chapter, illustrated largely through a review of curriculum and resource development in New South Wales, the state in which the authors focus much of their work. What is argued and is critical to note is because teachers and schools fear negative public or community backlash from *any* mention of gender and sexuality diversity-related content, such inclusion is constrained at best and often avoided (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; DePalma & Jennet, 2010). Thus, the lack of explicit guidance by departments of education, curriculum writers and policy makers is not only *influenced* by a culture of limitation that detracts from progress towards greater socio-cultural equity, it simultaneously *reinforces* an apparent validity of a culture of limitation's positionality through ongoing educational silences and invisibility. These institutions' lack of resistance to the limiting discourses, in effect, regulates all people (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Sedgwick, 1990).

Not all educational systems and schools in Australia (or elsewhere) are in servitude to a culture of limitation, as shall be illustrated in Chapter 5, but many recoil from issues of gender and sexuality diversity inclusions. This is undoubtedly in response to the potential influence of a culture of limitation, its provocation of moral panic and the subsequent directives of silencing around curriculum inclusion from the highest bureaucratic and political levels. This chapter, thus, embarks on a potted history of some of the moral debates that have arisen in Australia over approximately the last two decades in relation to the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in the education of children and youth. Specifically, it sheds light on how a culture of limitation influenced the exclusion of educative attempts to merely allude to lesbian mothering through the pillaring of a long-standing and highly regarded children's educational television show *Play School*; interfered in, and consequently removed teaching resources in response to a developing moral panic about a Year 9 empathy exercise that focused on sexuality diversity; impacted a small pilot program in

New South Wales called *Proud Schools*; and, more recently, interfered in secondary schools' viewing of an award-winning documentary called *Gayby Baby*. A fuller account of the spectacular demise of the national rolling out of the *Safe School's Coalition Australia* program is provided as the method of its annihilation was particularly comprehensive and oppressive and illustrated the volatile and expansive impact of a culture of limitation on discursive knowledge production and educational opportunities. Unfortunately, the outcome has had a considerably negative impact on gender and sexuality diversity curriculum inclusion across most states in the nation, arguably decreasing the ability of schools to do this important anti-discriminatory work. This begs the question: who does this work when providers who support schools are under-resourced and where individuals and organisations are effectively thwarted from educating in this area? The chapter then explores the problematic issues related to gender and sexuality diversity-related curriculum and syllabus inclusions and illustrates how non-interventionist approaches and lack of explicit direction render gender and sexuality diversity-related topics in schools difficult for teachers to broach, resulting in silence and invisibility; these effectively further reinforce the operations and intent of a culture of limitation.

Moral Panics and Public Debates: A Potted History of Hysteria in Australia

Education is ensconced in political rhetoric, often seemingly influenced by a culture of limitation that is fuelled by, and feeds off, moral panic. As Kerry Robinson notes:

> moral panics are used as a political strategy for maintaining the hegemony of the nuclear family, the sanctity of heterosexual relationships and the heteronormative social order . . . [where particular] . . . discourses are mobilised by right-wing politicians and moral entrepreneurs to strategically instigate a moral panic at critical points in time, in order to reassert conservative values within a heteronormative social order.
>
> (Robinson, 2008, p. 114)

Public debates and moral panics about the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in the schooling context largely centre around the "suitability" of gender and sexuality diversity-related knowledges for young people. They have often involved fear-mongering that teachers will teach gay sex (Bhole, 2017) and a conviction that broaching such topics in the classroom will encourage young people to think positively about gender and sexuality diversity when it breaches fundamentalist religious beliefs (Parveen, 2019a). A number of hegemonic discourses are in operation

around these tensions which serve to misrecognise the value and intent of such knowledge. One positions children and young people in dominant Western discourses of childhood which constructs children and youth in binary opposition to adults, as universally innocent, vulnerable, irrational, asexual and in need of adult protections (Robinson, 2008). These protections are at least partly in response to the ways gender and sexuality diverse subjects have been sexualised and "queer-ified", defined through their sexual and gender subjectivities in everyday parlance. For example, one may be described as a "lesbian teacher"—where the point of difference is marked, compared with the unmarked and normalised positionality of the heterosexual (teacher) subject (Foucault, 1978). Gender and sexuality diversity is also associated with a "broad range of taboo sexual topics" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 251) and as DePalma and Jennet (2010, p. 19) point out,

> an implicit conceptual link between sexual orientation and sexual activity has led teachers to avoid addressing same-sex relationships within, for example, discussions of family, friendship, self or growing up, despite the fact that many children in their care will have at least some connection . . . to non-heterosexual relationships.

Exposing young people to anything sexual, particularly that which is not heteronormative and constructed as "abnormal", is perceived as inappropriate and problematic.

In line with this, a second discourse positions gender and sexuality diverse people as "folk devil" (Robinson, 2008, p. 114) who target and pervert these aforementioned young children. Historically, gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities were constructed through social, cultural and medical institutions as sick, deviant, perverse and abnormal. Consequently, they have been situated within discourses of disease, predation, hypersexuality, instability, immorality and as possessing an agenda to recruit others, particularly young people, into their "hedonistic homosexual lifestyle" (Robinson, 2008, p. 114).

Moral panics also perpetuate discourses that construct the dominance of a global parent subject who does not want such "adult centred" information incorporated into the education of their child. As a consequence, teachers and schools believe to do so inevitably risks parental and community backlash (Duffy, Fotinatos, Smith, & Burke, 2013; Milton, 2010; Smith et al., 2011), negatively implicating the individual teacher and potentially tarnishing the reputation of the school in which they are employed. However, in reality, little research exists about what parents who live in Australia *actually want* in relation to such content inclusions, (with the exceptions being Macbeth, Weerakoon, & Sitharthan, 2009; Ollis, Harrison, & Richardson, 2012; Robinson, Smith, & Davies, 2017; Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016), with assumptions about parental perspectives

influencing policy and strategy—an area explored further in Chapter 5. Thus, teachers and schools remain impacted by the legacies of moral panics which inform what is safe to teach and which are used to justify the lack of visibility of this form of diversity within classrooms (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2014, 2017a; Ullman & Ferfolja, 2015). Examples of these moral panics and the events that ensued are detailed in the following sections of this discussion.

"Play School", An Empathy Exercise, "Proud Schools", "Gayby Baby" and the "Safe Schools Coalition Australia"

Play School

In 2004, *Play School*, the longest-running and most highly regarded young children's educational television program shown on the Australian broadcaster, the ABC, became the subject of a public moral panic. The show was criticised by politicians, conservative media and religious lobby groups for portraying two women, lesbian mothers, taking their daughter and her friend to a theme park. The segment in which the mothers appeared, "Through the Window" (Marriner, 2004), formed part of a long-standing format which had focused on many kinds of diversity. There were no visual clues about the women being a couple other than appearing together watching the children playing on 'dodgem' (bumper) cars and a merry-go-round, with the voiceover of one of the children saying, "I'm Brenna. That's me in the blue. My mums are taking me and my friend Meryn to an amusement park", before moving on to another part of the program (Robinson, 2008).

This was not the first screening of this episode; the initial broadcast went largely unnoticed. The second transmission, however, resulted in an extended moral panic at a politically expedient time just prior to a federal election. Both sides of Parliament distanced themselves from the broadcast. As Robinson (2008) points out, the screening also corresponded to the introduction of a parliamentary bill aimed at amending the Marriage Act 1961 to endorse marriage as only possible between a man and a woman, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The sitting Conservative Prime Minister, John Howard, capitalised on the ensuing media publicity and the increased discriminatory climate resulting from the public discussion to vehemently and successfully campaign for his cause. He claimed there were "community concerns that the sanctity of marriage was threatened (concerns which were not substantiated)" (Robinson, 2008, p. 119). Concurrently, Howard sought further amendments to anti-discrimination legislation to limit IVF access to heterosexual, married women. Thus, political interference at the highest level reinforced the superiority and reification of the heteronormative nuclear family, couched in conservative ("common-sense") and religious discourse, at

the expense of the diversity present within the broader community. Discourses of the welfare of the child subject and the importance of a mother and father were promulgated and used to control and restrict the actions of adults—a strategy used more recently in the marriage equality debate explored earlier.

Although the ABC's head of children's television stated the piece was illustrative of the many types of family constellations in existence in Australia, conservative politicians used the debate for political convenience, drawing on discourses that perpetuated a culture of limitation. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs at the time admonished the ABC for being "too politically correct"; a refrain employed frequently by the Conservative government of the period and which remains a common criticism applied to anyone attempting to promote equity, human rights, equality of access as well as opportunity for the marginalised. As the Minister, Larry Anthony, reportedly said:

> I think I'm representing the majority of Australian parents. . . . My kids watch *Play School*. I think it is an excellent production. But I think it's important for those program producers to ensure that they are not just responding to minorities. There is a responsibility to parents and I don't think it's appropriate. I think *Play School* has been an excellent program but I wouldn't like to see it become politically correct.
>
> (Marriner, 2004)

Several issues are of interest here. The first is the assumption that the parent subject is automatically assumed to be in opposition to the inclusion of educational materials that broach the topic of gender and sexuality diversity with children (regardless of how subtly). This parent subject is constructed as highly conservative and as possessing traditional values that reify the normativity of heterosexuality, and who apparently wish any mention of gender and sexuality diversity to be avoided in front of their child (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017b; Thompson, 2018). It is this construction of the apparently aggrieved parent subject that educators feel obliged to accommodate and to whom they demonstrate a constant, near-mollifying responsiveness, to the detriment of other, more progressive parental views.

The second issue is that this was the only mention of gender and sexuality diversity in the history of *Play School*, which had, at the time, been screening for nearly 40 years; hardly "just responding to minorities". It is interesting to note how *any* allusion to gender and sexuality diversity in educational contexts, no matter how minimal, is perceived as excessive (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001, 2008), despite the fact that heterosexuality and heteronormalising discourses are omnipresent not only throughout society but, more specifically, in educational contexts; these

are never questioned as being over-represented. Third, endeavouring to work towards any socially just agenda is simultaneously positioned as "political correctness" (PC), a concept used to undermine such work (Ahluwalia & McCarthy, 1998). As Ahluwalia and McCarthy noted two decades ago about the history and rise of the use of the phrase:

> The PC debate in Australia appears as a reaction to the perceived gains of marginal groups such as Aboriginal people, feminists, the gay community and recent migrants. It is not coincidental that these groups were seen to be making significant gains; in one sense, the PC controversy appears to be no more than a backlash against these very groups. (p. 79)

Arguably becoming an entrenched discourse in Australia during John Howard's term in office as Prime Minister (1996–2007), and reinforced by the conservative media, the notion of political correctness gained traction and was used to denigrate anything that threatened Howard's promotion and maintenance of the mainstream and perpetuation of social conservatism (Ahluwalia & McCarthy, 1998; Johnson & Tremblay, 2018). These discourses that perpetuate the power of the privileged status quo at the expense of the Other reflect and propagate the ethos and intent of a culture of limitation. Finally, although anecdotally, it is interesting to note how many people had *heard* about the *Play School* incident via media reporting compared to how few actually *watched* the segment. Despite this, at the time, everybody seemed to have an opinion.

Empathy Exercise

Constraining gender and sexuality diversity-related inclusions in learning has not been relegated to only young children, but has also been witnessed in the education of adolescents. For instance, in 2005, a secondary school teacher in NSW directed students to undertake an empathy task in relation to being lesbian or gay. Empathy exercises are frequently used pedagogically to build understanding of the perspectives and lives of others. A moral panic was instigated, fuelled by the media. Politicians quickly became embroiled. In response to the brouhaha, the sitting NSW State Education (Labor) minister banned any further use of the lesson's "inappropriate" materials after a member of the community complained to the Conservative Federal Education Minister (Barnes, 2005). This sanction occurred even though the lesson was, at the time, located on the NSW Department of Education's website. Ironically, it had been available for use by teachers for at least a year before the incident (Welch, 2005).

> The course that caused the uproar was within the Department of Education's guidelines, was funded by the department . . . and was

> removed only after the story broke. . . . What we're [the Teachers' Federation] now getting calls about are other teachers fearful that they'll be somehow castigated by [the press] and the minister will let them down as well.
>
> (Welch, 2005, cited in Ferfolja, 2013, p. 163)

As this quote illustrates, such public commotion makes teachers anxious about implementing lessons that include gender and sexuality diversity-related content for fear of becoming media targets themselves. After all, the teacher was using resources endorsed by their employing institution, ultimately headed by the state's Education Minister who reneged on her responsibility to support the curriculum by banning the materials. The then President of the Secondary Principals' Council, Chris Bonner, wrote to the Minister. The letter included the following in part:

> Teachers and especially PD [Personal Development] teachers will see the response of the government as simply a disgraceful act of cowardice. Your reported response is even out of step with readers of the Daily Telegraph [a popular tabloid newspaper]. When asked "do you think this subject matter should be taught in schools?" 80 per cent responded "yes". Your response certainly does not align well with other government and DET [Department of Education and Training] initiatives for dealing with homophobia . . . the task of principals is now to convince their teachers not to walk away from using teaching and learning materials which challenge students to understand the world of others and in the process reduce discrimination, bullying and homophobia.
>
> (Bonner, cited in Barnes, 2005, p. 1)

What Bonner's letter draws attention to is the blatant interference by politicians to appease a populace who did not express any real resistance to the lesson in the first instance but, rather, expressed overwhelming support for it. The lesson, as Bonner pointed out, reflected other apparent government and educational initiatives. Prohibiting meaningful educational materials on the grounds of one (or even a few) complainant(s) is an extreme form of conservative reactivity. It further silences gender and sexuality diversity-related content in schools as teachers will actively avoid broaching the issue, as recognised by Bonner. When empathy exercises are undertaken in relation to any other form of diversity they are unremarkable. However, when dealing with gender and sexuality diversity in education, the fear seems to be if a student imagines hard enough, they can just imagine themselves right into becoming gender and sexuality diverse (a problematic outcome for those wishing to maintain the heteronormative!). The outcome of the incident served no one, but reinscribed the legitimacy and prominence of discourses that constitute a culture of limitation.

Proud Schools

An NSW trial program, *Proud Schools*, was implemented across a dozen public high schools from 2011 through 2013 over a period of approximately 18 months. Its aim was to address homophobia and create schools inclusive and safe for gender and sexuality diverse students (McNeilage, 2015). Interference from conservative politicians and lobby groups was reported in the press, although overall, and compared to its more recent successor, the *Safe Schools Coalition Australia* initiative, discussed later in this chapter, media coverage was sparse. However, divisive and sensationalist newspaper headlines such as "Being straight no longer normal, students taught" (Devine, 2012a) and "The thought police telling kids heterosexuality's not the norm" (Devine, 2012b) did emerge. Responses from a number of politicians, including a conservative Christian parliamentarian, Fred Nile, reportedly spoke of the program as "propaganda" (Devine, 2012a), and that said he was "opposed to the brainwashing of high school students, especially when they are going through puberty" (Devine, 2012a) and that "We will have more confused teenagers than ever" (Devine, 2012a). Further, there were claims that "at least 10 Liberal MPs are 'extremely concerned' about the program, and will complain to Education Minister Adrian Piccoli this week" (Devine, 2012a). These kinds of media reporting both constitute and are constituted in discourses that position gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities as abnormal and the teaching of related content as inappropriate for young people, thus seeking to prohibit inclusion in curriculum.

However, the power of the culture of limitation does not only reside with the nation's politicians. As Foucault posited, it is everywhere and nowhere (1978). Grassroots activism by the conservative lobby group "Family Voice" coalesced, presenting a petition to the then State Premier, requesting the program be withdrawn from schools. As one letter to parents, from Kingdom Connections Illawarra—A Network of Christian Leaders and Churches, stated:

> Christian teaching says we should hate the sin but love the sinner. There is no excuse for bullying of any kind. But for a state government department to imply that the plain words of the Bible do not mean what they say is a disturbing move which is contrary to the government's mandate.
>
> (Mitchell, 2013)

Despite this claim in relation to a government mandate, state-run institutions are meant to be secular. The importance of addressing issues related to gender and sexuality diversity in schools was recognised in the evaluation report of the *Proud Schools* program that acknowledged

"there is a strong relationship between homophobic abuse and self-harm and suicide . . . and drug and alcohol abuse" and that homophobia has negative ramifications for health and wellbeing (Ong et al., 2014, ix). More than two thirds of students who partook in the *Proud Schools* evaluation felt the initiative "had a positive impact in their school" (Ong et al., 2014, p. xii).

The evaluation found a whole-of-school approach was, unsurprisingly, effective in creating a more positive climate for gender and sexuality diverse students and even small initiatives could help. Predictably, the schools that reported most change "appeared to mirror the depth and scope of strategies being implemented in a school" in relation to gender and sexuality diversity (Ong et al., 2014, pp. xiii–xiv). However, as the report documents, tension about addressing such issues was apparent in some situations. Thus, schools unused to this work focused on a broad approach to diversity as they felt "this approach was more acceptable to their parents" (Ong et al., 2014, pp. xii–xiii).

Moreover, the evaluation report claimed schools desired greater leadership from the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) and this would "encourage schools to actively address homophobic and transphobic bullying, which affects student welfare and learning outcomes" (Ong et al., 2014, p. xiv). Departmental messaging about gender and sexuality diversity in curriculum and resources is generally diluted and vague, as most educational bodies err on the side of extreme conservatism and near avoidance for fear of a public sentiment that arguably reflects a vocal minority when one considers broader social change in relation to these issues. Rather than taking a stand to genuinely support diversity and those who teach about it, teachers who attempt to incorporate gender and sexuality diversity in their classrooms often do so at their own professional peril, a position discussed later in this chapter. Despite the *Proud Schools* program's relative small-scale success, it was not extended and there was no formal announcement by the DEC about its cessation (School Governance, 2015). It was around this time the DEC stated it was supporting the *Safe Schools Coalition Australia* program which started to be rolled out across the nation and which will be discussed shortly.

Gayby Baby

In 2015, *Gayby Baby*, an Australian, award-winning documentary, was to be screened at Burwood Girls High School and approximately 40 other NSW secondary schools on Wear It Purple Day[1] before the film's release in Australian theatres (Tseng, 2016). *Gayby Baby* records the lives of four children growing up in lesbian-and-gay-headed families. The film observes the mundanities and complexities of family life, illustrating that

regardless of constellation, family is family. In many ways, the documentary was pioneering. As Shannon and Smith (2017) articulate:

> The documentary champions the "legitimacy" and health of these families by adopting the very techniques which opponents of marriage equality and same-sex parenting use to rationalise their prejudiced arguments against social change. It provides a platform for the voice of real children and their lived experiences into the current national dialogue on the personal and political issue of marriage equality and same-sex parenting, signifying a groundbreaking departure from traditional "adults-only" discourse.
>
> (p. 246)

Former Burwood Girls High School student Maya Newell, who directed the film and led the strategy to screen it in schools, was targeted by the media, conservative lobby groups and politicians, as was her Alma Mater. A day prior to the planned viewing, headlines appeared in the press such as "Gay class uproar" with a tagline that stated, "Parents outraged as Sydney school swaps lessons for PC movie session" (Tseng, 2016) and "Schools learn their PC before the ABC" (Daily Telegraph, 2015). Such headlines sent a "deliberate message there is something intrinsically wrong" with lesbian-and-gay-headed families (Shaw, 2015). Although there were apparently no complaints from parents to Burwood Girls High in relation to the screening (Safi, 2015), the state Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli, intervened in the learning activity, issuing an "extraordinary ministerial decree" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 247) that forbid the film's viewing during school hours on the grounds it was "not part of the curriculum" (McDougall, 2015). This is despite the fact that gender and sexuality diversity is included in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Curriculum Years 7–10 in the state in which this intervention occurred, as are notions of family and relationships (Board of Studies, 2003). As Charlotte Mars, the producer of the film, reportedly stated, "You have the leadership deciding that our film does not belong in schools, which is effectively saying that our families don't belong there either" (Tseng, 2016). Jeffries (2018, p. 83) rightly points out that such action as undertaken by the minister "sent a message about the [in]appropriateness of representing sexuality diverse families in schools. This was especially true given regular classes had previously been cancelled for religious programs, films, and visits by politicians" without government interference.

The rising conservative voices invigorated a culture of limitation around gender and sexuality diversity, resulting in the official revoking of yet another useful pedagogical moment that would have assisted teachers to broach this form of diversity in a meaningful way in classrooms. Young people are daily positioned within heterosexual discourses and

are surrounded by images of the heteronormative family. Yet, in this instance, they were not only prohibited from gaining understandings about alternative family types, but from acquiring valuable life lessons about diversity that could enhance harmony in schools and, by extension, the broader community into the future. In the case of children from gay-and-lesbian-headed families, the influence and imposition of a culture of limitation ensured they missed an opportunity to see themselves reflected in the manifest curriculum, but clearly learned of their and their family's subjugated position through the subtext as expressed through political leaders' responses to the screening and associated media hysteria. Moreover, the banning seemed to inherently condone further exclusion and marginalisation of young people from same-sex-headed families, justifying the current and future lack of inclusion and action on the part of teachers and schools to acknowledge this form of diversity. Moreover, on a more global perspective, as Shannon and Smith (2017, p. 248) point out, "The banning of the film calls into question the capacity for individuals to participate in the democratic project . . . and the attempts of politicians to limit information about genders and sexualities in the public school system". Once again, a high-quality resource that could be used pedagogically to educate about gender and sexuality diversity was diminished by a culture of limitation, reinforcing an already existing legacy resultant of previous moral panics.

Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA)

Progressive initiatives aimed at both increasing understandings about gender and sexuality diversity as well as decreasing homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools are, as illustrated, used for political expediency particularly by those positioned within, and advocating for, a culture of limitation. The Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) program is a case in point. It will be referred to, at times, throughout the remainder of this book largely because of the impact the highly publicised and contentious "debate"[2] had on schools and curriculum, as well as on the lived experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers in Australia. The relentless hostility towards the program and what its ultimate endeavours were—promoting safe and respectful school environments for gender and sexuality diverse students, their families and staff—left a problematic legacy in a range of ways in relation to gender and sexuality diversity-related curriculum inclusions and the depoliticised positioning of homo/transphobia in schools in terms of bullying frameworks, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The Safe Schools Coalition (SSC) was originally implemented in the progressive state of Victoria. Its success encouraged the Victorian state government to increase its funding (Law, 2017), and over a period of about four years, it advanced into other states to become a national

initiative. Its name was changed to SSCA to reflect its national approach and it received $8 million in federal funding over three years; this was a very small investment for its nationwide implementation compared to that given to a controversial school chaplaincy program which cost the federal government $243.8 million over four years (Law, 2017, p. 3).

Schools' involvement with SSCA was always optional. The only formality for participation was a promise by schools to endeavour to create a safe environment. As Benjamin Law (2017) wrote in his comprehensive essay of the ensuing moral panic:

> The only formal requirement for a school to become a member of Safe Schools Coalition Australia is the completion of a membership form signed by the school principal. In signing, principals make a genuine commitment to building a school that is free from homophobia and transphobia and to support gender diversity, intersex and sexual diversity. SSCA member schools are not expected to be 100% safe.
>
> (p. 16)

Of interest, SSCA did not provide a program for school implementation, however, and schools began to request support materials illustrating teacher interest in addressing gender and sexuality diversity-related topics in their classrooms (Law, 2017). The SSCA team, guided by the national curriculum, and in conjunction with the federal education department, experienced educational consultants, and a youth-advocacy network, Minus-18, produced "a teaching and learning resource called *All of Us*,[3] which sought to broach the topics of sexuality and gender diversity in the classroom" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 248). The resource is for teachers and had been created for students in Years 7 and 8.[4] SSCA piloted the resource in schools prior to its 2015 launch (Law, 2017) and the program was endorsed by politicians—even those on the conservative spectrum—albeit quietly (Law, 2017).

Minus 18 had also developed a set of unconnected resources aimed at gender and sexuality diverse young people who are experiencing issues around their gender and sexuality diverse identities called *OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer* and *OMG I'm Trans*. These included "personal anecdotes and advice about sex, sexuality and gender presentation, moderated by experts associated with Minus 18" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 248). An awareness of the high rates of suicide, depression and other mental illnesses among gender and sexuality diverse youth were key drivers of the development of these resources. However, these resources, perceived by some as inappropriate material for young people, along with *All of Us*, became identified as the totality of what SSCA was, "resulting in the brunt of [a subsequent] media backlash being directed at the Safe Schools Coalition" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 248).

This moral panic was based on misconception and embellishment. As Law (2017, p. 28) points out, politicians "turned feral" claiming the program "prematurely sexualised" children, and was designed to "indoctrinate children into a Marxist agenda of cultural relativism" (Law, 2017, p. 29). Young people were discursively positioned as impressionable and vulnerable, alongside reductive framings of the program's approach as being a "how-to" [have gay sex or "change" gender] guide. Public statements by prominent political leaders perpetuated a high degree of hyperbolic language that induced fear and misunderstanding in the broader populace—misinforming and panicking parents. The backlash was perpetuated in the main by neoconservative politicians, right-wing media commentators and religious groups (Law, 2017), some of whom claimed the "programmes intended to subscribe young people to left-wing ideology rather than to prevent bullying" and bully young people "into conforming to . . . the homosexual agenda" (Shannon & Smith, 2017, p. 248). The Australian Christian Lobby reportedly compared the program (along with marriage equality) "to the Holocaust, dubbing them all 'unthinkable things' that happened because societies lacked strong moral guardians" (Koziol, 2016). As Nicholas (2019, p. 1) points out, "In the media, Safe Schools was derided as an effort to undermine heterosexuality and 'the family' rather than as an anti-bullying program". The approach of SSCA transcended merely examining homophobia or transphobia as issues to be dealt with; rather it unambiguously spoke about "heteronormativity and normative, binary assumptions about gender as problems" (Nicholas, 2019, p. 2); in other words, a "threat" was perceived against what is understood as the rightful gender and sexual order.

The extent of the backlash was astounding. Benjamin Law reports in a single year, one of the nation's leading papers, *The Australian*, published approximately 90,000 words relating to the SSCA *on its own*, targeting not only the program but individuals involved with it. Many of these articles featured insults by elected officials and prominent community members with headlines like: "Activists push taxpayer-funded gay manual in schools" (Bita, 2016; Law, 2017). Rasmussen (2017, p. 6) points out that SSCA had "become symbolic of gender and sexual freedom in education in Australia" through its politicisation.

Social media reinforced the hysteria. On one site, the SSCA approach was described as "sexualised" and that it "promote[d] gender theories that are controversial for both the scientific community and the general public. The program is divisive because it challenges traditional sexual concepts" ("You're Teaching Our Children What?", n.d., para 3). Concern was expressed about the "positive manner" in which same-sex attracted and transgender youth were constructed and that the materials "encourage risky sexual activity and minimises the dangers associated with this" ("You're Teaching Our Children What?", n.d., para 7). Trolling of the topic appeared to maintain social engagement. The attack was

relentless and, along with the incessant criticism from right-wing federal parliamentarians, resulted in the then Liberal Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, ordering a formal review (Rasmussen, 2017). Despite the fact this review did not identify significant problems with the materials, financial government support was rescinded and the program's reputation and reach were devastated.

The impact on the provision of focused gender and sexuality diverse support materials through the demise of the SSCA was considerable. At the height of the media debacle, for instance, the NSW Department of Education seemingly systematically removed all online teaching resources to assist with the provision of a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education in the area of personal development, health and physical education (PD/H/PE), the key area in which such content is generally taught, and deployed a revised anti-bullying strategy, discussed further in Chapter 3. Critical resources, including a "Teacher Toolbox for delivering content relating to diversity of sex, sexuality and gender" (NSWTF, 2016), designed to support the PDHPE syllabus from Kindergarten through Year 10, and the "Crossroads" program, a mandatory PDHPE extension curriculum for students in Years 11 and 12, were removed from the department's website for review. While the department's "Review of Sexuality and Gender Education" (Louden, 2017) declared the material in these two resources consistent with syllabus outcomes, content articulating gender and sexuality diversity was repeatedly framed as "not . . . appropriate for all students" and teachers were instructed not to "use the materials without the approval of the school principal" (pp. 4–5). Such an approach renders silent these issues in schools as they are perceived by teachers as risky business and thus promoting understandings about gender and sexuality diversity is stymied. As Rawlings (2016, p. 9) points out:

> schools can be viewed as productive sites of knowledge, power and discourse that inform (and reflect) understandings of students, teachers and broader communities. . . . Through producing curricula, policies and everyday practices that are either formally sanctioned or informally permitted [or not], school institutions function to facilitate or marginalise, produce or disable particular types of knowledge.

The "Teacher Toolbox" document and the dedicated PDHPE support website "Teaching Sexual Health" (NSWDEC, 2015) were never replaced, the latter first "temporarily unavailable" between 2016 and 2019 and ultimately "suspended" in mid-2019; no trace of these curricular support materials exist online as at the time of writing. The "Crossroads" program for Years 11 and 12 was replaced with the mandatory (and neoliberally titled) "Life Ready" program in mid-2018, which fails to articulate gender and sexuality diversity in any of its publically available, outward-facing materials, with access to full lesson plans requiring

departmental login details. Life Ready's programmatic requirement for all materials to be "reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal" means content is subject to approval by a single individual's own prejudices and concerns (NSWDOE, 2018, para 1). Further, instructions advise that all *optional* lessons (1) should be chosen with consideration of "differing cultural perceptions of what should be taught at a certain age" (NSWDOE, 2018, para 9) and (2) can be delivered by external providers instead of classroom teachers, further distancing the department from what is seen as polarising and taboo knowledge. Within Australia's culture of limitation, it appears gender and sexuality diverse knowledges are not just risky—they are almost unspeakable.

Positioning gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive content as optional and not appealing or applicable to certain cohorts is in keeping with the NSW PDHPE K-10 syllabus documentation, which was also coincidentally updated during the height of the SSCA controversy and (re)released in 2018. While terms which articulate gender and sexuality diversity are defined in a glossary list at the conclusion of the document, these appear only twice within the main syllabus body—both as part of a list of (again) *optional* groups through which students might examine the concepts being explored (NESA, 2018). Accordingly, and as in previous iterations of the document (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2015), teachers could easily meet the syllabus objectives without ever acknowledging the existence of gender and sexuality diversity beyond a deficit framework of homophobia—the only required syllabus content related to gender and sexuality diversity across 11 years of schooling. It seems remiss that so little explicit reference to gender and sexuality diversity is apparent in an area of study designed to educate students about sexuality and relationships while promoting critical thinking about gender norms and stereotypes. Such blatant invisibility is in keeping with a neoliberal perspective; if gender and sexuality are personal, individual projects, then gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive content is only directly applicable to the (under)estimated 10%[5] of gender and sexuality diverse students who may exist in any given school. Additionally, teachers anecdotally report there are no gender and sexuality diverse students at their school, making the need for inclusive education near non-existent if one takes the position that such education is useful for those individuals alone. In an environment which positions schools as the arbiters of whether or not gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive content is appropriate for their student body, and subjects such content to official surveillance/review by school leadership personnel prior to its delivery—additional school administration which is wholly unique to this particular content area—it is a wonder such content ever sees the light of day in NSW classrooms at all.

The surveillance and regulation of information pertinent to topics related to gender and sexuality diversity is limiting to a range of young people, not only those who are gender and sexuality diverse. The removal

of quality educational opportunities in this area from schools fails to acknowledge that young people are increasingly identifying as not exclusively attracted to an 'opposite' gender (Fisher et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2016). Moreover, sexual practices and emotions are not necessarily driven by one's sexual orientation or gender identity, which are not necessarily inherent or stable subjectivities. Additionally, many young people recognise their sexuality diversity in primary school and can recognise their gender diversity even earlier (Luecke, 2011), thus reinforcing the need for an early, broad and inclusive approach to the topic of relationships and sexual health education. Yet, Australian research illustrates most gender and sexuality diverse young people feel they are not educationally catered to in this respect at school (Byron & Hunt, 2017; Hillier et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014) even though there is evidence that a combination of school and community initiatives enhance knowledge around STI prevention and protective behaviours while delaying sexual activity (Brown, Croy, Johnston, Pitts, & Lewis, 2013).

The disabling and subsequent demise of the SSCA program for school use and the manner in which it was drawn into other political/moral campaigns is a quintessential illustration of the reductive, closed and damaging nature of a culture of limitation and its negative impact on an education for a socially cohesive, equitable and accepting society. The political brouhaha created a space where the program was constructed as electorally hazardous. Moreover, the moral frenzy around SSCA had wider reach than educational contexts as it was craftily integrated by detractors into the marriage equality "No" campaign of 2017. Here it was used to encourage people to vote against marriage equality mainly on the basis of protecting innocent and vulnerable children from degenerate queers apparently keen to recruit a new generation of non-normative sex/gender rebels. Thus, the moral panic had potential implications for the outcome of a national civil and human rights debate.

Similarly, criticism of the "radical agenda" supposedly underpinning the SSCA reportedly became a 2016 Federal Election platform for various right-wing political groups such as The Christian Democratic Party, Family First and Australian Christians (Shannon & Smith, 2017). Interrogating the heteronormative family unit, the principal institution that is believed to form the basis of (patriarchal) society is perceived as a threat to social stability and its primary foundations. This prevailing fear highlights the instability and fragility of heterosexuality; this is positioned as the only natural and normal sexuality that needs to be maintained at all costs. However, it is apparently easily destabilised simply by the discussion of gender and sexuality diversity in schools and through the possible provision of the same rights, access and information for gender and sexuality diverse individuals as that enjoyed by their heterosexual counterparts.

The hysteria and lack of political gumption in supporting gender and sexuality diversity content inclusion in schools, as detailed earlier,

reinforces the belief by teachers and school administrators that addressing these issues with children and young people, even generally, is inappropriate and likely to result in parental and community backlash. The legacy of hysteria around SSCA has, inarguably, reinforced teacher inertia; they are fearful of reprisal if they broach these issues in the classroom and are not adequately supported through curriculum documentation or policy if they do so (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2015). Undoubtedly, there is a fear for teachers of being under surveillance which results in a careful self-regulation of their own behaviours and approaches to curriculum. By maintaining their avoidance of gender and sexuality diversity (arguably preferential to subjecting oneself and one's school to potentially negative press through a potential media frenzy and political point-scoring), schools are discursively positioning themselves within the culture of limitation whilst simultaneously re/producing it through silence and invisibility.

Teacher ignorance in the area of gender and sexuality diversity inevitably has been intensified by SSCA's closure through the loss of its professional development opportunities (Rasmussen, 2017). There will, instead, be a forced reliance on local education service providers who are not appropriately resourced to undertake the detail and reach of work that the SSCA had a government mandate to implement. In many ways a culture of limitation has achieved its goals in thwarting progress in this area; however, and somewhat unfortunately, Australia is not alone in these campaigns. Indeed, similar parochial assaults have been witnessed internationally, illustrating the different ways various brands of the culture of limitation are realised to frustrate the social outcomes of education which could otherwise benefit all children in different ways.

International Moral Panics

A Culture of Limitation in the UK: The Parkfield Experience

The efforts to undermine progressive educational shifts is apparent in other parts of the world and is inarguably reinforced through the global moves and increasing popularity of the political right. During the first half of 2019, a significant controversy occurred in England over the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity-related content in a Birmingham area school. Parkfield Community School, a primary school serving predominantly Muslim families, was featured in the UK-based media throughout early 2019 due to parental complaints about a resource developed by educator and author Eric Moffat (2017) entitled "No Outsiders". The "No Outsiders" curriculum aims to teach children about the various identities and diverse personal characteristics protected by Britain's Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 brought together 116 separate pieces of legislation into a single act, including legislation on race, disability, religion,

age, sex, gender and sexual orientation, to "promote a fair and more equal society" (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). Schools are required to adhere to the Equality Act and, towards that end, the "No Outsiders" curriculum support program developed by Moffat uses children's texts and art activities[6] to instil a whole-school ethos aligned with the celebration and promotion of diverse identities, including religious identities and new migrant identities as well as sexual orientation and diverse family structures (Moffat, 2017). "No Outsiders" was the product of a two-year, multi-stakeholder Economic Research Council Grant tasked with addressing how to teach sexuality in primary schools; it is noteworthy that the program had previously run for four years without complaint (Bagwell, 2019).

Following the initial objection, over approximately 10 weeks, protesters brought large groups of people, including their children whom the parents removed from school activities, to stand outside the school gates during school hours. Using megaphones, the protestors amplified various oppositional messages to gender and sexuality diversity inclusions (Bowden, 2019). Of interest is the reported frequency with which these protesting groups referred to the program as undermining "parental rights" or "parental choice" (Bowden, 2019). Their messages also drew upon discourses of childhood innocence and the sexualisation of all children through the inclusion of content related to gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities. Media interviews with a key school informant[7] highlighted false rumours circulating in the community about the "No Outsiders" resources; these included the apparent teaching of explicit sexual activity and using clay models of genitalia during lessons. The program was suspended in late March 2019 due to the tensions caused by the weekly protests (Parveen, 2019b).

This culture of limitation that interrupts education about diversity has history in the UK. On the one hand, while there are currently endeavours to make education more progressive in the UK through the Equality Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2010), the legacy of Section 28 lingers through the impact of discourses related to "parental choice" with regards to gender and sexuality diversity inclusions in the curriculum (Severs, 2019). "Section 28", a section of the Local Government Act deployed by Margaret Thatcher during her time as Prime Minister, enshrined in law in 1988, was a significant feature of her education reform platform. This section of the Local Government Act functioned as the highly conservative federal government's attempt to curtail the actions of local states by writing into law they could not "(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Lee, 2019).

It did not matter that local government authorities were not responsible for sex education in schools, the discursive effect of this "official and

legal disapproval of homosexuality" (Epstein, 2000, p. 1) had the impact of silencing such topics in schools for decades afterwards. Section 28 was based on the premise that despite homosexuality "being unnatural or abnormal" it can be " 'promoted' and learnt" (Epstein & Johnson, 1998, p. 58). Accordingly, classroom-based discussions of topics related to gender and sexuality diversity were discursively reconstituted by Section 28 supporters as teaching *how* to be "homosexual", rather than teaching *about* related issues and identities. Most disturbing, was the reported teacher anxiety about addressing homophobia in schools, believing they could not intervene lest they breach the law by "promoting" homosexuality as a legitimate sexual identity, or at least one which should not incite violence or hatred within school communities (Epstein, 2000). Their silences were ensured through threat of punishment in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault, 1978) in the form of potential dismissal from their employment or other adverse consequence. Moreover, the legacy of teacher fear about this legislation, even post its validity, was long term, with teachers not feeling confident about their right to include gender and sexuality diversity-related content in their teaching even decades after the repeal (Edwards, Brown, & Smith, 2016; Greenland & Nunney, 2008).

In the years preceding the official repeal of Section 28 in 2003, the UK saw a resurgence in homophobic messaging in political circles promulgated by the media with the recent Prime Minister Theresa May (then Shadow Minister for Education) standing firm in her support of Section 28 as a "victory for commonsense" ("Ministers back down", 2000, para 12). This political messaging reinforced discourses that reified heterosexuality as superior and natural at the expense of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities. While national surveying of the school-based experiences of gender and sexuality diverse people by the Stonewall group (Guasp, 2012) did not commence until 2007, post repeal, it is noteworthy that between 2007 and 2012, alongside governments' newly endorsed gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive training and resource production, researchers saw a clear improvement across every measure of school climate for gender and sexuality diverse students. Twice as many young people reported their schools taught that "homophobic bullying is wrong" and half as many reported their teachers "never respond to homophobic language" (Guasp, 2012, p. 30). Clearly, the discourses constituted within state messaging matters, with material consequences for the schooling experiences of gender and sexuality diverse young people.

A Culture of Limitation in the US—No Promo Homo

A culture of limitation surrounding gender and sexuality diversity is flourishing in the United States. Barely a year into his presidency, in 2017, Donald Trump's administration removed Title IX inclusions related to gender identity. Title IX was passed as part of the Education Amendments

of 1972 which, broadly, made it illegal to exclude or discriminate against individuals on the grounds of sex. President Barack Obama's administration made it known that transgender students have protections under this legislation. Trump's intervention means that decision-making regarding accommodation of trans/gender-diverse students' needs is located with individual states. This decision satisfied the US political right, allowing conservatively-governed states to perpetuate a discourse of sexualisation of gender and sexuality diverse identities, insinuating that issues like bathroom access served as a ruse for erotic spying on other (often discursively constructed as female) students as objects of sexual desire (Spencer, 2019). Unsurprisingly, discourses of disingenuity were used during a media-fuelled moral panic over bathroom access (Ullman, 2018), positioning access as an agenda of "radical social change" (de Vogue, Mallonnee & Grinberg, 2017) rather than evidence of support of student wellbeing in line with anti-discrimination legislation. In early 2018, this roll-back of trans/gender-diverse student rights was further entrenched when the US Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, confirmed that the Department of Education would no longer investigate civil complaints from transgender students denied access to a bathroom consistent with their gender identity (Summers, 2018).

Additionally, in the United States, seven of the 50 state Departments of Education, serving more than 9 million students, have what are colloquially called "no promo homo" laws in place, prohibiting positively oriented education about gender and sexuality diversity—that is, education which could be seen as "promoting homosexuality" (GLSEN, 2018, p. 1). In some of these states, the law requires silencing and invisibility of these subjectivities, in others, students must be *explicitly* taught homosexuality is not an "acceptable lifestyle" and is punishable under the laws of the state (Barrett & Bound, 2015). In their 2018 research brief, GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) used their National School Climate Survey data to compare the student cohort from "no promo homo" states to those in the rest of the country. Unsurprisingly, this cohort fared statistically significantly worse on every measure of positive school climate for gender and sexuality diverse students, experiencing higher levels of victimisation, less supportive classmates and less supportive and inclusive teachers, even after controlling for student/teacher demographics and school/state characteristics, such as state spending per pupil. This is an incredibly important finding, highlighting the enduring impact of state messaging on teacher—and through them, student—behaviours.

This culture of limitation and its reach is by no means limited to schools. The aforementioned Title IX changes coincided with the Trump administration making invisible gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities through other central government organisations. For example, the Centers for Disease Control was prohibited from using specific words in their 2018 budget, including "transgender" and "diversity". Similarly,

the Department of Health and Human Services was required to remove questions about sexual orientation and gender identity from one of their regular surveys and also removed references to LGBT persons from their website (Sun & Eilperin, 2017). During "Pride Month" in the United States in June 2019, the Trump administration refused to allow US embassies to fly the pride flag on their flagpoles, a policy change made right on the heels of their barring of transgender people who have undergone gender transition or who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria from enlisting in the US military, on the grounds they take "massive amounts of drugs" (Lederman, 2019). Such erasure positions gender and sexuality diverse peoples not only as Other, but constructs them as taboo and unworthy of mention.

Conclusion

This chapter reported how a culture of limitation is present not only in Australia, but in other similar democratic, English-speaking nations. We illustrated how a culture of limitation actively operates to obstruct the education of young people in relation to gender and sexuality diversity and how, in Australia, this has been particularly obvious in the very recent, public and concerted dismantling of the SSCA initiative. Schools, teachers and students are largely now without a nationwide common approach that has (questionably) adequate funding to assist in the implementation of effective learning around such diversity. Other general service providers, who lack the resources for a large-scale approach, cannot fill this void.

Those who will bear the brunt of this attack by a culture of limitation are the gender and sexuality diverse young people (and those assumed to be by others) who are fringe-dwellers, at best, in terms of representation in the curriculum, general visibility and inclusion in most schools. Families headed by gender and sexuality diverse parents/caregivers as well as gender and sexuality diverse teachers will also be affected. Failing to educate young people meaningfully about these issues risks ongoing discrimination into future generations, and governments and educational authorities who have responded to the noisy minority need to acknowledge their responsibility for this legacy. It is the impact on gender and sexuality diverse students in schools and the erasure of their experience through the machinations of a culture of limitation that will be explored in Chapter 3.

Notes

1. Wear It Purple is an organisation led by young people that supports diversity and equity (see www.wearitpurple.org/about). Wear It Purple Day is a day where people are encouraged to wear purple in support of LGBTQI youth and to raise awareness of LGBTQI bullying and harassment.
2. For a more detailed overview of this moral panic see Benjamin Law's (2017) essay, "Moral Panic 101. Equality, Acceptance and the Safe Schools Scandal". *Quarterly Essay*, 67.

3. See *All of Us* www.minus18.org.au/index.php/get-involved/campaigns/all-of-us
4. Students in Years 7 and 8 are usually between 12 and 14 years of age.
5. Recent Australian studies show estimates of gender and sexuality diverse teenagers ranging between 21% (Mitchell et al., 2014) and 16.4% (Johnson et al., 2016) of the population based on school-based population surveys.
6. See https://no-outsiders.com/ for information on the curriculum, including resources, training and relevant contacts.
7. In an interview with the BBC News during the time of the Parkfield School protests, Hazel Pulley, CEO of the Excelsior Multiacademy Trust which runs the school, highlighted the falsehoods being spread amongst the parent community as well as the negative impact of protests on staff and students' wellbeing. See: www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-birmingham-47699541/birmingham-schools-lgbt-row-protesters-aggressive-trust-ceo

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3 Schooling and a Culture of Limitation

Implications for Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students and Their Classmates

Introduction

The previous chapter explored histories of moral panics surrounding the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity in Australian schooling through the conceptual lens of a culture of limitation, highlighting similarities to other international contexts such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The chapter concluded by unpacking how the neoconservative ideals inherent in this culture constrict the curriculum and policy environment around inclusivity of gender and sexuality diversity within New South Wales schools, contrasting this with other states/territories and highlighting the inconsistencies which prevail in the Australian context. A review of these historical touchstone incidents exposes the discourses surrounding gender and sexuality diversity in schooling, discourses which foreground patriarchal values—including "traditional" (read: heterosexual), neoconservative family typologies and romantic relationships. At the heart of this is an assumed, "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1988, p. 623) which often manifests via marginalising school environments for gender and sexuality diverse students, or students assumed to be gender and sexuality diverse by their peers. To wit, quite the opposite from the asexual, value-free environments schools are constructed to be (Epstein & Johnson, 1998), "punitive and regulatory social conventions" (Butler, 1988, p. 527) govern the expression of gender and sexuality within school environments, from dress codes to curriculum choice to the boundaries of acceptable, hegemonic masculinities and femininities.

A recent Australian nationwide prevalence study revealed that "being or seeming 'gay'" was one of the leading reasons students are bullied in school environments (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). Social and academic rewards abound for students whose identities, gender expression and romantic behaviours align with the dominant heteronormative discourse, aided in no small part by educators' and curriculum silences in relation to gender and sexuality diverse knowledges, as discussed in Chapter 2. As Kehily (2002) writes, "schools can be seen as sites for the *production* of

gendered/sexualised identities rather than agencies that passively reflect dominant power relations" (p. 50, emphasis in original). Such production "works best" when its student-targets feel surveilled and policed (Foucault, 1978) and, although the extent of this may vary across different school environments, a review of the literature illustrates it is commonplace.

A central thesis of this book is that, in relation to the full progression of social justice and equity practices, the Australian context is hindered by a culture of limitation, inclusive of a heteropatriarchal (Nicholas, 2019) society heralded by the dominance of an Australian (white, colonial, patriotic, yet antiauthoritarian) masculinity (Wailing, 2017, p. 431) which mocks sentimentality (Bellanta, 2016) and functions alongside binarised, conservative, normative gender expectations. Within such a culture, and with specific regards to gender and sexuality diversity, social "order" is maintained through the careful cultivation of fear, uncertainty and resistance to diversity; nowhere is this better evidenced than within the schooling environment. This chapter will highlight the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students—arguably the least empowered members of the school community—forced to attend school by law, and coming of age in environments where their very existence challenges hetero/cisnormative assumptions and at a time when visibility of gender and sexuality diversity (and social/relationships education, more broadly) is at odds with a neoliberal schooling agenda. The chapter begins with an examination of the international literature on the schooling experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students, by way of drawing parallels with, and further contextualising, the Australian school environment. It continues by problematising the conceptualisation of school-based policing of normative gender and sexuality as "bullying" and notes the impossibility of locating this policing as an extension of a broader social phenomenon when schools view associated behaviours through such a narrow and prescriptive framework. The *Free2Be?* series of research projects investigating Australian gender and sexuality diverse students' experiences of school-based support and marginalisation are outlined in detail, with implications for understanding a culture of limitation through this work. The chapter concludes with a snapshot of the current political "moment" for gender and sexuality diverse students—the Australian religious freedoms bill and implications for students attending religiously affiliated schools.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students' Schooling Experiences: A Review of the Inter/National Literature

While this book focuses on a culture of limitation within Australia as dominating the cultural landscape in relation to these topics, frameworks which seek to restrict and limit the expression of gender and sexuality

diversity exist across many international locations, with both direct and indirect consequences for students. Of course, this culture of limitation structures the parameters, or boundaries, of "allowable" gender and sexuality diversity within the curriculum as experienced and/or assumed by educators. A subset of education research concerned with how school culture is intertwined with gender and sexuality diverse students' well-being, visibility, representation and schooling outcomes has sought to understand the nature and impact of contextual stressors and supports for this cohort. The most well-known and longest-running survey of gender and sexuality diverse secondary school students is conducted biennially by New York City's GLSEN group whose research over two decades has investigated both supportive and marginalising schooling experiences for American gender and sexuality diverse youth. Given their ability to take an empirically informed, macro perspective on trends and movements in this space, it is noteworthy that, in the preface to their latest 2017 *National School Climate Survey*, they point out:

> The progress of the last decade—the result of robust partnerships and concerted action in support of youth health and safety—has slowed. The momentum built over years of effort . . . now faces an entirely new level of pushback. Our work to secure respect for all in our schools now contends with the radical rejection of standards and values in public life we used to take for granted, and the continuing erosion of our public commitment to education for all. And that all shows up in the lives of LGBTQ students.
>
> (Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018, p. xiii)

GLSEN's data reflect these current challenges. In their 2018 report, of their final sample of 23,001 students aged 13–21 from across the United States, 70% of gender and sexuality diverse students surveyed experienced harassment at school based on their sexuality diversity, with nearly 60% reporting harassment based on their gender expression. All forms of homo/transphobic language queried were most frequently reported in politically conservative areas of the country (the South and Midwest), areas where students were least likely to report the presence of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curricular resources and policies, supportive educators or the presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). Perhaps most distressing, a sizeable percentage of participants reported hearing homophobic (57%) and transphobic (71%) remarks from their teachers and other adults at school. The study's authors note an upward trend in the frequency of staff making transphobic remarks between 2013 and 2017 and no change—where they had hoped for a decrease—in the frequency of peers' homophobic remarks during the same period (Kosciw et al., 2018). Such outcomes appear to be both evidence and consequence of, the

"pushback" Kosciw and colleagues refer to in their preface, including the Trump administration's removal of Obama-era protections for trans/gender-diverse students at the federal level, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Research from the British educational context reveals a comparable landscape for gender and sexuality diverse youth. The Stonewall group has been conducting similar research for more than a decade, with their most current *School Report*, surveying 3,713 LGBT young people aged 11–19 from across the country, released in 2017 (Bradlow, Bartram, Guasp, & Jadva, 2017). Just under half of the gender and sexuality diverse students surveyed in their report (45%) indicated that they had been personally harassed at school as a result of their sexuality and/or gender identity and expression (with the figure rising to 65% if just the gender-diverse cohort was examined). In keeping with a culture of silencing and invisibility surrounding gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities, nearly half of these young people reported that they never tell anyone about the harassment—unsurprising when fewer than one third (29%) indicated that their teachers intervene when they are present during these instances. Findings related to students' mental health present an even bleaker picture: more than four in five gender-diverse young people (84%) and three in five sexuality diverse young people (61%) reported self-harming behaviours; and nearly half (45%) of the gender-diverse young people and 22% of the sexuality diverse young people in their sample had attempted to take their own life (Bradlow et al., 2017).

Large-scale survey data from the Antipodes bears striking similarities in terms of school-based harassment and its impact on gender and sexuality diverse students' sense of wellbeing. Researchers from the University of Auckland in New Zealand collected data on the schooling experiences of same-sex attracted young people at three time points between 2001 and 2012 (Lucassen, Clark, Moselen, Robinson, & The Adolescent Health Research Group, 2014). While other studies recruited a convenience sample of young people primarily through online spaces, their research is unique in that recruitment took place at secondary schools—offering a comparison group of self-identified heterosexual students. Across every measure of school-based discrimination and harassment, the 3.8% of high school students who self-identified as same/both-sex attracted fared significantly worse than heterosexual-identifying students, with 60% of the same/both-sex attracted group reporting being afraid that someone would "hurt or bother them" and 43% reporting that they had been hit or physically harmed on purpose at school (Lucassen et al., 2014, p. 28). Looking longitudinally across their three points of data collection, the authors state at "each survey wave opposite-sex attracted students were proportionally more likely to report feeling safe at school than same/both-sex attracted students" (p. 29). These differences appear to be reflected further in comparisons of students' mental health and well-being; same/both-sex attracted students fared significantly worse across

every measure, with an alarming 59% reporting self-harming behaviours (Lucassen et al., 2014).

In the authors' Australian context, researchers from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University conducted national surveys of gender and sexuality diverse young people at six-year intervals between 1998 and 2010. The third and, at the time of writing, most recent 2010 study, *Writing Themselves In 3* (WTI3), reports on the experiences of 3,134 young people between the ages of 14 and 21. It included a substantial proportion of students attending high school at the time of data collection (41%) and asked participants to outline experiences of support and discrimination within the schooling environment (Hillier et al., 2010). Of participants who had experienced homophobic abuse or discrimination, 80% reported experiencing this within the schooling environment, marking school as the most likely place for gender and sexuality diverse youth to experience abuse. Disturbingly, the authors point out that this 2010 figure was higher than what was recorded during either of their previous two points of data collection in 1998 and 2005; such observations appear to illustrate a growing constriction around gender and sexuality diversity, arguably influenced by conservative shifts contributing to a culture of limitation across this timeframe.

Schooling Environment and Related Outcomes for Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students

Each of these major national studies makes some statement about the impact of school-based marginalisation, albeit through different analytical techniques. On one level, these findings seem entirely unsurprising, given that students' feelings of safety and peer connection in the classroom are a logical and empirically proven prerequisite for their learning (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Ladd, Herald-Brown, & Kochel, 2009) and, likewise, students' sense of their value within/to their school community is linked to their positive academic outcomes (Reynolds, Lee, Turner, Bromhead, & Subasic, 2017; Ullman, 2015a). On another level, however, the gravity of these results cannot be overstated, as positive representations of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities and swift and consistent response to homo/transphobic harassment—both known to impact gender and sexuality diverse students' sense of safety and connection to school—are malleable elements of the school environment over which school staff have near-total control. The relationship between school culture and gender and sexuality diverse students' psychosocial wellbeing outcomes continues to be replicated across multiple recent studies. For example, Stonewall's *School Report* from Britain finds that students in schools with a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum were less likely to personally experience homo/transphobic

marginalisation and harassment and more likely to report feeling welcome, safe and happy at school (Bradlow et al., 2017). In the New Zealand *Youth'12* report (Lucassen et al., 2014), comparisons between same-sex attracted and opposite-sex attracted students show telling patterns, with the former being significantly more likely to report being bullied "weekly or more often", and simultaneously significantly less likely to say that they "like school" or "feel part of school" (pp. 37–38). Hillier and colleagues' *Writing Themselves In 3* report shows clear associations between participants' accounts of homo/transphobic abuse and feeling safe at school; further, young people indicated that such abuse made it harder for them to concentrate at school, more likely to truant, and impacted their marks (Hillier et al., 2010). Similar associations between young people's experiences of school-based harassment and challenges to their classroom concentration also have been found in more recent Australian research (Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden, & Davies, 2014). GLSEN's most current *National School Climate Survey* echoes all of these relationships, highlighting specifically the clear, significant links between gender and sexuality diversity bias-based victimisation, school belonging, school attainment and schooling aspiration (Kosciw et al., 2018). Findings from these larger-scale national studies also reflect a number of smaller projects which highlight the associations between gender and sexuality diversity-specific school environmental stressors and gender and sexuality diverse students' diminished educational aspirations (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009); lowered academic achievement (Murdock & Bolch, 2005); concentration difficulties (Blackburn, 2012); truancy (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002); and diminished sense of school connection (Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007).

Empirical research repeatedly tells us that the opposite relationships are also true for gender and sexuality diverse students, demonstrating unequivocally that school culture enhancements are the most effective (and most directly modifiable) elements of the schooling experience for improving these students' educational outcomes. Safe, supportive, approachable and knowledgeable adults create safe schooling environments, where gender and sexuality diverse students feel more connected and invested in their education (Diaz, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2010; Seelman, Walls, Hazel, & Wisneski, 2012) and are more likely to report victimisation in instances where it occurs (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006). The presence of GSAs has been shown to be related to gender and sexuality diverse students' decreased truancy and educational attainment (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2010), with GSA visibility and activity across the school culture predicting gender and sexuality diverse students' enhanced school engagement (Seelman, Forge, Walls, & Bridges, 2015). Furthermore, the positive impact of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive school culture enhancements extend across the entire student body; mainstream student populations in schools with a gender and sexuality

diversity-inclusive curricula report less homo/transphobic verbal harassment and describe their schools as environments in which students are more likely to intervene when harassment does occur (Baams, Dubas, & van Aken, 2017), particularly when such gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive content is placed within sexuality education/health and physical education classes (Snapp, McGuire, Sinclair, Gabrion, & Russell, 2015).

Gender and Sexuality Diversity Bias-Based "Bullying" in a Neoliberal Schooling Environment

How is it, then, that alongside an increase in societal visibility of gender and sexuality diverse individuals, clear gains in terms of more equitable legal rights and recognitions and a growth in awareness around the existence and experiences of gender and sexuality diverse members of schooling communities in Western countries, these large, national studies show either (1) an increase in homo/transphobic discrimination and abuse across study years (Hillier et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2018) or (2) no change in levels of reported discrimination by gender and sexuality diverse students, even as mainstream students' reports of bullying decreases substantially (Lucassen et al., 2014)? Clear restrictions about how gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive content is covered (if at all) in schools offer a useful explanation. As discussed in earlier chapters, limiting discourses surrounding gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities present within a culture of limitation are created and maintained through right-wing and conservative agendas, which have seen varying waves of prominence, political and mainstream social support. Within school environments, these agendas—the result of direct political interventions and media interference—manifest via constructions of the child/adolescent as innocent, devoid of sexuality and vulnerable to suggestion: discursive strategies which have been used to delegitimise and dismantle gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education in institutions across the West. Such constructions function by positioning gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive content as inappropriate, political and as always sexualised.

The construction of children and young people as unaware and innocent likewise reveals itself through education institutions' framing of peer-to-peer conflict in schools as discreet, anti-social "slip-ups", rather than as a thoughtful response to social relationships and norms, often resulting in positive social outcomes for the harasser (Smith & Payne, 2016). Further, in the neoliberal schooling marketplace, where value is placed on students' individual achievement rankings as a key marker of a school's worth, sexuality and gender identity and expression are regularly positioned as developing in a vacuum, entirely personal and independent of external/social influence. Within this framework, responsibility for student wellbeing—particularly as related to gender and sexuality-based

identity markers—falls on the individual student in terms of their ability to cope within school peer cultures, "fit in" and compartmentalise in order to succeed at school (Smith & Payne, 2016; Ullman, 2014). It is no surprise then that anti-bullying programs—which, by definition, pathologise individual bullies and victims and look to evidence of individual bully-victim events as indication of program success or failure (Payne & Smith, 2010, 2013; Smith & Payne, 2016; Ullman, 2018)—are far more common in this space than educative programs which work for students' understanding of gender and sexuality as something social as well as sexual or identity/subjectivity related.

In a neoliberal schooling landscape, where the transformative, flexible and always-improved self is the goal, the bullying framework offers a coherent focus on the failures of the individual (bully/victim) while masking any related failures of the system itself. The generic language of "anti-bullying" is safer, perceived as more palatable, and therefore more appealing, than the specific language of "gender and sexuality diversity bias-based harassment"; while the latter is a more semantically accurate method of describing this international phenomenon, it includes recognition of societal values, norms and biases—irrelevant concepts within a neoliberal schooling marketplace that erases difference and diversity in its near-total focus on qualifications and metrics (Sonu & Benson, 2016). In a culture of limitation, such oversights hardly appear to be accidental; to name bias-based marginalisation for what it is affords a recognition of subjectivities viewed as peripheral to the neoliberal agenda and which a culture of limitation actively attempts to repress. As Camicia (2016) warns, dominant discourses reinforce one another to "literally misrecognize those with the least power" (p. vii); here, misrecognition of the impact of school-based reification of hetero/cisnormative ideals as simple schoolyard disagreements allows silences to prevail. This approach means that gender and sexuality diversity certainly sits apart from many other areas of diversity/visibility in schools; rather than take a whole-school approach to gender and sexuality diversity as one of many diverse identity characteristics represented in the school and in society at large and—by extension—acknowledging that effective interventions for harassment related to gender and sexuality require whole-of-school awareness and approaches, a bully framework relegates such conversations to individual, private consultations.

The attraction of such a simplistic approach is obvious, particularly within a culture of limitation where topics related to gender and sexuality diversity are rendered taboo; including gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities alongside other socially marginalised identities within policy documentation related to student wellbeing and anti-bullying initiatives enables school to "tick the (accountability) box" and point to some visibility of gender and sexuality diverse topics in a safe, apolitical way. Since a generic anti-bullying approach fails to use language which

recognises gender and sexuality diversity and, instead, enables its invisibility, departmental stakeholders who may fear pushback from parents or other members of the community are likewise satisfied. Such policies offer the illusion of value-free acknowledgement of gender and sexuality diversity, as well as other marginalised subjectivities, through their provision of clear rules and boundaries for dealing with bullying incidents, regardless of student motivation for engaging in bullying behaviours. Importantly, these policies relieve educators from any expectation of curricular or contextual awareness; teachers are not expected to be any more knowledgeable about the subject matter/rationale for student bullying than they would have to be about any other element of student social cultures (Ullman, 2018). Within an anti-bullying framework, suppression of (bias-based) language and behaviours is the goal, as distinct from generative conversations for students' awareness building around the subjectivities, cultures and social markers which are positioned as stigmatising, or unpacking the complexities of social status rewards for the "bully" (Payne & Smith, 2018; Ringrose & Renold, 2010); such conversations are messy, time-consuming and cannot be readily justified in a neoliberal system prioritising uncritical career-readiness and a particular social/workplace "fit" (Down, 2009).

Furthermore, a system thus attuned to considering harassment as a purely student-on-student interpersonal phenomenon abdicates educator/school-level accountability in that it leaves no room to address the active policing of gender and sexuality by educators, including the overt harassment of gender and sexuality diverse students by school-based adults (Ullman, 2015b). From instances of overtly discriminatory comments from teacher-to-student related to the students' sexuality, gender expression or identity (and the impact of such comments on young people bearing witness), to more quotidian, heteronormative interactions—these phenomena have no definitive recognition within the standard anti-bullying framework. Additionally, more often than not, the reporting expectations associated with anti-bullying policies require the victim to have some involvement in the disciplinary procedure; for gender and sexuality diverse students, this may involve having to "out" themselves to school staff or being "outed" through the explanatory process, as well as having to engage in a certain amount of emotional labour to help resolve a socio-cultural issue which is far larger and more insidious than any one "bullying incident" would have an educator believe. Such accountability technologies are aligned with a neoliberal schooling model, in which discourses reify individual responsibility, student flexibility and future-ready status, and in which the

> flexible child optimizes the self by having the wherewithal to draw fluidly from a variety of techniques for . . . risk-reduction. In contrast, the child that is not ready for the future is unprepared, precarious,

> even damaged or dangerous. The unready child is an undesirable and risk-laden subject.
>
> (Sonu & Benson, 2016, p. 237)

Within this configuration, students' status as "future-ready" hinges on their ability to adhere to normative social cues and to operate within relevant parameters. Accordingly, it is no surprise that gender and sexuality diverse students avoid reporting gender and sexuality diversity bias-based harassment to school staff, particularly when they are drawn into the infraction themselves; as detailed in GLSEN's most current national survey, gender and sexuality diverse students "who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have experienced school discipline than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization" (Kosciw et al., 2018, p. 139). As discussed in Chapter 1, within a culture of limitation where discourses work to frame minority group awareness and understanding as oppressive "political correctness", while re-casting individuals' affective responses to bias-based social marginalisation and insult as evidence of their hypersensitivity (Flood, 2004, cited in Gray & Nicholas, 2019), it is little wonder that gender and sexuality diverse students would rather not confide in educators about such experiences or fears.

The Bully Framework as Evidenced in the New South Wales Context

This redirection away from specific gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education in favour of its generic "representation" in a bullying framework had a very public moment towards the conclusion of the SSCA debacle in mid-2017 in the Australian state of New South Wales. As outlined in great detail in Chapter 2, when it became clear that federal funding would not be renewed to continue teachers' professional development to support gender and sexuality diverse students and their families through the SSCA initiative, NSW state representatives, including politicians, minsters and bureaucrats, made much of their refusal to continue to fund SSCA at the state level even as other Australian states (Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) were publically committing to the program's continued resourcing. Their messaging deployed key discursive techniques which speak to both the perceived *risks* of positively oriented, gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education and the *safety* of the bully framework as a hallmark of the neoliberal school environment. NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes released a media statement announcing "an updated anti-bullying strategy" to coincide with the discontinuation of the SSCA initiative in mid-2017, pitching this as evidence of the stability and trustworthiness of the department, stating that "Schools remain one of the most secure

and trusted public institutions in our community" (Haydar, 2017, para 9). It is a pity that, given the findings from the field (Hillier et al., 2010; Ullman, 2015a, 2015b), it stands to reason that comparatively few Australian gender and sexuality diverse young people would describe their schools as "secure" and "trusted".

It is noteworthy that departmental spokespeople made an extraordinary show of distancing this new content from the SSCA initiative—referred to by Australia's former Prime Minister Tony Abbott as "social engineering programme *dressed up as anti-bullying*" (Haydar, 2017, para 2, emphasis added). Of course, inherent in such a statement is the erasure of schools' work as social engineering more generally; or, rather, that there are "right" and "proper" ways to conduct such engineering which become, thus, invisible. Discourses of disingenuity were cleverly deployed to further distinguish between a *genuine* anti-bullying program, which uncritically treats all instances of harassment as equal, and a program with an *agenda* to increase awareness and acceptance of a marginalised group of individuals. Such messages appear to reflect Sonu and Benson's (2016) reading of the normative child in a neoliberal schooling environment where schools prioritise real-world "readiness" in order "to prepare the child to participate uncritically in the status quo, however detrimental these . . . conditions may be" over students' critical engagement with diversity and discrimination, which might enable them to build "a more just and humane society through feminist, anti-racist, and/or anti-capitalist grassroots struggle" (p. 238).

An examination of the NSW Department of Education's anti-bullying strategy, released just after SSCA was fully disbanded in the state, reveals near-total invisibility of materials which mention issues of sexuality and gender identity, further signifying their overt distancing from the moral panic associated with SSCA. In fact, while their resource document on whole-school approaches and teachers' creation of a "supportive and connected school culture" mentions "students who can be disadvantaged by various forms of gender stereotyping" as part of their list of students who may be targeted by bullies[1] it is noteworthy that clear signifiers of same-sex attraction, gender diversity and related identities (e.g. LGBTQIA+ identities) are completely absent (NSWDOE, 2019a, para 2). Although their resource document on bias-based bullying (NSWDOE, n.d.a) does include gender and sexuality diverse identities within a list of individual characteristics which might place a student at risk for bullying, the classroom activity materials designed to action this policy ("Bystander to Upstander"; NSWDOE, n.d.b) contain no direction whatsoever for teachers seeking departmental advice on how to address gender and sexuality diversity within their classrooms or how to interrogate related societal norms at a macro level.[2] Rather, these materials reinscribe bullying as a "misuse of power in a relationship" with a clear bully-victim dyad, even if multiple individuals are involved (NSWDOE,

2018, para 3). The department's related "Anti-bullying plan" documentation suggests that teachers should provide "support for any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour" (NSWDOE, 2018, para 6), clearly operating under the assumption that such events are discrete and unrelated to broader school culture.

Such a reductive framing offers a bounded, tidy conceptualisation of this (pathologised) phenomenon without ever acknowledging the affordances of a curriculum which articulates and affirms diversity in supporting positive school culture for providing that support. Further, it positions student cultures as both bullying-inclined and as somehow existing independently of the larger socio-cultural-historical power structures dictating which identities are marginalised and which typologies of individuals are empowered to and rewarded by engaging in marginalising behaviours. Perhaps most sadly of all, teachers' own ability to *educate* around social issues is obfuscated, positioned as they are by the departmental bullying policy as little more than bully "record keepers", specifically resourced to articulate policy and engage in discrete incident administration (NSWDOE, 2019b). Conceptualising social issues in this manner—as structured by notions of accountability and record-keeping—is in keeping with a neoliberal agenda of management, while simultaneously fitting in with the conservative, far-right, and fundamentalist religious discourses that silence gender and sexuality diverse subjects. Given the fear that schools and administrative departments have of discussing gender and sexuality diversity, the appeal of such a tidy manoeuvre is clear. It is, therefore, little wonder that a generic redirection from proactive gender and sexuality diversity inclusions to an anti-bullying approach which fails to articulate gender and sexuality diversity can be seen in other Australian states; in South Australia (Richards, 2018; Government of South Australia, 2019) and Tasmania (Department of Education, 2019; Urban, 2017), redactions of financial support for professional development associated with SSCA occurred during shifts to a conservative political government. Similar manoeuvres have also been critiqued across international contexts (Meyer, 2008; Payne & Smith, 2010; Ringrose & Renold, 2010).

Free2Be? National Studies of Australian Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students

As alluded to in a previous section, school-aged gender and sexuality diverse youth have not traditionally been the singular focus of national, large-scale survey recruitment efforts in the Australian context; most Australian national surveys of gender and sexuality diverse youth, including those described earlier, have targeted young people more broadly, inclusive of individuals aged 18 and over who no longer attend secondary school. Namely, the early informative national studies, including the

first two of the *Writing Themselves In* series (Hillier et al., 1998; Hillier, Turner, & Mitchell, 2005), included post-school-aged participants up to 21 years old and explored more expansive questions of local community safety and involvement. Accordingly, in her PhD research, Mikulsky/Ullman[3] (2006) sought to more deeply investigate the schooling experiences of same-sex attracted secondary students, with her research becoming the first national study in the country to focus solely on the student experience and to limit the age range of participants accordingly. Specifically, she was interested in students' experiences of school-based, gender and sexuality diversity-specific supports, including curriculum visibility and supportive teachers, as well as gender and sexuality diversity-related stressors, including homophobic language and teachers' active engagement in marginalising behaviours. This work aimed to extend previous findings in the field by quantitatively exploring the relationship between these school culture variables and students' academic and school-based wellbeing outcomes, shifting the focus from prevalence data and qualitative narrative accounts to the predictive ability and relationships of school culture variables to students' self-reports of engagement and academic success. In the pre-Facebook era, this online survey primarily used free-to-access print and radio media sources, as well as email newsletters for recruitment, resulting in a final survey sample of 282 young people, aged 14–19, from every state and territory in Australia. A second, interview phase was used to further explore key trends from the survey data.

The key contribution of this work was the testing of a predictive model explaining students' academic self-concept, which empirically demonstrated that students' perceptions of their school culture accounted for a substantial portion of the variability in their sense of their personal academic capabilities. Those students attending more homophobic and exclusionary schooling environments were likely to report thinking of themselves as less academically capable than those students located in schools seen to support gender and sexuality diverse students. These findings made mathematically tangible the narrative connections offered by previous work in the field, highlighting the importance of an inclusive, overtly gender and sexuality diversity-supportive school culture for this cohort. Furthermore, this model allowed for,

> an acknowledgement that "risk" for SSA (same-sex attracted) students is a product of socially-constructed stigma, located not within the stigmatised individual but "without"—in the behaviour exhibited by others in their environment . . . (including) the role of school staff in the active production of "risk".
>
> (Mikulsky/Ullman, 2006, pp. 195–196)

While Ullman did not use the language of "neoliberalism" at the time, the qualitative student accounts which complemented survey findings

certainly appear in keeping with such a framing, evidencing schools' positioning of sexuality diversity as an individual, private matter—one that would not be appropriate for educators to engage with at a whole-school or classroom level. A culture of limitation was evidenced through teachers' behavioural management techniques where students who described schools where gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive topics were not discussed or were actively avoided also described school staff members who would not intervene during instances of homophobic harassment—positioning this as a personal, student issue and one which might compromise teachers who chose to engage. This was further evidenced in the plethora of accounts of school-based verbal and physical homophobic violence during which teachers were described as perfunctorily intervening to stop the behaviours without any acknowledgement of the substantive nature of this bias-based discrimination such as naming behaviours as homophobic or educating students about why such behaviours are unacceptable.

> Kids don't like to fight just one on one. They tend to get into groups cause they know they can overpower you that way. . . . But I didn't really tell anyone [about homophobic harassment] because the teachers at my school tend to blame it on you.
>
> (Samantha, female, 17, local/state school; cited in Mikulsky/Ullman, 2006, p. 151)

> If it was really bad, they would just say "Hey!" or "Stop that!" or whatever else to stop the student from saying that. I never heard a teacher say "That's homophobic" or "You shouldn't say that."
>
> (Alex, male, 19, local/state school; cited in Mikulsky/Ullman, 2006, p. 131)

Findings from this first national study pointed to the influence of cis-normative gender expectations as sitting at the heart of questions of schooling cultures and educators' treatment of same-sex attraction. Specifically, interview participants from schools with more restrictive and more highly policed parameters for gender-specific dress, behaviours and academic engagements described their schools as rife with homophobic harassment. A contrasting narrative was presented by others: schools evidencing more inclusive, flexible gender expectations were also described as environments where homophobic harassment occurred infrequently and was summarily addressed by educators.

> PD/H/PE teacher discussed sexuality—stated that attraction to a member of the same sex was not only acceptable but was just as valid as attraction to the opposite sex. . . . [Homophobia] would be addressed right then and there by that staff member. . . . It wouldn't

> be tolerated. It would be picked up by the teacher immediately and probably used as a point for discussion. You know, "Why do you say that?" and opening lines for discussion saying, "Don't you think there would have been better ways to express that?" You know, "You're entitled to your opinion but you're not entitled to discriminate against anyone".
>
> (Melissa, female, 18, selective [state] school; cited in Mikulsky/Ullman, 2006, pp. 138, 145)

In order to better understand how schools enforce, scaffold and maintain boundaries of un/acceptable gender expression from the perspective of gender and sexuality diverse students, Ullman conducted a smaller-scale qualitative study, interviewing gender and sexuality diverse young people aged 16–19 from Sydney's western suburbs (Ullman, 2014). A key theme of the young peoples' narratives was students' sense of their schools' near-obsession with conformity of appearance, evidenced in policies which restricted hair length, style, various physical adornments and—above all—school uniform. Several of the young women described (private) schools in which trousers were not available as a uniform option; students were forced to select from a narrow range of traditionally feminine options including a blouse and skirt or a dress. Male-identifying students spoke of their inability to embellish upon their uniforms, even in typically male-gendered ways such as adding a bow tie or a vest for a "dapper" look, further noting the push for conformity of appearance and expression. School staff members were described as actively maintaining gender norms through various social rewards and positive reinforcement, most notably through clear implications that gender and sexuality diverse students could properly conform to school/societal gender norms if they tried harder to do so. In line with expectations for the neoliberal subject, these students were expected to self-monitor, reflect and self-discipline (Türken, 2016), positioned by educators as, at least partially, responsible for their own social marginalisation through their unwillingness to adapt to hetero/cisnormative expectations.

> I'd walk into a [class]room—everyone either moves away or starts insulting me. And, from my experience, the teachers didn't do anything about it. . . . I confronted the principal about it at one point and she said, "Oh well, you know, just *try*" [to blend in].
>
> (Hazel, female, 19, local/state school; cited in Ullman, 2014, p. 439)

Students were presented with limited, differentiated, binarised and highly specified bands of acceptable gender expression and were subject to disciplinary "training" (Foucault, 1978), if their expression or behaviours

expanded beyond these. Paradoxically, "school rules around homogeneity of gender appearance served to reduce these students' ability to use their autonomous physical expression as a means to signpost broader social belonging", thus reinforcing students' marginalisation (Ullman, 2014, p. 435). Unsurprisingly, such environmental stressors were most impactful for participants whose personal aesthetic was more androgynous and who identified as trans/gender-diverse.

> I'm probably like the only person who has short hair in that school. Even one of the teachers said to me, "No one cuts their hair short". . . . They want me to have my hair off my face and swept behind my ear 'cause that makes you more feminine or whatever. . . . I have been told off for my hair looking shaggy and, like, just lanky and just not really nice looking, I suppose.
>
> (Joe, gender-diverse, 16, single-sex, religious school; cited in Ullman, 2014, p. 435)

Continuing this research trajectory, Ullman conducted a second national online survey of Australian gender and sexuality diverse students, this time specifically inclusive of trans/gender-diverse students and related explorations of transphobic harassment in schools. Young people were recruited from across the country using targeted social media advertisements and participant snowballing. The *Free2Be?* Project (Ullman, 2015b) used findings from the aforementioned qualitative exploration to include an original, quantitative measure of "gender climate", measuring students' perceptions of their school's institutional and interpersonal support/restrictions of more expansive understandings and performances of gender expression and identity. *Free2Be?* Drew from other prominent Australian research with gender and sexuality diverse youth from that same time period, including the third iteration of *Writing Themselves In* (Hillier et al., 2010), the *Growing Up Queer* study (Robinson et al., 2014) and the *From Blues to Rainbows* study of trans/gender-diverse young people (Smith et al., 2014), again refining to focus strictly on current schooling experiences and outcomes for a narrower age range of student participants, with a final cohort of 704 gender and sexuality diverse students, aged 14–18. Prevalence data revealed that students were witnessing high rates of gender and sexuality diversity bias-based harassment, homophobic and transphobic in nature; over half of the cohort (55%) reported hearing homophobic language "almost every day", a clear increase from the 38% reporting the same level of frequency in 2006. Where students recounted stories of their peers using such language in front of school staff, almost 40% spoke about their teachers' failure to respond, commenting that the "everyday" normalisation of homophobic comments as an element of peer cultures meant that these did not incite disciplinary intervention. Many young people were conscious

of the negative impact on the intervening teacher, should they associate themselves with positivity towards sexuality and gender diversity; as one noted: "Us kids are left to suffer because the teachers aren't interested in getting jumbled up with us" (Ullman, 2015, p. 23). As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, adults in schooling communities are likewise susceptible to the social impact of a culture of limitation and fear themselves becoming targets should they speak in favour of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Ullman & Smith, 2018).

Free2Be? (2015b) extended Ullman's previous work through the inclusion of trans/gender-diverse specific items as part of the investigations of students' reported school cultures. While smaller numbers of students reported peers' use of transphobic language in the presence of school staff members (39%), proportionally larger percentages of students reported that staff never intervened when students used this language (35% vs. 20%) when compared to reported interventions for homophobic language. Open-ended responses highlighted students' perceptions of their teachers' lack of understanding about gender diversity, teachers' defense of binarised conceptions of gender and their overt gender policing—positioning students as implicit in their own social marginalisation for their failure to conform.

> [Neither] teachers nor students have been educated about how to properly respect trans or intersex people, so even teachers use the wrong pronouns, and I have never heard a teacher put a student down for using words like "tranny", "it", or anything like that.
>
> (cited in Ullman, 2015b, p. 24)

> A girl was wearing male uniform pants and had short hair and a group of boys walked past and made remarks on whether she was a boy or a girl. A teacher was present and went up to the girl and started yelling at her for wearing the boy's designated uniform and that she should wear skirts and she might not get teased so much.
>
> (cited in Ullman, 2015b, p. 25)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, gender-diverse students were significantly more likely to report hearing transphobic language at school than their cisgender, same-sex attracted peers, probably due to such language being used specifically in their presence. However, this cohort was also significantly less likely to report that their teachers were openly affirming of gender diversity. Follow-up analysis showed gender-diverse students' reports of teacher positivity to be significantly positively correlated with multiple measures of their school and academic wellbeing. Further, examinations revealed the unique predictive, explanatory impact of teacher positivity

about gender diversity on gender-diverse students' sense of connection and belonging within their school (Ullman, 2017).

At the time of survey development, the Victorian Department of Education and Training was working to improve students' wellbeing and school engagement outcomes as an additional and additive metric of school success. The state's publically available baseline data (DEECD, 2011; Victoria Auditor General, 2010) offered a useful point of comparison for gender and sexuality diverse and general student cohorts as a way to shed light on how these cohorts might be experiencing school differently. Mean score comparisons of the *Free2Be?* Participants to Victorian students showed poorer outcomes for the national sample of gender and sexuality diverse students across every measure of wellbeing, including: school morale, school distress, safety, peer connection, school connection and teacher empathy (Ullman, 2015b). These findings were replicated across the two academic engagement measures, student motivation and learning confidence, with the largest gaps present in the earlier years of high school (Years 8 and 9). While these differences are problematic on their own, they take on a more sinister dimension in light of research demonstrating the explanatory power of several of these variables to predict Victorian students' high school tertiary entrance scores,[4] above and beyond other national standardised test measures of their ability, demographics and socio-economic status (Houng & Justman, 2016).

To explore differences over time and retest for specific predictive relationships between school culture and students' academic and psychosocial wellbeing, Ullman conducted a third national study (forthcoming), using similar methods of recruitment and survey dissemination. The *Free2Be . . . Yet?* Survey went live in late 2018, after the worst of the public media debates around SSCA (see Chapter 2) and in the wake of the passing of Australia's marriage equality laws. Nearly 2,400 gender and sexuality diverse students aged 13–18 from across the country provided useable survey data for this project—the largest cohort of gender and sexuality diverse-identifying high school students ever surveyed in Australia. While preliminary data analysis is being conducted at the time of writing, some tentative findings are already of interest. Sexuality identity data shows a spike in numbers of gender and sexuality diverse young people who identify as pansexual and queer—a full quarter of the cohort, up from 14% in 2013, with another 35% identifying as bisexual, up from 24% in 2013. These statistics point to a rise in sexuality identities which account for more fluid and expansive attractions. Further, almost 30% of the sample did not identify as cisgender, indicating that their current gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. Of these, nearly equal numbers indicated transgender (8.5%) and non-binary (8.6%) identities, as well as not being sure about their gender (7.2%). Twenty-one young people (or 0.9% of the cohort) said that they had an intersex variation.

Across nearly every metric of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive school practices, including inclusive policies, visibility within the curriculum and the presence of a GSA government, public schools were described as more inclusive than Catholic or independent schools. However, within the cohort of government school students (57% of the sample), state/territory differences emerged. Students from the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia reported substantially more gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive practices within their schools—three locations which implemented state-controlled versions of the Safe Schools program after federal funding for SSCA was discontinued. Frequency data on students' use of homophobic language showed that 72% of students heard negative terms to describe same-sex attracted people on a weekly basis at school: either "every day" (34%), "several times per week" (18%) or "once or twice per week" (19%). A third of the cohort reported hearing negative language about gender-diverse and transgender individuals at school with weekly frequency. As with earlier iterations of the study, comparatively few students reported that their teachers "always" intervene, or intervene "most of the time" in these instances; just 6% of those hearing homophobic language in front of teachers and 5% of those hearing transphobic language in front of teachers reported universal positive intervention, with another 22% and 15% respectively reporting intervention "most of the time".

As in the 2015 *Free2Be?* Study, mean score comparisons were made with Victoria state cohort data on key measures of student wellbeing and academic engagement.[5] Looking across Years 7–12, the largest discrepancies were in the earliest years of high school (Years 7–9), where the national student cohort fared significantly poorer on most measures, particularly those with school safety and school connection. Across all years of high school, the gender and sexuality diverse cohort were less confident in their teachers' ability to manage bullying and support students who were targeted. Additional measures addressing gender and sexuality diverse students' sense that they could connect and rely on their teachers echoed these differences, with the gender and sexuality diverse cohort less likely to feel that they have a teacher advocate at school (e.g. a teacher who cares for them and who they are able to trust), to say that teachers are interested in their wellbeing and to report that their schools respect diversity (Ullman, forthcoming).

Free2Be . . . Yet? Also included the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 6-item measure of students' sense of belonging at school, employed in Australia and all participating OECD countries. In a 2018 publication, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) expressed concerns about the wellbeing of Australian high school students given Australia's low ranking on this measure compared to other students across the OECD and considering known links between students' school belonging and their academic achievement (ACER, 2018).

While authors classified percentage agreement/disagreement (depending on item value direction) for each of the six included items ranging from 72% to 84% as problematic, particularly given comparisons with other nations, analysis of the *Free2Be . . . Yet?* Cohort data revealed far lower reported percentages across these. Notable gaps include that only 47% of the gender and sexuality diverse student sample agreed they "feel like (they) belong at school" (compared to 72% of the PISA Australian sample) and just 48% of gender and sexuality diverse students disagreed with the statement that they felt "like an outsider or left out of things at school" (compared to 77% of the PISA Australian sample; ACER, 2018, p. 16; Ullman, forthcoming).

While further bivariate and multivariate examination of the data are still underway, findings related to the prevalence of homo/transphobia, teachers' response to such incidences and comparisons of gender and sexuality diverse students to mainstream student cohorts conducted thus far signal the continued impact of a culture of limitation for gender and sexuality diverse students. This current trend data shows that gender and sexuality diverse students are concerned about educators' willingness and capacity to protect them, with apparent implications for their sense of connection and belonging within the school environment and their subsequent academic engagement. Such findings are in keeping with education as a conservative and reactive institution which, by and large, renders gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities invisible and positions such topics as contaminant and as risk. These school-based silences are reinforced by a culture of limitation and related discourses which, unacceptably, can result in disruptions to gender and sexuality diverse students' academic trajectories.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Students and Religious Discrimination: Implied Contaminants

As highlighted in the previous chapter, numerous moral panics and resultant public debates, coupled with the visible erasure of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum by some Australian states/territories, have inevitably impacted educators' confidence and willingness to acknowledge and affirm gender and sexuality diversity in primary and secondary classrooms. Such conditions appear to conspire to make gender and sexuality diverse young people hide these elements of their identity. Most recently, this has come to a head through national discussions related to the proposed revisions to Australia's Religious Discrimination Bill.

A review of Australia's religious discrimination laws was prompted by the marriage equality postal survey (see Chapter 1) in response to concerns raised by religious groups, with a publically available report released in 2018 (Ruddock, Croucher, Bennett, Brennan, & Aroney, 2018). The review recommended retaining existing exemptions that allow

religiously affiliated schools to discriminate against gender and sexuality diverse students and staff members, through exclusion from the school environment. In response to public backlash against the government's condoning of such acts of overt discrimination against gender and sexuality diverse young people under the banner of religious freedom, Prime Minister Scott Morrison committed to passing laws which would stop religious schools from expelling gender and sexuality diverse students (Karp, 2018); however, no legally binding decisions have been made as at the time of writing, as the issue of religious discrimination and schooling was referred to an Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry (Human Rights Law Centre, 2019). The organisation is not due to release its findings until December 2020 (ALRC, 2019).

Most striking about this debate is that while Australia's current conservative, Liberal government does not want to be regarded as willing to remove young people from school based on an identity characteristic—this appears to be their limit—they are unwilling to make the connection between (gender and sexuality diverse) students' wellbeing and their sense of belonging and visibility (of gender and sexuality diversity) within their schools. It may very well be the case that a gender and sexuality diverse student would be better off removed from a school which actively denounces gender and sexuality diversity and the daily stigmatising practices—both overt and covert—which often accompany such attitudes. Yet, the Morrison government has repeatedly framed gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum as inappropriate and unwelcome, as discussed. These inconsistencies reflect one of the more sinister elements of a culture of limitation as outlined in Chapter 1: a resistance to diversity (and particularly to gender and sexuality diversity within the context of schools), while maintaining the normative, whether that takes the form of ideologies, values or identities. In this case, adults being seen to directly harm a young person (here, through school expulsion/exclusion) crosses a clear, normative behavioural line. Yet, requests for students' equity of access or school experience, through acknowledgement and visibility of gender and sexuality diverse identities; gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education; and educators' awareness, sensitivity and, where needed, protection-through-education, is positioned more broadly as greedy, self-interested and as connected with a left-wing, radical social agenda. The contradictory nature of this creates an untenable position for young gender and sexuality diverse people and complicates the issue for teachers and schools.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 extends these observations, exploring the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse teachers while highlighting the social, environmental structures which bound un/acceptable performances of gender and

sexual subjectivities. In heteronormative schooling environments, where "accepted", normalised subjective performances of gender and sexuality diversity are clearly preferable, many gender and sexuality diverse teachers consciously manage their sexuality and gender and/or reposition this element of their identities in ways that reflect the broader mandates inherent in a professional landscape shaped and dictated to by neoliberalism (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). Although, for some gender and sexuality diverse teachers, reframing their subjectivity effectively enables them to operate on a more "equal playing field" as their heterosexual counterparts in schooling contexts, while for others, separating the personal from the professional encompasses greater challenges and stressors.

Notes

1. This list articulates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities, students with language backgrounds other than English, students from communities with low socio-economic status, students from rural and remote areas, refugees and those at risk of disengaging from school, but never mentions sexuality or gender diversity (NSWDOE, 2019a, para. 2).
2. The online materials include a single hyperlink for educators seeking to understand more about gender and sexuality diversity where it is mentioned within the document; however, it is noteworthy that the material links to an external organisation: "BeyondBlue"—a mental health promotion site, with simplified text written as a resource for gender and sexuality diverse youth rather than for educators working to develop classroom activities ("LGBTI Young People", n.d.).
3. Mikulsky is Ullman's previous name; thus, when used here, "Mikulsky/Ullman" is used for accuracy of research acknowledgement, although the original reference is "Mikulsky".
4. The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) is used nationally as an entry criterion for Australian higher education courses.
5. This data is not publically available; however, it was provided to the author through direct application to the Victorian Department of Education and Training, Performance and Evaluation Division.

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4 Gender and Sexuality Diverse Teachers Within a Culture of Limitation

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse young people's experiences in schools and illustrated how the culture of limitation impacts how homo/transphobic harassment and discrimination are positioned as individual, personal issues within neoliberal discourses permeating policy frameworks. Although the discourses related to gender and sexuality diversity have gradually matured in the socio-cultural milieu, demonstrated by greater public visibility and social acceptance, when gender and sexuality diversity is intersected with the education of young people, adult and community resistance to its inclusion and visibility often ensues. Traditional, political and fundamental religious influences reinforced by conservative right-wing media form powerful and vocal lobbying platforms that perpetuate a culture of limitation that undermines the teaching of gender and sexuality-related content and understandings in schools (Newman, Fantus, Woodford, & Rwigema, 2018). Such teachings could, as research illustrates and as intimated in Chapter 3, potentially reduce homophobia/transphobia in schools and beyond and increase young people's acceptance and inclusion through an enhanced understanding of human differences (Bridge, 2007). This would potentially result in greater equity and sense of belonging for gender and sexuality diverse young people as a result of decreased discrimination and heightened visibility in curriculum and policy. It would also enrich all individuals' options related to gender and sexuality performativity and expression which continue to be foreclosed by homophobic and transphobic surveillance and policing and the reification and elevation of heterosexuality and cisgender subjectivities (Newman et al., 2018).

However, the culture of limitation does not only impact the experiences of students in school; gender and sexuality diverse teachers are also affected. School-based teaching and learning, reinforced by dominant discourse pertaining to childhood and its intersections with education, heavily focus on students, while often disregarding the reality that Australian schools are, in fact, the workplaces of hundreds of thousands of adults (Willett, Segal, & Walford, 2014), including gender and sexuality

diverse employees. On a daily basis, many gender and sexuality diverse teachers are constrained by the heteronormativity, heterosexism and cisgender privilege prevailing in their workplaces, where they are frequently compelled to self-regulate their gender and sexual subjectivities in ways that are not required of their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts. In general, in schools, gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities are invisible and un/der-represented (Rudoe, 2010; Wright & Smith, 2015), while, contradictorily, they are often targets for surveillance, derision and overt and covert discrimination. Additionally, the public moral debates about gender and sexuality diverse-related curriculum content and inclusions, discussed earlier in this book, reinforce the ongoing marginalisation of many of these teachers.

This chapter focuses on the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse teachers, drawing directly on the authors' combined research which together spans 30 years in the field. It illustrates how gender and sexuality diverse teachers have experienced a history of discrimination in the workplace which has impacted their personal and professional lives. Gender and sexuality diverse teachers work in conflicting and contradictory employment contexts which are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, requiring them to navigate a complex landscape exacerbated by the conservative heteronormalising discourses that pervade the Australian socio-political landscape (Gray, Harris, & Jones, 2016). Gender and sexuality diverse teachers may be "accepted" by colleagues, yet, there is little, if any, actual visibility of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities in these workplaces. Schools remain overwhelmingly heteronormative sites where subtle (and not so subtle) discrimination is still ubiquitous. As a result, many gender and sexuality diverse teachers are compelled (or directed) to manage and self-censor their personal lives while at work or find other ways to reconcile their gender and sexuality diverse subjectivity with their employment culture. Gender and sexuality diverse teachers, thus, reframe their subjectivities in ways that enable them to participate on a more "equal playing field" with their heterosexual counterparts through the production of normalised subjective performances that position the invisibility and silencing of their gender and sexuality diversity as a form of professionalism discursively produced through neoliberalism while inadvertently seeming to reinforce the heteronormative demands espoused by neoconservatism. Before embarking on this discussion, however, it is necessary to theoretically contextualise the discursive positioning of gender and sexuality diverse teachers.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Teacher Subjects, Surveillance and Young People

Historically and in contemporary times, teaching as a profession has been socially regulated and scrutinised. Teachers are required to maintain a

higher degree of morality and conformity to social norms than other citizens (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). *In loco parentis*, all teachers are seen to be in a prominent position to educate and influence young people. Charged with interpreting and implementing the official curriculum and perceived as the singular authority within the classroom, they have the power to determine what is actually taught (Thornton, 1991), as well as the opportunity to deviate from sanctioned content directives. As such, they may be construed as a potential moral danger to young people. Hence, teachers are under considerable surveillance in terms of what they teach in both the manifest and hidden curricula; these must be controlled by the regulators of education (Piddocke, Romulo, & Manley-Casimir, 1997).

This surveillance is particularly evident in relation to content linked to gender and sexuality diversity. As pointed out earlier in this book, Western discourses of childhood constitute children and young people as vulnerable, unknowing, asexual, powerless, immature, in binary opposition to the rational adult subject and, thus, as needing protection (Davies & Robinson, 2013; Kane, 2013; Robinson, Smith, & Davies, 2017). Providing formal knowledge about sexual bodies generally and diverse gender and sexuality subjectivities, in particular, are perceived as threats to the innocence of youth despite the fact that (hetero)sexuality is omnipresent in schooling cultures (Epstein & Johnson, 1998), is all-pervading in Western youth popular culture and many (secondary) school-aged young people are sexually active in some way (Fisher et al., 2019).

This knowledge taboo is more explicitly enforced when dealing with sexualities and genders that transcend heteronormative, cisgender subjectivities. Gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities have been historically constituted in discourses of deviancy, sin, abnormality, perversion, disease, hypersexuality, instability and as a threat to the social and moral order (Khayatt, 1992; Jones, Gray, & Harris, 2014). Their sexuality and gender performances are perceived as being for personal gratification rather than for the reproduction of the species, or for social or economic contributions as expected by a neoliberal/neoconservative agenda. These myths and associated notions of deficiency attach to gender and sexuality diverse teachers, constructing them as immoral subjects likely to recruit, predate, indoctrinate or corrupt vulnerable students (Jones et al., 2014). Gender-diverse teachers who challenge the "dichotomous and heterosexual" (Wells, 2018, p. 1547) schooling mandates are especially "marked as 'other', embodying an identity positioned as dangerous and subversive and, particularly within the current neoconservative moment, viewed with significant scepticism" (Ullman, 2020, p. 71). Thus, young people, who (theoretically) look up to teachers, are highly vulnerable in the eyes of those who position gender and sexuality diverse individuals as problematic. The teacher's position of power in school, as both an adult and a teacher (in the adult/child, teacher/student binaries), reinforce these teachers as potentially perilous.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Teachers, Anti-Discrimination Legislation and Religious Institutions

Historically, gender and sexuality diverse teachers in Australia have been discriminated against, on an individual and institutional level. The battle for inclusion of legal protections for those who are gender and sexuality diverse arose in the last two decades of the 20th century in Australia. State and territory governments, in various ways, began to make discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation illegal during the 1980s. However, such discrimination was not nationally legislated until 2013, when relationship status, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status were included in the Sex Discrimination Act (1984) via amendments instigated by the Gillard Labor Government. Despite the updating of this legislation, private religious bodies were, and remain, largely exempted (Sanders, Finestone, & Kirkland, 2000). This means that religiously affiliated schools can discriminate against gender and sexuality diverse teachers (and students) so long as the discrimination is in "good faith in order to avoid injury to the religious susceptibilities of adherents of that religion" (Clark, 2016, para 5). Thus, those working in religious schools can be dismissed with impunity as discrimination is permitted "on the basis of sex and marital status, religion, or sexual orientation or gender identity where it is consistent with religious doctrine" (Evans & Gaze, 2011, p. 398; Jones et al., 2014).

As many gender and sexuality diverse teachers are employed in religiously based schools, with or without the school's knowledge of their gender and sexuality diversity, this legal exemption in anti-discrimination legislation has far-reaching ramifications for the professional and personal lives of these teachers—not only for those who work in these schools and risk dismissal, but also in terms of employment opportunities in the field. In fact, the intersection of neoliberalism's privatisation agenda with the current exemptions in the Anti-Discrimination Act create increasing opportunities for inequality. Enrolments in private institutions are growing as the discourses of a poorly funded and deteriorating public education sector and the apparent benefits of choice and a "user-pays" system (McAvan & Sutherland, 2015), arguably corollaries of neoliberal discourse, become increasingly accepted by parents seeking the (assumedly) best outcomes for their children in a highly competitive, dynamic employment market. Hence, for gender and sexuality diverse teachers working in the religious independent/private sector, employer knowledge of their gender and sexuality diverse subjectivity risks legal discrimination and presents a real threat as, not only are their workplace rights not fully protected, but neither are their human rights (Jones, 2016).

Reports continue to be published about teachers' fears about the ongoing exemptions in anti-discrimination legislation and the loopholes

that enable prejudice. For instance, Queensland's (QLD) *Courier Mail* described how "teachers fear discrimination if they come out", and how "Some Queensland Christian schools openly warn that their teachers should not be practising homosexuals and an overarching body wants legislation changed so they can discriminate on grounds of sexuality without having to explain it under 'genuine occupational requirements' "—a qualification made under Section 25 of the QLD Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Chilcott, 2014). At times, discrimination is more covert and can be read into actions and behaviours. For example, a young gay male teacher was able to complete his contract working at a Catholic school but was never employed again once that contract ended; nor was his foster son allowed to be enrolled at the school, "a process we were told was almost a guarantee for any current or past teacher" (James, 2014). In yet another example of the problematic context in which many gender and sexuality diverse teachers work, a gay-identified teacher from a Perth Baptist school was sacked in 2017 apparently after the school learned that he was in a relationship with a man (Karp, 2018). Along the same vein, a principal of an elite Anglican girls school in Sydney tendered her resignation when "a furore erupted" after complaints from two families that the "school was hiring gay teachers" and "failing to live up to its Christian values" (Balogh, 2017, n.p.). The principal, in an open letter to parents, stated that the school "would not discriminate, either positively or negatively, when hiring staff" (Levy, 2016). Her reason for departure is of less relevance here than the seemingly few parental concerns which included the notion that: a) the school was not abiding by Christian principals through the employment of gay teachers (and therefore were not adequately discriminatory); and b) the assumption that, as a result, "their daughters could be exposed to 'messages or values' they did not agree with" (Balogh, 2017). This reasoning presupposes that it is only gender and sexuality diverse teachers who have the propensity to impart what may be perceived as problematic values and messages; heterosexual teachers are equally capable of this yet they are not singled out for blanket discrimination. During the marriage equality campaign, the desire for religious institutions to maintain their ability to discriminate was reported loudly in the press, where key figures in, for example, the Catholic Church threated to fire teachers and other employees who legally married their same-sex partner (Koziol, 2017).

The inconsistency in discrimination in relation to the application of religious doctrine was bluntly but eloquently critiqued by a teacher participating in Ferfolja's research on gay and lesbian teachers in NSW (see Ferfolja, 2014b for more detail about this study). The teacher was, at the time, working in the Catholic school system. He said:

> The church has got this awkward theological stance on homosexuality that's nonsense really, where they will argue that being homosexual

> isn't sinful but homosexual behaviour is sinful. So you know, we support the homosexual but we condemn the behaviour. The behaviour is pretty much anything . . . that normal human beings would say is expressive of their sexual identity. . . . The gay thing sits, theoretically, in with the divorce issue and with other non-approved sexual practices that would be part and parcel of heterosexual life, but we don't want to police that, we will only police the gay thing. So your gay teacher, we will make all sorts of assumptions about your sexual life that it is in contravention with Catholic teaching and therefore we will discriminate against you, but we won't take the same rubric and impose it on straight people because if you did, do you know what it would look like in an interview? It would look something like; do you orally pleasure your wife? Do you allow your wife to orally pleasure you? What kind of contraception [do you use]? Are you using artificial means to limit the size of your family? . . . In terms of discrimination, you can tick the box that you've got a right to discriminate if you consistently apply these rubrics across your school population but you are not consistently applying these rubrics, you are choosing to apply them just on same-sex-attracted people. So if that's your choice then it's homophobia.
>
> (cited in Ferfolja, 2014b, p. 144)

It should be stated that not all religious institutions or, indeed, all religious people desire to, or actively discriminate against, gender and sexuality diverse students, teachers or communities; some are supportive and even celebratory of this diversity. Although Rasmussen (2017) in an interesting and complex argument claims that religious freedoms are important and that gay rights should not necessarily trounce religious rights, it remains a difficult and contentious position considering the harm that comes to gender and sexuality diverse teachers and students, both in terms of their wellbeing and relative opportunity and future prospects, as a direct result of discriminatory discourse. As one teacher working in the public sector succinctly stated:

> There are still so many teachers—not so much within the public system, but there are so many teachers that work in the private system that stay in the closet because they fear; there is only one school in Sydney that is a private school that's non-denominational. The rest of them are linked with a church. Whether that's the reason—they feel like the school has grounds to fire them because they are not living in line with the ethos of the school.
>
> (Peta, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

Additionally, as pointed out earlier, theological doctrine *does appear to be* inconsistently interpreted and applied in the employment conditions

of teachers demonstrating that discrimination towards gender and sexuality diverse teachers (and students) does seem to be about discrimination purely on the grounds of gender and sexuality diverse identity rather than about a deep commitment to the full extent of religious doctrine that would consider all aspects of an individual's behaviour and allegiance to the faith.

A History of Oppression

Before embarking on an exploration of the experiences of gender and sexuality diverse teachers in Australia at this temporal juncture, it is critical to acknowledge the history of prejudice and subsequent legacy of discrimination that continues to impact, in different ways and to varying extents, on gender and sexuality diverse teachers' professional and personal lives. It should be noted at the outset, however, that gender and sexuality diverse teachers work in a range of employment contexts and their experiences all differ. Thus, in simpler terms, this discussion is not endeavouring to homogenise or essentialise gender and sexuality diverse teachers or their workplaces. However, there are commonalities of experience as evident in the research across Australia (Ferfolja, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2019; Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013; Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Gray, 2013; Gray, Harris, & Jones, 2016; Griffin, 1994; Irwin, 2002; Jones et al., 2014; Ullman & Smith, 2018) and from other capitalist countries with a similar Western, Judeo-Christian, English-speaking heritage such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom that extends back approximately three decades (see for example, Callahan, 2007, 2015; Clarke, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003; Evans, 2002; Griffin, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Harbeck, 1992; Jackson, 2006, 2007; Khayatt, 1992; Kissen, 1996a, 1996b; Lenskyj, 1991; Lugg, 2006; Neary, 2017; Neary, Gray, & O'Sullivan, 2017; Rudoe, 2010; Sparkes, 1994; Squires & Sparkes, 1996; Sykes, 2004; Woods, 1990; Wright & Smith, 2015). Most of this research focuses on sexuality diversity—that is lesbian, gay and bisexually identified teachers; research on trans/gender-diverse teachers, however, is just slowly emerging in the academic literature (see for example, Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Gray et al., 2016; Harris & Jones, 2014; Ullman, 2020; Ullman & Smith, 2018; Wells, 2018).

Historically, the threat of, or actual, dismissal as well as unequal and discriminatory treatment were the reality for many gender and sexuality diverse teachers and those seeking entre into the profession. There are some relatively well-known cases in Australia. For instance, in 1974, a pre-service teacher on a Department of Education scholarship at Macquarie University in Sydney, NSW, had her scholarship revoked when she published an explicit lesbian poem in a student newspaper. Reportedly advised to keep her sexuality to herself, advice that in some schooling

contexts, as shall be illustrated, still has currency, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives writes of her situation, "Clearly it was not her lesbianism that was the problem, but her openness" (Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, n.d.). Similarly, in 1975, a gay activist and teacher was fired from a Catholic school after he appeared on television to discuss a homosexual rights organisation's submission to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (Anonymous, 1977). Anecdotal reports also detail instances of teachers being forced to transfer to different schools when their sexuality diversity became known to authorities or employers; being advised to keep silent about their sexuality; and having their private life surveilled by senior school staff resulting in the resignation of the targeted person (Anonymous, 1977, p. 7). In 1984, the Queensland Minister for Education "attempt[ed] to play down reports that he intended to sack any gay teacher who came out" (Anonymous, 1984a, p. 4), illustrating that homophobia prevailed at all levels, including the upper echelons of government.

Such examples of discrimination are, however, matched by evidence of organised community activism. Activism about teachers experiencing harassment and discrimination spans at least four decades. For example, lobbying by unions and employer groups to act on sexuality diverse discrimination in schools was undertaken by GAYTAS, a NSW-based gay teachers' and students' group (Anonymous, 1981). As far back as 1984, the Australian Teachers' Federation at its annual conference "passed a resolution seeking assurances from authorities that they would not discriminate against teachers on the grounds of sexuality". It also called for curriculum inclusions that "enhance[d] understanding and acceptance of lesbians and male homosexuals" (Anonymous, 1984b, p. 2).

The impact of institutional and interpersonal discrimination of gender and sexuality diverse teachers at work has left a seemingly indelible legacy on teaching and schooling despite the passing of protective legislation. Although this legislation provided potential redress in cases of reported discrimination in state-run institutions and enabled public understandings to develop in a positive direction, the amendments to the Australian Anti-Discrimination Act in the 1980s changed little in practice for teachers working in schools (Ferfolja, 2007b), although without these legislative amendments it is doubtful that any progress towards equity would have been possible in the interim. Legislation provides a crucial base for change, however slow that change may be. Although such legislation is "symbolically important" it does not necessarily mean that gender and sexuality diverse teachers "desire to disclose their sexual orientation" nor does it necessarily augment "feelings of professional or personal security on an everyday basis" (Ferfolja, 2009, p. 381; Juul, 1995). As Didi Khayatt (1992, p. 207) eloquently expressed in her seminal Canadian work, *Lesbian Teachers. An Invisible Presence*, protective legislation "would not guarantee the attitude of people who are made privy to that knowledge.

It would not shelter one from their prejudices, from their antagonism, from their unwillingness to cooperate". Moreover, some teachers are also unaware of the full protections that they have available to them (Jones et al., 2014). Schools remain heterosexist and homophobic organisations where the potential for damage or limitation to one's career, the threat of dismissal on fabricated grounds and the ongoing possibility for covert discrimination from colleagues, parents and students has to varying extents, and depending on context and situation, continued.

Over the decades, many gender and sexuality diverse teachers have felt compelled to manage their gender and sexuality subjectivities at work for professional and personal self-preservation (Ferfolja, 2007b). This involved using a range of particular kinds of strategies first categorised by US-based researcher Pat Griffin in the 1990s. These include being implicitly and explicitly out, covering and passing (Griffin, 1991, 1992a). Undoubtedly, "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1980/1993) helped many to remain working in the profession. Assumptions about one's (hetero)sexuality could be (and still are) virtually automatic for some sexuality diverse teachers who were married and had left heterosexual relationships. Similarly, those who had children were automatically seen as heterosexual as the commonly assumed means of reproduction involves sexual intercourse between a female and male; this simultaneously signifies a proclivity for intimate relationships with the opposite sex (Ferfolja, 2003). Other strategies included the careful and selective disclosure of their identities (Allen, 1999; Ferfolja, 1998, 2005, 2007b; Griffin, 1991, 1992a; Khayatt, 1992; Kissen, 1996a); and feelings of having to overperform to ensure an outstanding reputation for fear of loss of credibility if their sexuality diversity became public knowledge at work (Griffin, 1992a; Kissen, 1993, 1996a; Singer, 1997; Woods, 1990). Additionally, many enacted particular teacher performances aimed at deflecting attention from their sexual subjectivities and were mindful of the potential for public "outing"; for this reason, it was not uncommon to develop strategically prepared responses to potential public attacks (Griffin, 1992a).

These strategies require constant monitoring of performance and meant that many teachers lived dual lives. Some protected themselves by discursively positioning their sexuality as a personal matter and therefore of little consequence to others. This enabled them to create a "safe space" by consciously rejecting overt scrutiny of their private lives. The right to privacy was a commonly espoused self-protection (Ferfolja, 2003). Whether this positionality was, in reality, a conflation with the need for secrecy is worthy of reflection considering that any disclosure portended possible negative consequences. Being private renders one further marginalised through disengagement from colleagues, many of whom possess sexual capital through their heterosexual subjectivity (Britzman, 1997) and who subsequently are able to share their personal lives without compromise or jeopardy. Thus, the notion of privacy is simultaneously protective

and limiting. Similarly, in an endeavour to safeguard themselves, some teachers fore-fronted other aspects of their subjectivity, including that of "teacher as professional" (Ferfolja, 2003). This positioning still has currency for gender and sexuality diverse teachers, but is perhaps more legitimated within contemporary discourses of neoliberalism as will be illustrated later in this chapter. It is unsurprising that actual discrimination or the threat of it, combined with the conservative, heterosexist culture of schools and the subsequent requirement of many gender and sexuality diverse teachers to maintain a façade or live dual lives, had negative impacts on health and wellbeing (Ferfolja, 2006; Kissen, 1993, 1996a), on professional relationships with students and colleagues (Ferfolja, 2007b; Kissen, 1996b; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), on professional growth and on teacher retention (Ferfolja, 1998; Olson, 1987).

The legacy of years of silencing has created a precarious narrative of the lives of gender and sexuality diverse teachers and there are few positive historical representations on which gender and sexuality diverse teachers can draw (Jones et al., 2014, p. 340). In the present day, instances of publicly espoused and institutionally reinforced hostilities influenced by a culture of limitation, and ongoing invisibility of gender and sexuality diversity in the workplaces of teachers, continue to be a reality. Thus, the remainder of this chapter broadly examines how homonormative, neoliberal and neoconservative discourse influence and operate in the professional lives of contemporary gender and sexuality diverse teachers. In doing this, it must be acknowledged that our research over the years, and on which this chapter is based, finds that gender and sexuality diverse teachers' workplace experiences are often dependent on the leadership and social justice ethos of the school and its micro-culture (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013), which is often site-based and cannot be homogenised. Thus, we can only provide snapshots into the kinds of experiences of these teachers and the subjective performances that are deployed and at times embraced alongside an ever-present culture of limitation.

Gender and Sexuality Diverse Teachers in the 21st Century

Homonormative Acceptability

The legacy of discriminatory discourse prevailing in Australia along with more current influences apparent in its culture of limitation continue to shape the professional subjectivities of gender and sexuality diverse teachers. While, historically, gender and sexuality diverse teachers were oppressed by their employment context and experienced institutional and interpersonal discrimination, these attitudes reflected the dominant discourses in circulation that constructed problematic beliefs about gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities. In the second decade of the

21st century in Australia, however, dominant discourses have shifted to being more accepting and celebratory of gender and sexuality diversity (although more so in some circumstances than others and to varying degrees). Schools, however, have not substantially reflected these changing mores. Although gender and sexuality diversity may be "accepted" in some school workplaces, it seems this is only in certain situations. For instance, colleagues of gender and sexuality diverse teachers may be aware of one's gender and sexuality diverse identity and/or relationships, but this knowledge is often kept from students and the broader school (parent) community (Jones et al., 2014). It is only those subjective performances which are easily assimilated into the heteronormative environment and do not challenge the status quo that are embraced, relative to less conventional (perhaps socially unorthodox) subjectivities.

Additionally, a new type of sexuality diverse individual has emerged that is able to fulfil the normative constructions of the neoliberal subject; the "homonormative" personage. Duggan (2002) argues that homonormativity reflects a neoliberal sexual politics that enables the existence of a queer subjectivity. To all intents and purposes this subjectivity acceptably mirrors heterosexuality and "does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan, 2002, p. 179). This homonormative subject is, thus, an increasingly inconspicuous subject, where difference to the heteronormative is diminished and made largely invisible through assimilation with the heterosexual mainstream (Richardson, 2005). This allows gender and sexuality diverse individuals to potentially succeed at work, "but only if they enact a narrowly circumscribed and conventional performance of gender, family, and politics in the workplace" (Williams & Giuffre, 2011, p. 553). For gender-diverse teachers, this may be more difficult. As Kamenetz (2018) reports in their North American study of 79 gender-diverse teachers, more than half of the participants had been discriminated against at work in relation to their gender identity and expression and were commonly advised to make changes to their physical presentation. These expectations by schools enable discourses of heterosexuality and cisgenderism to remain dominant, intact and unchallenged.

Furthermore, Garwood (2016) explains how laws and policies change in order to benefit the neoliberal project. This can be illustrated by the passing of marriage equality in Australia in 2017, where contractual monogamy, an historically established patriarchal, cisgender and heterosexual institution, serves to create a "homonormative, assimilated, respectable same-sex couple" (p. 10). Although the authors of this book completely support marriage equality in Australia, particularly in terms of the right for any and all individuals, regardless of their gender or sexuality identity to marry, engaging in this institution expands

the production of a socially constructed acceptability; a homonormative (and neoliberal) subject who assumes the dominant and legitimised heteronormative narrative of monogamy and potential nuclear family life. This has been aided by changes to legislation enhancing access to adoption and reproductive technologies for same-sex couples. Such legislative developments, overall, support the production of homonormative families that, like their heterosexually headed counterpart, are considered the basis of society as they are perceived as economically significant through the stable unit of consumption that they provide (Garwood, 2016). In various ways, many sexuality diverse teachers assume homonormative subjectivities in the workplace and, to an extent, neoliberal discourse has opened spaces for inclusion for these historically marginalised identities in schools (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). This may also be possible for gender-diverse teachers who can "pass"; however, teachers who transgress normative presentations of gender may be compelled to "engage in additional gender work" (Ullman, 2020, p. 69) if they desire to be acknowledged as good teachers, or, in other instances, if they desire to remain in the profession (Wells, 2018, cited in Ullman, 2020, p. 70).

Precarious Lives: Teachers and Identity Management

Despite the emergence of the respectable homonormative subject, gender and sexuality diverse teachers still often experience a somewhat precarious workplace existence (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Ullman & Smith, 2018). There exists a felt need by many of these teachers to negotiate and "control" their gender and sexuality diversity at work, despite broader socio-cultural discourses that cultivate a notion of acceptance, affirmation and celebration. The extent to which this is the case varies, but what is still palpable is the need to manage in some capacity. Emerging research from the field shows that this may be particularly the case for gender-diverse teachers, who experience greater pressure to confirm, "control" and manage their gender expression due to the marked visibility of trans and gender-diverse bodies within (typically) highly socially policed, cisnormative and cissexist schooling environments (Ullman, 2020). The constant internal negotiating undertaken by gender and sexuality diverse teachers is illustrated through comments such as:

> You're used to that as a gay person, generally. You're always negotiating those types of boundaries and relationships and how much I reveal about my partner. For the most part, I don't care. This is who I am. . . . But also, if I feel it might be a time where it might cause discomfort or conflict and I'd rather not go there at the moment, then I'll brush over it. I think, yeah, that definitely happens within the school environment as well.
>
> (Sam, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

> You get on well with people and so there might be an overture of let's do something else. There are times I am quite cautious in terms of, is that a safe arena I take myself into? And I think a straight person doesn't have to edit or censor their life in that way, and I do.
>
> (Celia, cited in Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013, p. 320)

Such identity negotiation and evaluation of degrees of revelation about one's partners and personal/familial relationships is not a requirement for heterosexual, cisnormative individuals who can be open and visible about their private life. The burden for gender and sexuality diverse teachers can be high: in addition to the constant educational decision-making moments required of a typical teacher, estimated to be 1,500 per 6-hour day (TeacherVision, 2019), many gender and sexuality diverse teachers have to also be vigilant about what they say or accidently "let slip" in the classroom in relation to their home life and relationships. Additionally, corporeal cues in terms of dress or hair-style and relationship indicators such as a photograph of loved ones on one's desktop or mobile phone may also reveal or confirm a teacher's gender and sexuality diversity to others, whether desired or not; one cannot control how one is read by others (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013).

Such revelations of identity are not problematic for cisgender, heterosexually identified teachers whose gender and sexual subjectivities are normalised and reified (Williams & Giuffre, 2011) and who can legitimately draw on suitable anecdotes from their private lives and relationships to illustrate a concept or even bond with students. Drawing on the affective self is a practice common in pedagogical interactions—teaching is, after all, emotional work, often resulting in the merging of the personal and professional (Nias, 1996). Instead, many gender and sexuality diverse teachers are required to navigate their personal lives and emotions in the classroom in a manner that blurs truth or avoids reference to their closest relationships; or, conversely, feel compelled to use their experiences of diversity as a tool in a teachable moment about equity or to lay their bodies on the line by coming out as "role models" (Khayatt, 1997). Unsurprisingly, the lives of heterosexual, cisgender teachers are not perceived as "personal"—the discursive naturalisation of their gender and sexual subjectivities renders them unmarked and therefore normal and speakable. However, the abnormality of the gender and sexuality diverse subject, positioned within discourses of gender and sexuality transgression, forces these teachers into silencing their subjectivities in various workplace contexts.

Some teachers are advised or directed by management to self-censor any potential revelation about their same-sex partner. Gender and sexuality diverse teachers do not fit, by definition, the neoliberal/neoconservative moment. As one new teacher stated, "I have been told that 'if you have career aspirations, you need to be careful who you let know about

your personal life'" (Ullman & Smith, 2018, p. 29). Similarly, a young, gay male teacher was advised by colleagues in his first year of teaching to develop a "persona that was not gay, and to not let the students know: Do not come out to the students. Shut down that conversation and that question at all costs" (cited in Ferfolja, 2019, p. 212).

How one's gender and sexuality diversity might be used to undermine one's power, authority or professionalism (including misguided potential parental concern) or be used as the basis for discrimination and the anxieties associated with this continue to be reported by teachers in the second decade of the 21st century (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013; Henderson, 2019; Neary, 2013; Ullman & Smith, 2018). Cognisant of this, teachers often feel hesitant about revealing their personal lives, particularly to students and parents, and subsequently self-surveil and self-monitor. The reluctance to be visible is often more intense in schools located in what are perceived to be culturally conservative areas.

> In terms of the kids, so far I haven't really been out to them deliberately because . . . the culture as well, and I don't know how parents would react to it.
>
> (Toni, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

> It's not something that I bring into my classroom, so to speak. It's not something that I really have a conversation [about]—just because of the community I work in. It's a can of worms that I don't really need to be opened up.
>
> (John. public school teacher, unpublished interview)

> The only reason why I don't consider myself vulnerable because it's not widely known [her sexuality]. I think it would make me more vulnerable with the parents. . . . I think it still is a point, but nowhere near what it was. I'm just a bit wary because I think teachers in general are more vulnerable and that is just another factor that makes us vulnerable.
>
> (Bella, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

Assumptions about the school community having particularly conservative and heteronormalised expectations of teachers result in teachers self-silencing these aspects of their subjectivity. On the one hand, such caution is perhaps personally judicious; the recent marriage equality plebiscite identified a number of highly conservative areas across the nation (Evershed, 2017) and teachers, as public figures, do need to protect themselves, emotionally and physically, as well as their employment viability. On the other hand, remaining silent on the grounds of causing offence does two things. First, it homogenises and essentialises cultural, religious and ethnic diversities and makes assumptions about such subjectivities based

on narrow constructs of what a particular "community" is like; in this way of thinking, individuals, or even some religions, who are progressive around social issues, are erased. Second, it reinforces the omnipresence of heteronormativity and preserves the misguided belief that as one research participant reported a deputy principal had claimed, "there are no gays in this school" (Peta, public school teacher, unpublished interview).

However, there is something intrinsically wrong with a system that compels gender and sexuality diverse teachers to silence a part of their subjectivity that is *legally* legitimised and recognised as a basic human right (DePalma & Jennett, 2010) in order to avoid discrimination or harassment from others. Confronted parents, in the neoliberal age, have a choice of schooling options and can move their child to a school that aligns with their values and beliefs (although undoubtedly there will be gender and sexuality diverse teachers/students in that school as well). Public schools use public funding and gender and sexuality diverse teachers do the same job as their heterosexual colleagues and are renumerated at the same rates, yet they are required to undertake the additional emotional labour foisted upon them via discourses that reflect a culture of limitation.

Thus, it is deeply problematic that gender and sexuality diverse teachers still feel the need to remain silent. Research conducted by Ferfolja and Stavrou (2015) found that between 37 and 54% of the 160 sexuality diverse teachers who participated in an Australian national study hid their sexuality from other staff and students in their school workplace. Not surprisingly, considering the religious exemptions in anti-discrimination legislation, respondents were more likely to be open about their identity and relationships, particularly with colleagues, in public schools than private religion-affiliated institutions. More recent research on 1,036 gender and sexuality diverse teachers working in the public school sector across the state of New South Wales, Australia, who are protected by anti-discrimination legislation, found less than 20% of gender and sexuality diverse teachers were "out" to everyone (Ullman & Smith, 2018, p. 22). Thus, relatively few gender and sexuality diverse teachers are visible to students or the broader school community in spite of a general increase in openness to, and apparent public support for, gender and sexuality diversity in Australia.

Compulsory Heterosexuality and Cisgenderism

Workplace climate hostility is often the rationale for self-silencing by gender and sexuality diverse teachers (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). The perceived need to self-silence may be experienced for a variety of intersecting factors ranging from community profile to school type and ethos through to leadership's position on diversity generally and gender and sexuality diversity specifically. There is evidence to suggest that rural or regional

schools often produce an unreceptive climate for gender and sexuality diverse subjects (Jones, 2015) with urban environments being more affirming of difference (although this is not always guaranteed). Recent research has found that the further that one is employed from a major urban centre, the more likely one feels compelled to remain guarded; for instance, in such places, more than half of Ullman and Smith's (2018) survey respondents were "not out to anyone at school" (p. 22). In contrast, employment in locations closer to urban centres is often perceived to be less fraught as these areas are often considered to be more liberally minded. As Bonnie who participated in research into young gender and sexuality diverse teachers stated:

> I think especially in the inner city I don't think I'll have any problems with teachers except for having to come out with everyone when you say partner and you then have to clarify that it's not a man. . . . I think the schools themselves, especially in the inner city should be fine.
>
> (Bonnie, cited in Ferfolja, 2019, p. 208)

The fact that public schools in liberal areas may be more welcoming of gender and sexuality diverse teachers is a common belief. However, there are a number of noteworthy issues in Bonnie's quote; first, being able to be open with colleagues *does* indicate some degree of progress towards greater equity for gender and sexuality diverse teachers at work which is positive; in the not-too-distant past, gender and sexuality diverse teachers were required to be extremely wary about coming out to *anybody* in a school (Ferfolja, 1998, 2005, 2009); an anxiety that remains particularly apparent in private religious schools (Ferfolja, 2005; Callaghan, 2007; Jones et al., 2014). Gender and sexuality diverse teachers have always had agency (Rudoe, 2010) to be visible, however, the climate of schools has not been conducive to be so.

Second, what is simultaneously apparent is the *pervasive heteronormativity* that prevails in schools even among credentialed teachers, despite the apparent progressive nature of the locale and the diversity of its community (Ferfolja, 2019). Compulsory heterosexuality is still discernible here; indeed, the wheels of progress turn slowly! The assumption reinforce[s] the fact that such diversity is beyond the realms of everyday consideration by their peers, who are representatives of the institution and who carry on participating in heteronormalising conventions (Ferfolja, 2019). This was quintessentially articulated by a young teacher known as Marla who stated, "It's very heteronormative. . . . It's like we're going to have my engagement, and then I'm going to have my wedding and we're going to move in together and have babies and so on" (unpublished interview).

Third, being open with colleagues does not supplant the ongoing, near-eradication of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities in the classroom by teachers. Such silences are institutionally led. As Bonnie later

recounted, although colleagues were "accepting" of her sexuality diversity during her professional experience placements, it seems that teachers purportedly actively ignored the needs of same-sex-headed families when organising school community events and minimalised the relevance of same-sex parental inclusions, which Bonnie felt were "trivialised".

> The . . . teachers are like, "They have two mums"—it sounds like a novelty kind of thing. . . . I don't think they know how to react. . . . It's not seen as "normal" or the "same-but-different". . . . Even when I go as far as saying maybe we should be a bit more careful around Mother's Day or how we talk about it . . . they're like, "Oh no, because most people have this" [i.e. opposite gender parents].
>
> (Bonnie, cited in Ferfolja, 2019, p. 209)

These teachers not only reinforced heteronormativity through their failure to include "two mums" and their whitewashing of diverse family constellations, they simultaneously reinforced the normativity of neoconservative constructions of the family and neoliberal productivity frameworks. So although the individual queer-identified teacher, Bonnie, was ostensibly accepted at her workplace, addressing diversity in the school as a structural imperative and acknowledging its presence beyond her singular diversity was not (Ferfolja, 2019). Gender and sexuality diversity in this school was a challenge to the heteronormative (and heterosexist) status quo where "more people have this" (i.e. a heterosexual family composition), which is inevitable, considering that gender and sexuality diverse people are in the minority. This argument illustrates how the teachers involved ignored the apparent broader changing social mores—even when reminded of them—while simultaneously reinforcing those neoconservative and neoliberal values that reflect and maintain a culture of limitation. Additionally, these teachers in their failure to acknowledge the multifarious subjectivities and discourses surrounding the concept of "mother" simultaneously ignored mothers from blended, polymorphous and extended family forms. Teachers who only acknowledge, or service the needs of, traditional heterosexual family forms are undoubtedly failing to accommodate and therefore marginalising an array of all kinds of difference.

Similar silencing of diversity on an institutional level was also illustrated in educational contexts that made gender diversity contained and, in the main, invisible. Sean, a young, gay-identified teacher also felt "accepted" at the inner west high school where he taught; however, he revealed how this site actively positioned gender and sexuality diversity as invisible. According to Sean, the only representation of gender and sexuality diversity evident was via posters displayed in *one* corridor that led to a teachers' toilet which was allocated to a single, gender-transitioning student for their sole use. Sean reported that this student was *the only student* permitted to use that particular corridor and that particular corridor had

the only visible representation of such diversity on campus of which he was aware (Ferfolja, 2019, author's emphasis). Schools in the state of Sean's school are legally obliged to support transgender students and have published policy stating this (see NSW Department of Education, 2014). The policy position says little about how schools can address such issues on a broader structural level and most of the information heavily centres around the individual transgender subject, particularly (but not only) in terms of risk aversion. Gender diversity is presented in a reductive way—being the responsibility of a handful of people involved with the student's welfare and wellbeing rather than creating spaces that normalise gender and sexuality diversities as legitimate aspects of human differences. To normalise this institutionally, for instance, as a whole-school approach that is implemented regardless as to whether any gender or sexuality diverse students have "come out" would likely risk outrage by right-wing media and neoconservatives who harken back to traditional families that reflect the Butlerian (1990) heterosexual matrix. However, in doing so, they also intervene in the lives of others to perpetuate the reification and dominance of a particular set of conservative discourses that limit the options of everybody (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Sedgwick, 1990)—a feature of a culture of limitation.

The self-silencing of gender and sexuality diverse teachers around students and the broader school community is influenced and reinforced by a climate of anxiety in relation to speaking about, or providing subject matter related to, gender and sexuality diversity more generally (DePalma & Jennett, 2010). This apprehension has been compounded, for teachers generally and for gender and sexuality diverse teachers specifically, by decades of witnessing (or experiencing) interpersonal and institutional discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender subjects. Teacher trepidation has also been fortified by the public hysteria recurrently generated by the media and politicians about any potential curricular inclusions surrounding gender and sexuality diversity-related content. The legacy remains well-entrenched in teachers' collective psyche and is even discernible in the actions of neophyte teachers perhaps less exposed to explicit discriminatory histories. These comments, published elsewhere (Ferfolja, 2019), illustrate the hesitancy of young teachers to discuss these issues even during teachable moments, let alone in more detail.

> I've never brought in gay perspectives. I think I touched on it once. This conversation came up that a girl can't have a girlfriend. So we had a brief discussion about that, but then I kind of skimmed past it because I wasn't sure how deep I could go into it.
>
> (Richard, cited in Ferfolja, 2019)

> I was just showing [the students] some [CD covers] and I put up one on David Bowie. . . . And one of the kids asked me, why does he look

> like a girl? . . . And I didn't know how much to really say. . . . The only thing that I pretty much said was, you know what? All actors, musicians . . . they all wear makeup whether they're on TV or in photos. I just cut through it like that and I felt that was the only way that I could be true to my beliefs and not seem like I was pushing an agenda in any shape or form.
>
> (Marla, cited in Ferfolja, 2019)

This apprehension of any meaningful mention of gender and sexuality diversity-related content in the curriculum is fuelled by a belief that such topics are constructed as an "adults-only" concept beyond the understanding of young people. As mentioned earlier, Western social constructions of childhood demand that young people are "protected" from "adult" concepts (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Robinson et al., 2017), particularly those related to non-heterosexual and trans+ identities. This is an archaic construct considering the exposure and access that young people already have to such information via social media, popular culture, peers and public debates (such as the Safe Schools moral panic and the marriage equality plebiscite) as well as the fact that increasing numbers of young people are recognising their own gender fluidity and identifying as not exclusively heterosexual (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Hillier et al., 2010). Youth awareness is also demonstrated by the fact that young people themselves request more information in the school curriculum about gender and sexuality diversities, particularly in health and personal development classes. These realities point to the actuality that there are young people who are capable of dealing with such diversity; to prohibit mention by teachers or visibility in education is short-sighted and borders on intergenerational negligence.

Potential and Actual Discrimination

Potential and actual discrimination is still experienced by gender and sexuality diverse teachers in Australian public schools. Ullman and Smith (2018) reported that a staggering 43% of participants reported experiencing "LGBTIA+ bias-based harassment, discrimination or disadvantage" while working in the government school system (p. xi). This number is higher for gender-diverse teachers (54%). Participants reported a range of harassment types, and similarly to previous research, described herein, verbal and psychological discrimination was the more prevalent form of abuse. Both students and staff were identified as the most frequent perpetrators of this violence. Such discrimination impacted participants' psychological wellbeing, with many reporting that they sought external support to cope, namely from medical and psychological professionals. Interestingly, only 8% of harassed teachers who reported their experiences to school management or executive staff were content with the

outcome. Participants who worked in schools where gender and sexuality diversity-related discrimination flourished, and where their gender or sexuality diversity was perceived as a burden to the school's image in some way, spoke of the discrimination's effect on their sense of self—specifically on their ability to teach, their feelings of credibility and their sense of security. These schools were state-funded institutions bound by anti-discrimination law; much less is known about the impact of discrimination and silencing on gender and sexuality diverse teachers working in religiously affiliated schools in this nation.

Although, theoretically, gender and sexuality diverse teachers working in the government school sector have legal employment protections in terms of these aspects of their subjectivity, legislation still does not preclude the potential for subtler, more nuanced forms of discrimination from occurring. Micro-aggressions can involve a range of behaviours and include incidents that impact work opportunity and career progression, such as being overlooked for promotion or for specialist positions. As one gay male teacher divulged, "My position . . . was not extended. I had a meeting with the principal and . . . she told me that my lifestyle did not align with the culture of the school and thus there was no position available for me the following year" (cited in Ullman & Smith, 2018, p. 29). Another gay-identified, male primary school teacher was moved away teaching Kindergarten as "two people from the executive wanted a 'real man' on Kindergarten" (cited in Ullman & Smith, 2018, p. 29).

Additionally, for gender and sexuality diverse teachers there is always a possible risk of what *could* happen if they are more visible about their subjectivities; legacies of blatant and institutionally condoned discrimination, coupled with personal and vicarious experiences of witnessing discrimination, contribute to gender and sexuality diverse teachers remaining cautious. As Bella stated:

> I personally won't ever be open in terms of my sexuality in terms of the students, and not because of the students, because by and large they're very supportive and [have] accepting parents. I've seen other staff members have negative experiences. . . . For that reason, I keep that [quiet] . . . it will come out eventually but that's when I'm well established at the school. I'm just a bit wary. That's my personal life. It's got nothing to do with anybody, really.
>
> (Bella, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

Moreover, as Jake and Jeremy articulate next, gender and sexuality diverse teachers can be silenced for multiple reasons, including mythologies that align gay male teachers as potential paedophiles and therefore a risk to young people.

> I'm only out to staff, I'm not out at all to parent community or to students just because you don't know what people's reaction would

> be. Typically speaking there's a stigma around male primary school teachers anyway, that you're only in it because you're a paedophile; okay, great. Then add into that mix oh, you're a gay primary school teacher, it's just people are going to have red flags go up. You go well what's the point of making them doubt me when that has absolutely nothing to do with my teaching.
>
> (Jake, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

> Just when the new principal got on board, they have an [international] excursion. . . . So the . . . [names discipline] teachers said, oh would you be interested in going? I was really chuffed that they'd asked . . . I said yeah, yeah, yeah! And then I didn't really hear anything. I said . . . any word on the trip? And they went oh we had to fill out a risk analysis and they said oh you couldn't go. I said what? Yeah yeah—single male teacher, so they got a married male teacher to go instead . . . yeah and that actually really did happen. She actually mentioned the risk analysis. So that's obviously been signed off by . . . the principal.
>
> (Jeremy, cited in Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013, p. 8)

Jeremy illustrates how one may be "accepted" by colleagues yet simultaneously one's sexuality diversity is constructed by others within discourses of risk, particularly when intersecting sexuality with one's "single" maleness. As Ferfolja and Hopkins (2013, p. 318) point out, these myths linking sexuality diversity with paedophilia are detrimental "and are discursively linked through political and moral crusades and media hysteria around sexuality", promoting public misunderstanding and disquiet and confusion (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). These myths, which have been "informed by older psychological and psychiatric discourses which falsely construed homosexuals as mentally ill, infectious predators" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 340), impact the good work of many and contribute to the culture of limitation that thwarts the true inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse teachers in schools, forcing them on some levels to the margins.

The workplace situation for gender and sexuality diverse teachers that requires them to manage and negotiate their identities, reinforced by a neoconservativism and associated hysteria permeating schooling, in many ways reflects the identity management strategies required of gender and sexuality diverse teachers reported in the early literature and outlined previously this chapter. There seems to have been a subtle shift, however, in many teachers' workplace experiences over the decades; this involves the discursive repositioning of their subjectivities within discourses of a neoliberally promoted and endorsed "professionalism" and an increased acceptability of the homonormative subject. This repositioning enables many gender and sexuality diverse teachers to feel included in various contexts on an everyday level. Importantly, their perceived inclusion in their places of employment is relative—relative to the reported historical

experiences of discrimination experienced by gender and sexuality diverse teachers and relative to the privilege of their heterosexual counterparts. Thus, inclusion for gender and sexuality diverse teachers in the school as workplace context remains only partial and conditional.

Yet, schools are not universally oppressive, nor are the employment conditions necessarily perceived by individuals as discriminatory. It appears that the kinds of work environments that enable teachers to feel comfortable about "being themselves" tend to cultivate supportive discourses around diversity instituted on a whole-of-school basis and that implement whole-school pastoral care initiatives that focus on diversity (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013, p. 6; DePalma & Jennet, 2010). Strong leadership and ongoing programs and support are also useful in creating an inclusive environment for gender and sexuality diverse teachers and students (Ferfolja, 2013b, 2013c; Ullman & Smith, 2018). As one young, gay-identified male teacher attested of the climate towards gender and sexuality diversity in his school—albeit it a privately funded institution—and his school leadership:

> To paint more of a picture of the actual culture, the principal of the school got up at assembly and said that he was an advocate for marriage equality. He said that it was a sham that it was not legal. . . . And that was coming from the top, from leadership, in an assembly. . . . And that kind of sets the tone. That's filtered down elsewhere.
>
> (Ned, male teacher, all boys private school, unpublished interview)

Although the experiences of many gender and sexuality diverse teachers in the workplace remain, to various degrees, somewhat repressive, other gender and sexuality diverse teachers report that they feel well-supported and are not actively excluded, nor do they feel discriminated against by their employing institution.

> I, myself, and colleagues I am aware of who are sexually or gender diverse, I don't think any of us feel like we are at a disadvantage or are being discriminated against in any way.
>
> (Benjamin, public school teacher, unpublished interview)

Although there are gender and sexuality diverse teachers who do not report feeling actively excluded or differentially treated in relation to their colleagues, upon deeper examination, it seems that in many circumstances their gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities are, in the main, silenced and invisible in, and by, the schooling culture. It could be argued that gender and sexuality diverse teachers' acceptance of non-representation and silencing in the workplace reflects a kind of habituated position around the normalisation of oppression and invisibility. An analogy can be drawn here with the notion of feminism; because there

has been some progress in relation to women's rights, there is a common belief that feminism, as a positionality, is now obsolete (albeit awareness may have shifted somewhat with the relatively recent rise of the #metoo movement). For gender and sexuality diverse teachers, any kind of acceptance, no matter how limited, is better than continued overt discrimination. Yet, it must be remembered that silence is the other side of discourse (Foucault, 1978), and such silences in relation to gender and sexuality diversity simply continue to perpetuate the reification of cisgender subjectivities and heterosexual relationships.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the ways a culture of limitation generally silences and makes invisible gender and sexuality diversity in the workplace of teachers. Despite broader social shifts which signal a growing acceptance of gender and sexuality diversity, teachers who identify as such often still monitor language and behaviour. Neoliberal discourse and its entanglement in education has, however, enabled gender and sexuality diverse teachers to draw on notions of the professional—a positionality devoid of the personal—to increase their belonging in school contexts while downplaying those aspects of their subjectivity that may be perceived as contentious. Although more research needs to be conducted in this area, arguably many gender and sexuality diverse teachers are somewhat accepting of the blatant heteronormalisation that occurs in schools, and have become accustomed to not seeing themselves reflected in the workplace context in any meaningful way. Anxieties perpetuated by a culture of limitation and its manifestations as described throughout this book continue to fuel their subjugated pedagogical positionality.

Although gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities and related curriculum content continue to be marginalised in schools, there are pockets of resistance in many countries where inclusions of various kinds are being mandated. These resistances are comprised of proactive parents, educators and activists who seek progressive ways forward to embrace gender and sexuality diversity. Although not necessarily without backlash of the kinds explored in Chapter 2, the final chapter highlights a number of school system responses which give us confidence that changes to the educational system are afoot. It is to this final chapter of hope that this discussion turns.

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5 Challenging a Culture of Limitation

Spotlighting Resistance Nationally and Abroad

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we traced the impact of a culture of limitation on gender and sexuality diverse educators in Australia, with some discussion of discourses of parental disapproval and gender and sexuality diversity, and the ways in which these contribute to silencing relevant classroom conversations and impede educators' sense of comfort and wellbeing in their workplace. This chapter continues our exploration of gender and sexuality diverse content inclusions in schooling, mapping traces of a culture of limitation through the espoused values which structure the Australian learning environment—both those values which are explicitly detailed by the Australian Federal Department of Education and echoed through state/territory-based documentation, but also those which are implicitly conveyed through curriculum and policy messaging. This chapter highlights what is currently known about Australian parents' views about responsible schooling practices in terms of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity. Of importance to this examination are neoliberal and neoconservative discursive constructions of the "good" parent, the "typical" student (and, by extension, typical student cultures) and the "proper" classroom, which insert themselves throughout curriculum guidance and documentation in materially important ways. In order to explore how gender and sexuality diverse content inclusions can be progressed through local/federal governmental support amid sometimes conflicting paradigms of students' right to knowledge versus parents' right to censor, this chapter spotlights two international contexts, including the United Kingdom and New York State, concluding closer to home, with a focus on the Australian state of Victoria, the most progressive and gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive state of Australia in terms of K-12 schooling.

As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse-related knowledges within formal school curriculum is often fraught and, when incorporated, is patchy at best, non-existent at worst. In the Australian context, even in key learning areas such as

personal development, health and physical education, where curricular space for such topics appears to exist, Australian educators and students report that gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive content is haphazard and dependent on an individual school's composition and micro-climate, and/or individual committed teachers taking up the responsibility (Ezer, Kerr, Fisher, Heywood, & Lucke, 2019; Ollis, Harrison, & Maharaj, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). This is especially problematic considering the ongoing discrimination perpetuated against gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers and the ongoing silencing of these subjectivities in school education.

It is noteworthy that one in ten Australian high school students report that they did not receive sexual education and fewer than half describe their formal sexual education as "very" or "extremely" relevant (Mitchell, Patrick, Heywood, Blackman, & Pitts, 2014). While students say that they trust and appreciate their school-based sexual education, they want content to focus less on biology and reproduction and more on issues like sexual intimacy and identities, and specifically request information about gender diversity, violence in relationships and how to stay safe online (Johnson et al., 2016). Such calls for more inclusive sexual education are echoed elsewhere; a recent national survey of more than 1,200 Australian teenagers aged 13–18 found that 81% believed that topics specifically relevant to gender and sexuality diverse young people should be included in formal sexual schooling (Singleton, Rasmussen, Halafoff, & Bouma, 2019). However, these requests for additional information appear to sit in contrast with what is actually being provided by schools.

There are clear ramifications for schools' failure to include gender and sexuality diverse-relevant relationships and sexual health education. Large-scale research with gender and sexuality diverse young people demonstrates that, when this cohort is not able to access the information they need about sexuality and sexual health at school, they turn to online spaces (Mitchell, Ybarra, Korchmaros, & Kosciw, 2014). While there are doubtless positive outcomes related to young peoples' online help-seeking (Webber & Wilmot, 2012), and the community building that often goes with this (Byron & Hunt, 2017), there is something wholly irresponsible about an education system that leaves such gaps in students' knowledge that they are required to educate themselves, particularly in relation to issues of sexuality and gender expression which are essential to one's identity and intertwined with one's mental and physical health and wellbeing (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). There is also some irony in the fact that young people often receive highly restricted sexual health education in the formal school context and, as a result, have little alternative but to obtain the information they need from (unpredictable, uncontrolled) online sources, which may expose them to explicit material (Walker, Temple-Smith, Higgs, & Sanci, 2015). While research shows that online information searching related to relationships

and sexuality encourages positive information sharing and connectivity for gender and sexuality diverse teenagers (Smith et al., 2014), young people are certainly introduced to adult content and themes and can easily be exposed to misinformation about sexual health. Furthermore, a clear message is being communicated to gender and sexuality diverse youth and young people generally, through school's erasure of such perspectives: gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities are taboo, constitute inappropriate knowledges, and are not worthy of mention. As presented earlier in this book, research has highlighted the damaging impact this can have on gender and sexuality diverse students' relationships with their teachers (Ullman, 2015a, 2015b, 2017)—particularly noteworthy given the predictive influence of positive student/teacher relationships on students' secondary school completion (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2019).

The Liminal Space of "Values Education" in the Australian Context

Given the politically fuelled and media-enabled rise in neoconservative discourses, and their recurrent focus on parents' apparent opposition to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity,[1] and the ways that young people are positioned in Western constructions of childhood, elaborated in earlier chapters, it is not surprising that teachers are reluctant to discuss gender and sexuality diversity-related topics with students for fear that their professional reputations may be questioned, that they may become scapegoats in a public controversy, or that they might lose their jobs (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Duffy, Fotinatos, Smith, & Burke, 2013; Ferfolja, 2019; Ullman & Smith, 2018). Further complexity is added when we consider that some teachers may personally disagree with inclusion on moral or religious grounds or feel they lack the confidence or training to address gender and sexuality diversity in the classroom (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Leonard, Marshall, Hillier, Mitchell, & Ward, 2010).

While teachers cite fears of parent and community resistance as a central barrier to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity (Smith et al., 2011), there is very little formal research evidence in the Australian literature to support these concerns. Key work that has been conducted in this area points, instead, to parents' sense of confidence in their child/ren's schools to implement appropriate sexual health education, more generally (Berne et al., 2000; Ollis, Harrison, & Richardson, 2012), as well as specifically with regards to same-sex attraction (Macbeth, Weerakoon, & Sithartharan, 2009; Ollis et al., 2012). Australian research likewise highlights parents' interest in receiving information from the school about the content of formal sexuality education (Ollis et al., 2012) and their views that sexuality education should be a collaborative endeavour; a recent online

survey of 342 parents found that the majority (92%) believed parents should have some input into their child/ren's formal, school-based sexuality education (Robinson, Smith, & Davies, 2017). Interestingly, while educators' fears around parent pushback against inclusive sexual health education primarily centre on those parents anticipated to be opposed to gender and sexuality diversity, researchers found that parents who "wanted their children to have an open and positive outlook about sexuality, and gender and sexuality diversity" were likewise concerned about school-based programs "undermining the values and morals they wished to instil in their children" (Robinson et al., 2017, p. 342).

Such findings raise interesting questions about whether or not it is ever possible to separate values from educational content. Simply making some topics visible and others not illustrates value or preferential treatment. In that sense, all curriculum reform and teaching work is values-based. Beyond this is the question of schools' role in educating children and adolescents around a particular code of values, ethics and morals which may be thought to be aligned with those of the society in which it is situated; competing discourses surround such a focus in Australian education. At the federal level, the Australian Department of Education released a comprehensive set of curriculum resources and guidance documents in 2005, outlining the *Values for Australian Schooling* (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005a). These resources speak frankly about the teacher's role in explicitly articulating and teaching a values-based curriculum, centred around a core set of nine values, including "Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion", which teaches students to "be aware of others . . . accept diversity" and "include[ing] others" (p. 4). Notably, contrasting values or the potential for contested values is not ignored in these documents. The authors adeptly point out that teachers, particularly those in culturally and religiously diverse schools, might question "*whose* values" (emphasis in original) should be taught; however, the documentation goes on to suggest that,

> No school is an island; each is part of the mainstream society where there is a plethora of influences and values open to students that may contrast and conflict with the values regimes that the school community is trying to foster. . . . The Framework, therefore, presents an **agreed set of values** for Australian schools to foster . . . common ground that schools can work in.
>
> (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005b, pp. 10–12, emphasis in original)

Such statements are strong and unequivocal in their intent, and schools are positioned by this documentation as responsible for an articulated values-based education that sits alongside/in tandem with various key learning areas across the curriculum. Further, in lieu of specifically articulated

diverse cohorts, such a statement can be read as implying the acceptance and inclusion of *all* forms of diversity. In their updated statements on values education (2011), teachers are encouraged to "take risks in their approaches to values education" (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p. 2) in order to "develop young people who are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice" (p. 3). Values education also appears across the various state and territory education department teacher guidance documentation. In keeping with the federal framing, the Department of Education (DOE) in the authors' state of New South Wales (NSW) outlines that schools are obligated to teach and to model "the values that are the basis of law, customs and care for others in our society", identifying a commitment, "to the principles of social justice and opposing prejudice" and "developing social cohesion" (NSWDOE, 2016, n.p.).

At first glance, a set of values concerned with the collective, with diverse communities and with social cohesion appears to sit in contrast with the individual-focused, neoliberal values which, we have argued in an earlier chapter, structure the educational marketplace (Apple, 2001; Brown, 2006; Connell, 2013; Down, 2009). However, by failing to explicitly name the groups which have been, historically, most marginalised in Australian society[2] or to identify the social/legal issues impacting these groups, such federal and state messaging glosses over actual diversity in favour of "feel good", motherhood statements. The schooling culture is, thus, configured as able to give everyone a "fair go" through their blanket opposition to prejudice and general orientation to inclusion—a generic values statement, ironically, free of any clear, value-oriented position on any specific minority cohorts and, thus, invulnerable to opposition. Accordingly, these documents are innately aligned with a system of neoliberal values, seemingly premised on the notion that individual success and, by extension, the social cohesion promised, is best achieved if everyone sits in agreement and if no one group receives any "special attention". Within this system, educators are encouraged to uncritically position diversity as a discrete addition to curriculum content, rather than as a holistic social justice orientation to teaching. Bland statements about diversity likewise align with a privileged, neoconservative reframing of minority groups' interests in advancing the rights of their communities as "identity politics" (Massoumi, 2015), thus potentially inscribing these groups as selfish and self-interested—importantly—at the expense of the greater good.

While a values-informed curriculum which is committed to opposing prejudice and making inclusion visible would seemingly support inclusivity of gender and sexuality diversity, in practice, the federal *Values for Australian Schooling* and state/territory-based adaptations as currently written can do very little to actively challenge a culture of limitation which constrains the visibility of gender and sexuality diversity. In many

Australian schooling contexts, teachers and school leaders must negotiate conflicting messages which are entirely specific to this minority group. In NSW, for example, departmentally produced curriculum support materials go to great lengths to position gender and sexuality diversity-related curricular inclusions as content which requires school leaders' consideration of local community/contextual values (NSWDOE, 2017), rather than align such inclusions with federal and state department-endorsed values as detailed earlier, which could be very easily accomplished. Accordingly, these institutions draw a clear line across the typologies of diversity which can be subsumed under Australia's "agreed set of values" and those which sit outside, for which even mention or acknowledgement is viewed as taking a values-based stance which is not agreed upon. Through these discursive constructions, these documents position gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity and recognition in the curriculum (inclusive of relevant and informative sexual health education for gender and sexuality diverse students) as dependent on an unknown, Othered and, particularly in the state of NSW, *politicised* set of values (NSWDOE, 2019), rather than as students' educative and civil rights, as identified in federal anti-discrimination law (Australian Government, 2018) and as recommended by UNESCO's (2018) international guidelines on sexuality education.

As discussed in Chapter 2, resistance to apply a values-inclusive framework to gender and sexuality diverse topics has been evidenced at various touchstone moments in Australia's history, most recently in the revisions to the national Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum. As multiple feedback submissions during the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) drafting process identified, the vague, non-committal language used to describe diverse identities would open the door for educators' own un/familiarity or dis/comfort with gender and sexuality diverse topics to guide their personal interpretations of such curriculum descriptors, resulting in teachers' avoidance or glossing over the topics and potentially writing gender and sexuality diverse individuals out of the curriculum (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2014). As with the values documentation discussed earlier, the final version of the national curriculum evidenced a decidedly conservative system of values, constructing diversity as a safe, monolithic concept without explicitly endorsing topics which could result in a difference of opinions or, more to the point, be seen as evidence of a social justice- and equity-based politic.

Research shows that, in lieu of articulated expectations, teachers are often the final arbiters of gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive content in their schools (Johnson et al., 2016). As subjective individuals, teachers often operate, of course, within their own knowledge and comfort zones and in line with their own set of values, including those related to gender and sexuality diverse education and identities. Research shows that Australian health and physical education teachers' own discomfort with

gender and sexuality diverse-related knowledges and uncertainty about what is meant to be covered and in what ways results in them restricting their lessons to "safer", more innocuous topics (Smith et al., 2011) which can ostensibly be positioned as factual and value-free. In their national survey of teachers of sexuality education, Smith and colleagues (2011) highlighted a lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training and awareness of relevant policies and curriculum resources as significant barriers to their students' access to relevant and inclusive content, with a third of teachers reporting that they did not assess their teaching against curriculum standards. Recommendations from this and other work in the field universally suggest centring the educational and interpersonal needs of young people, valuing their perspectives on the changing dynamics of sexuality and gender in order to reliably and conscientiously cover this content area (Albury, 2018; Johnson et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2018).

Values Discourses as Employed Within a Neoconservative Framing of Gender and Sexuality Diversity

Despite clear national direction on a framework of values and ethics meant to guide education and supersede all other personal/local systems of values (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005a), the "spectre" of parental opposition to diverse sexualities and genders, premised on the basis of conflicting community values, dictates the realities of students' access to this information (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017a; Ullman & Ferfolja, forthcoming). At the time of writing, while the eight Australian states and territories have had varying levels of revision of the national HPE curriculum—with some locations using the national version as is and others adapting or revising this as per agreements between federal/state government bodies—parents across the country are consistently enabled to opt their child/ren out of relationships and sexual health education, particularly content which deals with sex and sexuality, with no explanation required. Such policies communicate their own set of values: positioning gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive curriculum as both optional and as always sexualised, rather than as part of the social and cultural demography of Australian society.

Notwithstanding previous moves in Australian education policy towards critical examination of gender and power, including the framing of gender as a social construct and an acknowledgement of the gendered nature of homophobia (Gannon, 2016; Ollis, n.d.), escalating neoconservative backlash over the last few decades, including a reorientation of curriculum around traditional educational values, has seen such educational content paired down significantly across most states and territories in the country and its repositioning as "sexual" and "radical" (Smith, 2019), rather than as scholarly or a space for critical thinking or expansion. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, this was most

recently exemplified in the moral panic surrounding the (previously) federally funded and endorsed program, SSCA, the first national initiative to enable teachers to explicitly support gender and sexuality diverse students, for whom research consistently shows experience of a multitude of challenges in the heteronormative schooling context (Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden, & Davies, 2014; Smith et al., 2014; Ullman, 2015a, 2015b). Even considering evidence of positive school engagement and feedback, after a prolonged right-wing media attack which capitalised on hysteria surrounding purported (homo)sexualisation of young people, the erosion of family values and students' indoctrination (Law, 2017), federal funding for SSCA was not renewed (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017a). As noted, not only were SSCA resources mapped to the curriculum, professional development and lesson plan outcomes of inclusivity, visibility and cohesion stood in clear alignment with the values of "Understanding, tolerance and inclusion" within the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* documentation (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2005a), although this was patently ignored.

The legacy of Safe Schools and its challenge to a particular set of traditional, religiously conservative values regarding the (heteronormative) nature of romantic relationships and gender as only operating as a fixed binary has continued in striking ways, as a culture of limitation feeds and is fed by both political and social momentum. Since late 2018, "Binary"[3]—an Australian neoconservative, heteroactivist (Browne & Nash, 2017) political lobby group—has honed in on schools, agitating for the removal of curriculum content and policy support which makes space for trans/gender-diverse student identities, which they position as evidence of "radical gender theory" (Binary Australia, n.d.) and as outside the neoliberal brief of schools as "places of learning" (Smith, 2019). No doubt emboldened by the Prime Minister Scott Morrison's apparent overtly anti-trans position (see Martin, 2019; Butson, 2018 as just two examples of this), alongside the early 2019 Liberal/National Coalition[4] government win in NSW, Binary developed and distributed "Anti-PC Packs" to 500 Parents and Citizens (P&C)[5] Associations across the state of NSW "with advice for parents on identifying if their child is being 'indoctrinated' by 'radical gender activists' at school" (Smith, 2019, para 1). With the notable exception of the Safe Schools teaching materials, in instances where gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive education is acknowledged in any small way within the Australian National curriculum or related policy documentation, an equity or social justice values-distant, anti-bullying framing is often used, seemingly by way of shoring up the work against accusations of the promotion of gender and sexuality diverse identities and, by extension, recruitment of gender and sexuality diverse young people to the "lifestyle"; this sits in direct contrast to Binary's unapologetic values-laden position of opposition to the concept

of gender fluidity; to schools' acknowledgement of and accommodations for transgender students; and to teachers' apparent confusing of vulnerable children, (re)positioning educators who support trans/gender-diverse students as "intimidating" (Smith, 2019, para 17) bullies.

Intriguingly, Binary exposes this anti-bullying, (attempted) value-free discursive framework as a rouse, which they call a "politically correct 'code' " (Smith, 2019, para 19). While critiques of an anti-bullying framework as sufficient content addressing gender and sexuality diversity (as highlighted in Chapter 3) focus on its failure to include overt, descriptive education around normative conceptions of gender, relationships and sexuality, as a tokenistic, pretended inclusivity and its own rouse of sorts, for the Binary group and like-minded supporters, even anti-bullying policy that acknowledges the existence of gender and sexuality diverse students is too permissive. It appears that their satisfaction can only be found through schools' overt condemnation of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities and thorough erasure from curriculum and policy.

It is noteworthy that, while such views are clearly bigoted, homophobic and trans exclusionary, they gain traction within a culture of limitation, even by individuals who might otherwise consider themselves allies to gender and sexuality diverse communities. Policies which prioritise parental choice around their children's access to curriculum seem, at uncritical first glance, fair and reasonable. Further, most moderate and left-leaning individuals highly value individuals' bodily autonomy and individual choice, and support the ways such values are taken up within education in liberal democracies (Alexander, 2015). However, additional complexities arise when we consider that the dominant discourses which construct the "good" Australian parent are intertwined with conservative views on children's right to knowledge, what knowledge can be considered "risky" (Davies & Robinson, 2010) and parents' facilitation (or denial) of their children's access to this. The section that follows will explore how Australian parents are constructed by the media and through curriculum and policy resources, situating this alongside current data from this cohort which explores parents' views on gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity in K-12 education.

Constructed Stakeholders and Australian Parents

As discussed in previous chapters, Australia's culture of limitation surrounding inclusivity of gender and sexuality diversity in school education is actively produced and enforced by entangled discourses concerning privilege and access, gender and masculinity, and the role of the school and the family which circulate throughout society. These discourses construct school stakeholders in particular ways, with material effect in the daily lives of students and educators. While multiple discursive constructions of each—students, their parents and their teachers—can and do

co-exist, the paragraphs that follow focus specifically on those discourses which lead to the absence of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities in schools and which have dominated the Australian school landscape, even if these are not representative of broader cultural sentiment.

Throughout the various moral debates and most recent debacle involving SSCA, discussed extensively in previous chapters, Australian parents have been discursively constructed by right-wing press and politicians as universally conservative, religiously oriented/motivated, hyper-vigilant and deeply invested in controlling their child's (heteronormative) sexual health education. As Thompson (2018) reflected in his paper on mainstream media coverage during this time:

> within much of this [journalistic] rhetoric, the reader is interpellated as a parent. The reader/parent is encouraged to feel indignation and horror at the SSCA's attempts to sexualize innocent children and, correspondingly, want to protect these children in the way that only parents can (and should).
>
> (p. 2)

These discursive constructions co-construct a particular set of values for parenting. "Good" parents have conservative ideas about sexuality, gender and the traditional family; are positioned as their child's moral saviours; and are outraged, and potentially unpredictable, in the face of initiatives/radicals which place their (inherently conservative) "family values" at risk and their desire to safeguard that which is right and wholesome. Within a neoconservative political landscape, such ideas are strategically positioned as "commonsensical" and universal. Non-heteronormative families are, of course, generally omitted from this construction through discourses of majority-rule, which point to only small numbers of gender and sexuality diverse-headed families (see, for example, *Focus on the Family*)[6] even in the face of growing numbers of such families (ABS, 2018). Media's reader-as-parent evoked through the anti-SSCA articles rejects the SSCA program "and (perhaps implicitly) disapproves of gender and sexuality among children" (Thompson, 2018, p. 3). Parents featured by conservative media outlets and right-wing special interest groups during this time of the anti-SSCA were positioned as vocal advocates for their communities, who had no choice but to come forward to protect the(ir) children. Given historical legacies of such parental public behaviours successfully silencing gender and sexuality diverse voices in the Australian schooling context,[7] parents are (re)constructed through these narratives as not only powerful but, more importantly, morally justified. Crucially, within these discursive constructions, there is no room for the possibility that parents—particularly parents motivated by fundamentalist religious or cultural directives—are ever wrong about their child's needs. As evidence of the material impact of this discursive

construction, the federal review of SSCA resources requested by, then, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull contained recommendations for consent from the entire parent community for their school's participation in the initiative. The irony of such a mandate is near overwhelming; a program designed to support social inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse students through the de-stigmatisation of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities was officially positioned as so stigmatised as to require full parental consent.

Within this context, school leaders are left to decide whether or not gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum is incorporated into their school's curriculum and practice, bearing the ultimate burden of accountability and being potentially vulnerable to the constructed parent described earlier. As per the state-based departmental documentation in NSW, principals are meant to have an accurate, in-depth understanding of their school's "ethos" (BOS NSW, 1999, p. 6), be aware of families' "cultural values" (NSWDOE, 2017, p. 45) and are expected to make curricular decisions about sexual health education and gender and sexuality diversity-related inclusions based on their own informal assumptions about parental attitudes and desires. This is deeply problematic; after all, whose voices are heard? And what of the homophobic or transphobic principal or those who make decisions based on their own personal values rather than in terms of a broader social good? NSW-based recommendations for "sexuality and gender education" released in early 2017 as a further response to the SSCA political furore suggests that principals read through and dis/approve of any materials dealing with gender and sexuality diversity; no resources are to be used without their explicit permission (Louden, 2017). By extension, departmental documentation thus removes professional autonomy, constructing teachers as workers for the state through various accountability measures.

Media highlighting teachers' "missteps" in their inclusion of gender and sexuality diverse identities[8] is positioned as insubordination: a failure to accurately represent their community and follow instructions for value-free discussion of controversial topics. This is enabled through the department's strategic linking of a school's decision to include gender and sexuality diversity-related topics to educators' personal values while invisibility of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities within that same school is positioned as value-neutral. Little room is made within these discursive constructions of the teacher for their specialised expertise and deep knowledge of their student body, including students' educational or social support needs. In such a context and within an anti-bullying framework, the broader social issues of visibility and acceptance of gender and sexuality diversity remains ever in the shadow of an assumed heteronormative parent community who would be unsupportive of whole-school inclusivity, with any related issues of social marginalisation positioned as personal and relevant only to the students involved

in discrete incidents where gender and sexuality diversity is definitively mentioned.

Australian Parents' Attitudes Towards Inclusivity of Gender and Sexuality Diversity

The apparent fears of backlash and public recourse that construct Australian parents as opposed to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum based on religious and/or conservative ideologies seem to be at odds with research findings in the area. In a sample of 177 parents from the Sydney metropolitan area, nearly the entire cohort (97%) felt that sexuality diversity—framed as same-sex attraction—should be included as part of the standard sexual health curriculum (Macbeth et al., 2009). Similarly, in their case study of a Victorian K-12 school, Ollis et al. (2012) found that almost 80% of the 105 parents surveyed felt that school-based sexuality education should include sexuality diversity.

Recent research with 22 parents across the state of NSW about how and why gender and sexuality diversity-related topics might be included into a K-12 curriculum found parents' perspectives to be far more nuanced and supportive of inclusions than Australian popular media and conservative education departmental constructions portray (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017b; Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016). Parents of school-aged children attending K-12 schools were invited to participate in focus groups, offered in seven key regions of the state: three suburban areas in the greater Sydney area, one coastal regional town, two regional agricultural towns and one rural town. In direct relevance to our discussions of Australian schools as situated within a culture of limitation surrounding recognition and affirmation of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities, it is notable that, despite full ethical approval from the NSW Department of Education to recruit parents through schools, merely five of 39 primary and secondary schools agreed to include the project's promotional materials in their school newsletter (Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016). Notwithstanding the clear project focus on parents' attitudes towards visibility of gender and sexuality diversity across various key learning areas, ages and stages of schooling (as opposed to directly engaging students), declining schools reported that the project was irrelevant to their parent community.

The final sample of 22 participating parents came from across the public and (religiously affiliated) private sectors, with children attending primary and secondary schools and representing a range of ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse families. Despite these differences, participating parents were near-uniformly supportive of gender and sexuality diversity content inclusions in the school curriculum, with many expressing some incredulity that overt curricular inclusions/permissions were not already present. Parents spoke of teachers' duty of care to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all children, including

gender and sexuality diverse-identifying students and those with gender and sexuality diverse family members. Many outlined the ethics of inclusion, particularly as related to minority groups, and problematised the messages sent to children and their families when requiring special permission for gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive content:

> Do we think parents should be instructed that they're [students] going to learn about Aboriginal people or other minority groups? Do they need to be told? Do white people get to choose whether their kids find out about what we did to the Aboriginal people? . . . If you're talking about the civil rights history of these people [LGBTQ individuals] then I don't think that there should be a consent option to opt out.
>
> (Metropolitan location, mother; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 23)

> It's not normalizing this education if you have to get a permission note. I trust the school to teach my kid calculus and the capital cities, and I trust them to teach this too.
>
> (Regional location, father; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 24)

While participants did express some tensions around what gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive sexual health education might look like in practice, most felt that the same opportunities for health-promoting education should be available for gender and sexuality diverse students. Central to this assertion was the distinction between education and "promotion", and the recognised double-standard when comparing (hetero) sexual health education to gender and sexuality diverse-inclusive sexual health education.

> You'll have every 12-year-old girl pregnant if there's no sex education or safe sex messages. By teaching that [sexual education] we're not promoting sex. Similarly, by teaching about homosexuality we're not promoting homosexuality.
>
> (Metropolitan location, mother; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 25)

Participants did acknowledge that particular values are communicated to students through a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum. Where a minority number of participants saw this as the limits of such discussions, suggesting that topics around gender and sexuality diversity be presented to students in a factual, value-free way ("The judgement is for at home, not for at school"), most felt that this was a practical

impossibility. Many parents noted that schools promote values of social cohesion on a regular basis, highlighting the importance of visibility for both improved school belonging for children from diverse social groups and general education about diversity and the diverse groups which comprise Australian society. Participants felt that such education operates with the assumption that all stakeholders agree that discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation arise from anti-social values and ideas that educators would not want to be seen to promote. Accordingly, parents who viewed schools as premised on a shared set of values identified the hypocrisy in schools failing to admit even the existence of gender and sexuality diverse individuals, let alone affirm and celebrate gender and sexuality diverse identities:

> They're [schools] constantly pushing values, saying you should be tolerant, shouldn't bully, you should look after your friends, you've got to respect the teachers, you've got to respect the textbooks. That's [values in schooling] sort of embedded in part of their lessons, so it seems unusual to leave this little bit out [i.e. LGBTQ inclusivity].
>
> (Metropolitan location, mother; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 23)

While some differences of opinion did exist across the seven cohorts, most parents took the position that they were guardians, not owners, of their children and viewed education as premised on exposure to new information and offering young people the tools to make critical and informed decisions about the world and their place in it. Accordingly, these parents felt that gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum extended beyond a health or personal development framing to a broader recognition and normalisation of gender and sexuality diverse individuals as valid members of Australian society.

> My children in their state school used to go to the Easter church service and do the readings and I don't belong to a church or religion but I thought that's fantastic because they are learning about other people. They will live in the community with people who are religious and maybe one day they will become religious too, so I didn't want to stop them from getting that information. So similarly getting information about homosexuals—I'm not saying I want them to become homosexual but I want them to understand.
>
> (Metropolitan location, mother; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 23)

> Being gay or lesbian or transgender is a real thing and it's going to occur in your life at some point and it's not something you can believe

> in—it's not Greek mythology. It's there—it's in your face every day. So learn it—get used to it!
>
> (Regional location, mother; cited in Ullman & Ferfolja, 2016, p. 22)

Data from this group of NSW parents is aligned with findings from a recent pilot study exploring parents' rationale/s for why they would or would not support a national gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum. As a preliminary step in their multi-phase, mixed method project,[9] researchers from Western Sydney University piloted an original quantitative, multi-dimensional measure with parents from England the United States and Australia (N=998) in order to refine and validate the instrument and explore how parents' attitudes towards curriculum was related to their sense of who should provide relationships and sexual health education to young people (see Ullman, Hobby & Ferfolja, forthcoming). As a group, parents were far more supportive of a gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum than they were to agree with proposed potential barriers to such topics, including religious opposition to gender and sexuality diversity and ideas about students' "sexual suggestibility". Further investigations demonstrated that parents' rationale for supporting these curriculum inclusions came from clearly held values around equality, the desire to support and affirm gender and sexuality diverse students and a felt need to counteract histories of oppression of gender and sexuality diverse individuals. Perhaps most telling, parents' endorsement of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education was strongly related to their support of a whole-school approach to relationships and sexual health education, informed by external experts. The minority cohort of parents who endorsed barriers to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum were far more likely to suggest that relationships and sexual health education be delivered primarily by religious/faith leaders.

At the time of writing, Ferfolja and Ullman have surveyed several thousand Australian parents nationwide, with similarly patterned results. By and large, the sample of Australian parents collected to date support a national gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum, citing drivers such as enabling equality and countering histories of oppression as their main rationales for endorsement. Furthermore, the majority of the sample acknowledged the personal impact of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum for students who may be gender and/or sexuality diverse or be connected to a gender and/or sexuality diverse individual in their lives. Parents overwhelmingly felt that relationships and sexual health education should involve a number of stakeholders as a whole-school approach and, in addition to covering the basics of reproduction and biology, should include topics including choice, consent and acceptance of diversity. Merely 5% of the sample felt that relationships

and sexual health education should promote abstinence before marriage as its main goal, illustrating that parents are not as conservative as departmental documentation might have us believe.

Additional project explorations with nine mothers of gender and sexuality diverse-identifying children located across the country further highlighted the need for gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education as a way to normalise and affirm gender and sexuality diverse identities and improve the experience of schooling for their children (Ferfolja, Ullman, & Goldstein, 2019). Parents uniformly spoke of the importance of staff training around gender and sexuality, including how to support gender and sexuality diverse children but, more importantly, how to mindfully incorporate gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive lessons in ways that removed stigma and celebrated diversity.

> If they'd had that stuff [education about gender diversity] embedded somehow in the learning, I don't think it would've ever been an issue for him. I think he would've felt less isolated, and he would've felt more included in the process, and perhaps more like he had the power to challenge people when they were being really nasty to him.
>
> (Mother, gender-diverse adolescent, Tasmania; unpublished interview)

Several of the mothers pointed out that the staff tasked with having these conversations cannot be opposed to gender and sexuality diversity. Such a request seems so basic as to be almost commonsensical—a racist teacher would not be allowed to teach students about ethnic diversity, to draw a parallel; however, parents from across multiple projects discussed the damage inflicted by educators who appeared to be operating from a homo/transphobic viewpoint, through either their silences/refusal to acknowledge gender and sexuality diversity or their overt negativity.

> I think it should be compulsory in all schools, that they have to have an LGBTIQ term, where that's all they focus on in PDHPE. They get decent content and material. There's lots of stuff from the Gender Centre or online that people can watch. And the teacher who's running it must be trained in it, you know? . . . They must know what they're saying and doing, and not be prejudiced.
>
> (Mother, transgender adolescent, New South Wales; unpublished interview)

It is, thus, unsurprising that where mothers reported positive experiences with their child's school, heralded by supportive school leadership, they described the implementation of targeted staff professional development that focused on supporting gender and sexuality diverse students. In

many instances, these mothers were reportedly at least partially responsible for driving for this:

> We had Safe Schools [gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive professional development] come into my daughter's primary school . . . and do PD [professional development] with the—actually the entire school staff, so everyone from the tuckshop volunteers to the crossing supervisor to the grounds keeper had to do the Safe Schools PD. That's a great experience for me to have as well, to really see what I'd considered to be a best practice response from a school that's got no clue, but tremendous good will and I guess maturity to look at what they don't know and find ways to learn.
>
> (Mother, transgender child, Queensland; unpublished interview)

Such research narratives disrupt constructions of the conservative Australian parent, who supports a "back to basics" neoliberal curriculum which devalues social and emotional learning and is devoid of critical considerations of privilege, access and equity. Further, these findings evidence resistance to a culture of limitation and spotlight the power of parents to mobilise for visibility and recognition. This is particularly salient given that, to some extent, the supports for this opposition are already in place; if there can be a single advantage to the non-descript, open-ended statements of values or depiction of diversity, such as those outlined within the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2005a) or within the NSW Department of Education resources, it is the provision of space for gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive lessons across all areas of the curriculum. School-parent partnerships and ongoing communication, endorsed generally as a fundamental element of the new *Australian Student Wellbeing Framework* (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2019) as well as specifically with regards to relationships and sexuality education, afford possibilities for change and create fertile ground for parent-led advocacy.

Lessons Learned From Abroad and Progressive Victoria

With this in mind, the next section of this chapter turns outward to key international locations and the Australian state of Victoria where significant shifts have occurred in the treatment and delivery of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education across primary and secondary schooling contexts. In these locations, where broader policy redrafting has taken place, shifts have doubtless been aided by the gaining of momentum of grassroots advocacy groups, supportive government officials and dynamic academic/policy partnerships, which actively resist a

culture of limitation. In many locations this resistance manifests through counter-discourses focusing on curricular suitability and the benefits of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive schooling spaces, particularly in light of what is known about the challenges experienced by many gender and sexuality diverse students. How policy documents take up this challenge is of particular interest here; where every word is a strategic choice meant to inform and guide action, although much can be lost in policy interpretation, translation or implementation (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire, & Braun, 2011; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2014), clear and definitive language is critically important.

Of additional interest to this discussion is how departmental and other government representatives speak to the "'spectre' of fear of-LGBT-subjectivities-in-schools" (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017a, p. 12) through these various initiatives, via media statements and publically accessible materials. These actors challenge neoconservative viewpoints in various important ways, drawing upon values, equity and rights-based discourses to support visibility of gender and sexuality diversity and, in some locations, unabashed affirmation in schools. While schools remain situated within the current neoliberal marketplace, certain limits to such progress appear to be inevitable. Nevertheless, the cases spotlighted next offer stories of change and, with them, a sense of hope for what might be possible with overt governmental support and leadership in this area.

UK's Equality Act (2010) and Gender and Sexuality Diversity-Inclusive Curriculum

Much has changed in the UK since the repeal of Section 28 in 2013, as discussed in Chapter 2. At the broad, foundational level, the 2010 Equality Act specifies gender reassignment and sexual orientation as protected characteristics, making it unlawful to treat someone less favourably because of identity characteristics within the school environment (Department for Education [DfE], 2014a). While this guidance makes it clear that discussions about marriage, for example, should include marriage between same-sex partners, advice is notably conservative, stating that teachers are not required to "promote or endorse marriage of same sex couples" and that "Teaching should be based on facts" (e.g. that same-sex marriage is legally possible; DfE, 2014a, p. 22). Of particular interest is the section on religious viewpoints and permissions and advice included therein for educators with "views on sexual orientation/sexual activity grounded in religious belief":

> Where individual teachers are concerned, having a view about something does not amount to discrimination. So it should not be unlawful for a teacher in any school to express personal views on sexual orientation provided that it is done in an appropriate manner and

> context (for example when responding to questions from pupils, or in an RE or Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) lesson). However, it should be remembered that school teachers are in a very influential position and their actions and responsibilities are bound by much wider duties than this legislation. A teacher's ability to express his or her views should not extend to allowing them to discriminate against others.
>
> (DfE, 2014a, p. 22)

The current guidance for schools thus indicates that when teachers speak freely to students, over whom they hold considerable power and authority, about their opposition to gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities, relationships and families, this does not constitute discrimination. The documentation attempts to straddle a challenging middle-ground; however, what appears inclusive on uncritical glance unravels with closer consideration, given that one group's sincerely held beliefs judge the existence and, often, seek to foreclose upon the rights of the other.

Thus, it is a welcome, if somewhat contradictory, surprise that Britain's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the government body tasked with accountability measures for schools, follows through on schools' engagement with elements of the Equality Act which identify gender and sexuality diversity. Specifically, Ofsted produces a clear and highly comprehensive set of questions for their inspectors to ask school leaders, governors and primary and secondary students as part of their regulatory visits to observe school culture and inclusivity efforts. These guidance questions, designed to investigate "school's actions to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying" (Ofsted, 2013), hint at a more holistic framework for understanding anti-social behaviours—moving past a limiting bully discourse to a somewhat more sophisticated framing of gender and difference. As per this guidance, primary students should be asked if "pupils ever get picked on by other children for not behaving like a 'typical girl' or a 'typical boy' " and secondary students should be asked if "they learn in school about different types of families—whether anyone is, or would be, teased about having same-sex parents" (Ofsted, 2013, p. 3).

Although one must acknowledge its controversy,[10] Britain's Department for Education (DfE) positions a statement of values as central to such work—specifically, "fundamental British values"—and positions these as part of students' "spiritual, moral, social and cultural development", which Ofsted is likewise tasked with inspecting (DfE, 2014b, p. 4). In response to the 2019 clashes in Birmingham between religiously motivated parents and primary school educators using gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive teaching resources (see Chapter 2), Ofsted chief Amanda Spielman publically stated that "All schools have a responsibility to prepare children for life in modern Britain and that includes

encouraging respect for those who are different, for instance LGBT people or those of different faiths" (Weale, 2019, para 11).

Spielman's statements come on the heels of the DfE's development of a new draft statutory guidance document for national relationships and sexual health education in England, the first update since 2000 and the repeal of Section 28 in 2003. This resource clarifies that gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education should be "fully integrated" across the relationships and sexual health curriculum, rather than sit as a standalone topic, with the expectation that "all pupils" will be "taught LGBT content" (DfE, 2019a, p. 15). Further, the guidance stipulates that while parents will have the right to withdraw their child from *sex education* prior to the age of 16 (the legal age of consent, at which point young people are allowed to decide for themselves), there will be no right to withdraw them from *relationships education* in either primary or secondary school, with government documentation referring to these subjects as "important for all children to be taught" (DfE, 2019b, p. 2). Notably, when brought to a vote in the House of Commons in March 2019 the draft statutory guidance was approved by a vote of 538/21 (Doward, 2019), moving the document up to Parliament for a final vote in September 2020. The clear federal support for mandatory, gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive relationships education represents a huge step forward for visibility and affirmation of gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities.

In line with these moves, significant shifts are occurring across the UK. Should the 2018 decisions made by Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills John Swinney be implemented by May 2021 according to plan, Scotland will become the first country in the world to have gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education embedded throughout the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools, rather than as positioned within a discrete subject. Importantly, in keeping with a whole-of-curriculum approach, there would be no exemptions or parental opt-outs for gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive topics (Brooks, 2018). Between 2017 and 2018 the Scottish Government Learning Directorate established an LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, notably including representatives from the National Parent Forum of Scotland, which proposed 33 key recommendations, including a recommendation for engagement with peak parenting groups around implementation of this curriculum. Clearly, these moves could not have been made possible without support at the highest levels of education policy, including a willingness to create and fund a gender and sexuality diversity-focused working group and to accept their recommendations for teaching practice and working with families.

In Wales, curriculum guidance in the area of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) (Department for Training and Education [DfTE], 2002; Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) has likewise become considerably more inclusive of gender and sexuality diverse identities since the repeal

of Section 28. Striking changes between 2002 and 2010 include the revision of a reductive, "factual-only" orientation towards gender and sexuality diverse subjectivities [e.g. "objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom" (DfTE, 2002, p. 11)] in favour of unequivocal recognition of multiple gender and sexuality diverse identities, with particular attention given to transgender students and the impact of gender roles and stereotypes on Welsh students' lives. The Welsh Government's 2016 "Inclusion and Pupil Support" guidance includes a section specifically naming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students as necessary to consider in terms of inclusion and visibility, advising educators to have "balanced, honest, sensitive and non-discriminatory" discussions about sexual orientation with their students (Welsh Government, 2016, p. 60). Further, rather than treating the group in monolithic fashion, this document acknowledges differing needs for same-sex attracted and gender-diverse young people, and points teachers in the direction of government-endorsed learning materials which address transgender identities. A closer look at these resources, which sit on the "Education Wales" resource hub and were developed for students in the early/mid-years of secondary school, reveals their coverage of topics positioned as "radical" in the Australian context (Smith, 2019): separating gender and sex; acknowledging diverse masculinities and femininities; and specifically naming diverse (e.g. fluid and non-binary) gender identities (Education Wales, 2015).

Most recently, moves towards the creation of a new national curriculum in Wales has offered affordances for the reconsideration and reconfiguration of SRE, with greater attention to concepts related to gender and sexuality diversity (Education Wales, 2019a, 2019b). In early 2017, an expert panel led by Professor Emma Renold (Cardiff University), creator of the AGENDA curriculum resources,[11] was tasked with generating revisions to existing SRE policy and curriculum guidance for official release and implementation as part of the new national curriculum to be implemented in 2022. Acknowledging inconsistent implementation of SRE across the country and the need to address violence and discrimination against gender and sexuality diverse students (Renold & McGeeney, 2017), the group put forward a number of evidence-based curriculum revisions of direct relevance to the schooling experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students (Welsh Government, 2017). These included: making SRE compulsory across both primary and secondary school classrooms; incorporating SRE content across curriculum areas, rather than positioning SRE as a stand-alone curriculum area; renaming the subject to foreground relationships (e.g. "Relationships and Sexuality Education"); and ensuring teachers are trained in the area of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusivity. Critically, proposed changes have already been endorsed by Welsh Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, who has spoken to Welsh media in support of a curriculum that is "fully inclusive

of LGBTQI+ learners" and "respect[s] diversity" (Wightwick, 2018). Furthermore, the panel's suggestions have prompted Education Wales to consider ways they might "modernise" the system's approach to parental withdrawal of their child/ren from relationships and sexuality education which consider "the impact on all protected characteristics" (Welsh Government, 2019, p. 33); in other words, while the government body acknowledges that, historically, parents have had the right to withdraw their child/ren from this education for protected, religiously motivated reasons, they are officially recognising that parental withdrawal has additional impact on gender and sexuality diverse individuals (directly and indirectly), another protected group under Welsh law.

New York State's "Dignity for All Students Act" and Gender Diversity in Schools

In the United States, discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs is governed by federal civil rights law Title IX, first written into law in the early 1970s and amended in the 1990s to address sexual harassment and sexual violence against students. In 2016, under Democratic President Barack Obama, Title IX was expanded once again to protect students against discrimination related to their gender identity. Obama-era guidelines advised that transgender students be allowed to use bathroom and changing facilities corresponding with their gender identity. This highly publicised and politicised move communicated presidential support for gender and sexuality diverse individuals and issues more broadly, reflecting wider societal shifts in thinking about gender identity and transition. Importantly, such considerations also discursively constructed trans/gender-diverse young people as agentic and independent, empowering them to make decisions about preferred names/pronouns and other gender designations independent of their parents or educators. During this time, numerous guideline documents were released by the US Department of Education to assist schools in the development and integration of appropriate school-level policies to ensure their alignment with this federal directive (US Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Justice & US Department of Education, 2016).

Amid these changes, the state of New York (NY) developed their own state-based legislation for the protection of students, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex and other identity characteristics, including "sexual orientation [and] gender (defined to include gender identity or expression)".[12] The "Dignity for All Students Act" (DASA) was implemented in 2012 with the specific mandate of supporting students' mental health and educational performance, and monitored through the training and use of school-based DASA liaisons, whose brief it is to annually report qualifying incidences of student discriminatory behaviour to state agencies. Such moves represent the state's efforts to educate school staff about

the parameters of bias-based behaviours and to gain some understanding of the typologies of bias-based behaviours occurring in NY schools. After the 2016 amendments to Title IX, the NY State Department of Education likewise drew their teachers' attention to federal guidelines to ensure compliance with these new federal directives (Elia, 2016).

The school district of New York City, governed by its own Board of Education, provides the most inclusive set of guidelines to their educators on working with transgender and gender nonconforming students. Moving beyond a bullying framework and binary conceptions of gender, this document focuses on the building of a schooling "culture that respects and values all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression" (NYCDOE, 2019, p. 2), and specifically acknowledges gender fluidity and non-binary transitions. While specifics related to policy and daily school life are certainly included, the document takes multiple opportunities to stress the importance of whole-school education and approaches around gender identity and transition and educators' role in the creation of school culture and determination of a positive/negative schooling experience for this cohort. Although the language appears to carefully avoid overt value statements, the intent and positionality of the document is clear, particularly around student voice/choice, illustrated via statements such as "The individual student is the best person to determine their own identity" (p. 4). Connections to school curriculum, both formal and informal, are scattered throughout the document, as teachers are advised to include trans/gender-diverse topics in their classes, with examples offered; to eliminate school/classroom policies, rules and practices which are gender-based and serve no pedagogical purpose; and to remove dress codes which require different articles of clothing based on gender (expression or identity). Principals are located at the "pointy end" of this policy and given the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that staff are aware of the guidelines and have access to relevant professional development and training. In this sense, expectations are unequivocal and no caveats are provided to account for particular communities of families or learners. Additionally, no teacher reading this guideline document could legitimately claim that they were not sure whether or not they had state support for discussing gender diversity with their students, provided that a gender-diverse student attended their school.

While the Trump administration has worked to dismantle these inclusions, NY State, and a number of other US states, pledged continual recognition and support of trans/gender students to use single-sex facilities aligned with their gender identity, inclusive of bathrooms and other key provisions (e.g. athletics teams, changing facilities, overnight accommodation). In 2017, a NY State Senator proposed such a bill,[13] which is currently awaiting its review by the NY Senate and final Governor's approval. In the meantime, DASA and the NY State Department of Education's own guidance documentation is still in place. Further, after the

federal announcement that civic cases would no longer be heard, the NY State Department issued a "Dear Colleagues" letter (Schneiderman & Elia, 2018) essentially contradicting this—confirming students' right to appropriate bathroom access and informing staff that complaints/suits would be heard and dealt with in accordance with DASA. In this way, resistance to the neoconservative denial of rights is apparent.

Victoria—Australia's Progressive State

Across several measures related to human rights, visibility and affirmation of diversity and support of gender and sexuality diverse individuals, Australia's state of Victoria is the most socially liberal. To wit, during his 2018 election speech, the victorious Labour Party Premier Daniel Andrews—who, incidentally, for the first time in Victoria, appointed a 50% female cabinet (Carey, 2018)—declared the state the "most progressive in the nation" (Baxendale & Hutchinson, 2018). It is noteworthy that, across the country, only Victoria specifies sexuality education as a component of government schooling at all compulsory year levels (Mitchell, Smith, Carman, Schlichthorst, Walsh, & Pitts, 2011).

The progressive nature of the state is most clearly and recently witnessed in the recent moral panic related to the SSCA. During this debate, the Victorian Premier vociferously expressed his support for the program, publically deriding the federal review (which ultimately resulted in constraining the program's reach through the requirement of parental permission), and referring to such moves as a step backwards in terms of social support and affirmation of gender and sexuality diverse students (Preiss, Knott, & Ireland, 2016). When funding for the nationwide roll-out of SSCA ceased, the Andrews government pledged their ongoing financial support of the initiative, which remains a supported opt-in program. The initial program momentum appears to have continued; as of mid-2018, *The Australian* reported nearly 100% of Victorian public schools had opted-in as members of the state's Safe Schools program (Hutchinson, 2018). As "safe schools", school leaders are required to publically commit to creating a safe and inclusive environment for gender and sexuality diverse students and identify whole-school steps for achieving that goal, including the review of school policies and teaching practices for the inclusion of gender and sexuality diversity; addressing homo/transphobic behaviours; enhancing environmental cues (posters, etc.); and introducing departmentally supplied professional development to educate and support school staff. Notably, the public communication element is a critical one, positioned as "Step 4" of the four-step implementation plan (VIC DET, 2017), and guidance documentation stipulates communication with families and the broader community through newsletters and letters home is required as part of the Safe Schools program participation.

Simultaneously, the *Respectful Relationships* program, which provides curriculum resource materials to support education on gender-based violence and related topics which form the building blocks for healthy, safe relationships, is actively promoted by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (VIC DET) as supporting an unambiguous and compulsory respectful relationships education curriculum. The program, which includes resources for students in Foundation (Kindergarten) to Year 12, openly names and includes gender and sexuality diverse students beginning in the late years of primary school (Level 5–6), with teachers of Years 3 and 4 encouraged to explore their school diversity policies for mention of gender and sexuality diverse identities and coverage.[14]

Victoria's inclusive curriculum initiatives and their associated resource and professional development materials are a far cry from the "diversity euphemisms" and flagrant gender and sexuality diversity-specific content omissions present in the Personal Development/Health/and Physical Education (PD/H/PE) curriculum in the authors' home state of NSW, as illustrated earlier in this book. Such differences beg the question of how supports for gender and sexuality diversity are enacted and communicated at the institutional level. An exploration of the Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (VCAA) HPE online materials clarifies the department's apparent resistance to a value-free narrative in relation to gender and sexuality diversity-related curriculum inclusions:

> Diversity in relation to sexuality and gender is acknowledged *and affirmed* in Health and Physical Education programs. The design of the Health and Physical Education curriculum recognises the responsibility of school communities to ensure that *teaching is inclusive and relevant* to the lived experiences of all students, including those who may be same-sex attracted, gender diverse or intersex.
>
> (VCAA, n.d., authors' emphasis)

Here, Victoria takes a critical step beyond simplistic, "factual" recognition of existence, communicating their affirmation of gender and sexuality diverse identities and unabashedly conveying the subtext that *it is okay to be gender and sexuality diverse*. The gravity of this cannot be overstated, as this particular message—and the question of whether or not educators are within their rights to deliver it—remains a substantial sticking point across diverse educational contexts where moves toward gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive education are being made. This clear directive from the state curriculum authority effectively works to eliminate the uncertainty that HPE teachers, notably inclusive of all primary school educators who are required to teach HPE as well as all other key learning areas of the curriculum, report feeling when discussing these topics with students (Burns & Hendriks, 2018). Furthermore, the direct call for curricular relevance in HPE suggests the expansion of

conversations about romantic relationships and sexual health to include trans/gender-diverse individuals and same-sex sexual health practices, another significant step forward for the Australian context.

The state takes a proactive approach to communication with parents about these topics, no doubt given various learnings from SSCA's multi-year media spotlight. Through their "Sexuality education for parents" page as part of their online HPE resources, the department addresses inclusivity of sexuality diversity directly, stating "The Department recognises that sexuality education is only effective for all students when it acknowledges and caters for student sexual diversity" (VIC DET, 2019). Furthermore, both the sites for Safe Schools and Respectful Relationships—importantly, hosted on the VIC DET online domain as "Department programs"—contain sections on "Myths and facts"[15] wherein many of the discourses circulating during the moral panic surrounding the federal SSCA program are identified and debunked. Public access to this information is clearly also designed to satisfy journalists and special interest groups while also effectively providing school leaders and classroom teachers with a place to direct potential concerned or misinformed parents.

The Transformative Power of Support

The schooling contexts outlined earlier are unified by several key elements: clear policy permission for educators to include gender and sexuality diverse identities through a relationships education aligned with valuing diversity and inclusion (or clear movement toward this), inclusive resources and/or curriculum guidance and clear directives to educators about the purpose and permissions of such classroom conversations. In each of these locations, changes have taken years to come to fruition and have been informed and supported by tireless grassroots efforts, including long-term relationships between informants—parents, academic researchers, non-profit organisations—and the department representatives that serve these communities. In Victoria, for example, the advocacy work of *Parents Victoria* and *Rainbow Families Victoria* in relation to gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum played no small part in countering negative discourses during the moral panic surrounding the Safe Schools Coalition (Rizmal, 2017). These and other parent advocacy groups have written statements of support for gender-neutral toilets and uniforms,[16] drafted submissions to Parliament about the importance of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum for student and family wellbeing (Barber, 2018; Rainbow Families Victoria, 2018) and marched to protest religious discrimination laws which could be used to exclude gender and sexuality diverse students and teachers from schools. As we have seen recently in Birmingham, vocal parents can mobilise successfully against gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive

curriculum (Parveen, 2019), even in the face of clear departmental support for this work (DfE, 2019b). There can be no doubt that the opposite is also true: that parents who support inclusive education are powerful and can effect change.

In Australia, the 2019 *Australian Student Wellbeing Framework* (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2019) has been developed with school-parent partnerships as one of five fundamental elements of student wellbeing. The resource suggests that schools work closely with their parent communities in order to "collaboratively plan targeted support for all students and families, including those from vulnerable groups" (Student Wellbeing Hub, 2019). Within Australia's culture of limitation, in various contexts, gender and sexuality diverse students, families and school staff are vulnerable to dismissal, marginalisation, discrimination and even violence. However, where there is power (over), there is resistance (Foucault, 1978) and the acknowledgement of the importance of parent (and student) voice affords possibilities for change and fertile ground for parent-led advocacy.

Concluding Thoughts

This book has sought to explore the continued phenomenon of silencing and fear-mongering regarding gender and sexuality diversity in Australian schooling, using our notion of a culture of limitation, present within Australian society, as an explanatory lens. Our analysis of movements within Australian and NSW curriculum and policy, alongside various moral panics around gender and sexuality diversity, have offered a context for this issue. We have attempted to provide a comprehensive and empirically informed picture of the ways in which hetero/cisnormative schooling environments impact on the wellbeing and key relevant outcomes—social, emotional, academic and professional—for gender and sexuality diversity students and teachers, as well as parents of gender and sexuality diverse children and adolescents. Through presenting data on mainstream Australian parents' perceptions of gender and sexuality diversity-inclusive curriculum, we have tried to more accurately understand the boundaries and rationale behind their desires for this education, as well as offer some depth and contrast to the conservative parental voices featured in the Australian media. Looking to international contexts, and to the Australian state of Victoria, we attempted to present what an alternative, expansive and affirming approach to gender and sexuality diversity might look like in K-12 environments. Thus, despite the critiques of our current policies and national curriculum and the distressing narratives and statistics provided in this book, we remain hopeful about what might be possible. With parental and community advocacy and support, professional development opportunities for educators, partnerships with health and academic experts and, critically, politicians who are willing to work beyond the confines of a neoliberal, neoconservative framing of social and

emotional learning in schools, change is most certainly achievable. Given the tangible impact of an affirming schooling environment, as responsible educators, we must continue to strive for this.

While a culture of limitation does feature in Australian society, we are in the midst of important shifts. With marriage equality passing through legislation and nearly 5,500 couples availing themselves of their newfound right and legal recognition all across the country in the first year after its passing (O'Brien, 2018), classroom conversations about relationships and families can no longer wilfully ignore or silence the existence of same-sex couples. Gender and sexuality diversity is gaining exponential visibility, and while some of the media's concentration on such topics as they might impact Australian youth have been undoubtedly negative, as Shannon and Smith (2017) argue, these messages have provided "something of an education for Australia, and arguably worked in favour of a progressive agenda in certain ways" (p. 252). At the same time, comparisons of waves of national surveys reveal that numbers of gender and sexuality diverse individuals (or at least numbers of individuals who freely acknowledge their relevant attractions, behaviours and identities on surveys) are growing. In a recent national study of Australian high school students, 19% of young women and 13% of young men reported being attracted to people of the same sex or both sexes (Mitchell, Patrick, et al., 2014) and numbers of Australian adults reporting same-sex attraction (7.4% of men and 16% of women) appears to be on the rise (Perales & Campbell, 2019). This, alongside exponential increases in numbers of children and adolescents who identify as trans/gender diverse (Telfer, Tollit, & Feldman, 2015), implies not only a groundswell of need and demand, but also a growing critical mass of people with increasing ripples of social influence. As their social links grow and spheres of influence move outwards, increasing visibility of gender and sexuality diverse people will undoubtedly continue to impact Australian society via increases in understanding, empathy and affirmation. While we have written about a broader culture of limitation, we are aware that a more expansive counter-cultural shift is already and always in motion within Australia's gender and sexuality diverse communities and across their networks of allies. We can imagine its growth and influence and commit to working for a system of education in which cultivating socially responsible, emotionally intelligent, aware and proactive young people is just as important as cultivating their academic skills.

Notes

1. See Law (2017) for a discussion of this phenomena in relation to the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) initiative in the Australian context, discussed at length elsewhere.
2. The values framework document does explicitly recognise Asian communities, which have historically been socially marginalised and discriminated against in Australian society (Fitzgerald, 2007); however, this recognition

directly serves the financial interests of the Australian economy by developing students' awareness of and orientation toward Asian countries with which Australia has a growing and economically essential trade relationship.
3. www.binary.org.au/about
4. While Australia's democratic government includes multiple parties, two major parties have dominated since World War II: the Australian Labour Party (left-leaning) and the Australian Liberal Party (conservative, right-leaning), the latter of which forms the largest party in a coalition with the National Party.
5. Australia's Parents and Citizens (P&C) Associations are a school-based group which consists of parents, teachers and local individuals who live within the school catchment area of a local, public school. These groups are largely responsible for school fundraising and assistance with school community events. However, monthly meetings with school leadership can also be used as a platform to discuss curriculum and other education matters.
6. www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/the-homosexual-community-small-number-big-influence/
7. See the discussion of *Gayby Baby* as presented in Chapter 2.
8. Likewise, see the discussion of *Gayby Baby* and its showing in Burwood Girls High School in Chapter 2 for evidence of this.
9. The authors of this book, Associate Professors Tania Ferfolja and Jacqueline Ullman from Western Sydney University, are leading this research in collaboration with Professor Tara Goldstein (Ontario Institute in Studies in Education/University of Toronto). The research is funded by the Australian Research Council (DP180101676).
10. See Vincent and Hunter-Henin (2018) for their commentary on the problem of teaching "British values" in school; namely that, given Britain's history of colonialism, such a framework further entrenches an insider/outsider mentality.
11. The AGENDA and Primary AGENDA resources are, respectively, designed for young people and practitioners working with primary students, to aid learning about positive relationships and thinking through local/global advocacy work around gender-based violence. More information can be found here: http://agendaonline.co.uk/
12. New York State Education Law §12[1].
13. State of New York Senate Bill 4843. "Requires the board of education and the trustees or sole trustee of every school district to establish policies and procedures regarding the treatment of transgender or gender nonconforming students". 2017–2018 Legislative Session.
14. The *Respectful Relationships* resource materials can be located through the VIC DET's "Fuse" curriculum resource hub for teachers: http://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Resource/LandingPage?ObjectId=d722b857-8d78-4afd-8519-2bc7801d5590&SearchScope=All
15. The Safe Schools program page can be found here: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx?Redirect=2#link90; the Respectful Relationships program page can be found here: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/pages/respectfulrelationships.aspx
16. See www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/parents-victoria-viewpoints for an example of this.

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