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Homophobia in Catholic schools: An Exploration of Teachers' Rights and Experiences in Canada and Australia

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Little is known about the experiences of non-heterosexual educators in Catholic schools. This international analysis reveals previously unreported data from Australian and Canadian qualitative studies that examine the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) teachers, and LGBTI Allies from Australia and Canada who are currently teaching or have taught in Catholic schools. Bringing their work together for the first time, the two lead researchers compare their investigations and reveal disheartening similarities with religiously inspired homophobia despite differing legal and policy contexts of the two countries. These two studies demonstrate that LGBTI teachers, and LGBTI Allies, rely on their personal beliefs and local school community culture and policies to understand their equality rights and this has significant implications for the field of education.

Keywords

Non-heterosexual teachers, Catholic schools, homophobia, equality, international comparative study, Canada, Australia

Since the American Gay Liberation Movement of the 1960s, a new climate of tolerance has developed in the Western world, including the two Commonwealth countries of this study: Canada and Australia. This is evidenced by notable advances in same-sex legal rights. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that these legal advances are typically not respected in Catholic schools causing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) teachers to be at risk for homophobic discrimination (Callaghan, 2007b; 2018). Caught between the religious edicts of the Vatican and the secular laws of the state, Catholic schools in Canada and Australia respond to non-heterosexual teachers in contradictory and inconsistent ways, including firing or

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more subtle forms of exclusion. This lack of consistency and recurring intolerance towards gender and sexual minority groups could be due to the central contradiction within Catholic doctrine itself, the church's decree that "it's ok to be gay, just don't act on it," which is untenable for many lay Catholics.

As members of LGBTI communities (one in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia and the other in Calgary, Alberta, Canada) we the authors ask, how is it acceptable to be gay if one is not to act on it? Throughout our research into gender and sexual diversity in schooling, we have uncovered that Catholic schools can be especially difficult places for LGBTI people to teach and we thought it would be worthwhile to examine our studies together to discover why that might be.

In addition to advances in same-sex legal rights in both Canada and Australia, this exploratory study is most suited to the two countries because they share a framework of common values and goals that include the promotion of democracy, education, human rights, good governance, and individual liberty. They also share many recognizable traditions and customs as well as similar legal and political systems. In both countries, Catholic schools receive up to 70% of their funding from public sources (McKinney, 2008). This exploratory international study reveals new evidence about homophobic and transphobic incidents in Catholic schools, and explores the challenges of achieving the promise of equal opportunity for all.

Literature Review

Catholic Doctrine and Decrees

The Catholic teachings can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* ("*Catechism*") (Catholic Church, 1992), a book about the beliefs of faithful Catholics. This book refers only to "homosexual persons" and not bisexual, transgender, or intersex people. This is not only because such sexual and gender identities were not commonly known at the time that the *Catechism* was first undertaken in the mid-1980s and subsequently published in 1992, but also because Church leaders are wary that such identity markers would be too affirming of non-heterosexual sexual activity.

In Canada, provincial assemblies of Catholic bishops have written pastoral guidelines intended for Catholic schools that discourage the use of identity markers such as "gay" or "lesbian." A pastoral guideline is essentially an educational policy and curriculum document written and designed by local bishops to direct Catholic schools on issues of morality (Callaghan, 2007b).

For example, Alberta bishops' 2001 pastoral guideline, *A Resource for an Inclusive Community*, states,

> to refer to a person as 'gay' or 'lesbian' in our culture is not only to use politically charged language but to succumb to a reductionist way of speaking about someone else. Such labeling is not only inaccurate but tends to re-enforce and, in some cases, legitimate an arrested psychosexual development. (as cited in CCSSA, 2007, section 3)

Similarly, the Ontario bishops' *Pastoral Guidelines to Assist Students of Same-Sex Orientation*, caution that "attaching a label" such as homosexual, lesbian, or gay is "problematic" because it "implies that they are their orientation. . . . The orientation or act is homosexual or heterosexual but the person is not" (OCCB, 2004, p. 26).

For these reasons and more, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to "homosexual persons" and not LGBTI individuals. Even the use of the "homosexual persons" label is itself contradictory given the bishops' contention that the sexual act—not the person—is homosexual. But, contradictions abound in Catholic documents about homosexuality (Callaghan, 2007a). Deeply discrepant, the catechism related to the sexual expression of LGBTI people can be distilled to the colloquial Christian expression: "Love the sinner, hate the sin." This irreconcilable concept underlies curricular and policy decisions regarding the topic of gender and sexual diversity and the existence of gender and sexual minorities in Catholic schools.

The catechism about homosexuality can be traced to a definitive letter from the Vatican written by Prefect Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (who later went on to become Pope Benedict XVI) and Archbishop Alberto Bovone. Entitled *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, some lay LGBTI Catholics simply refer to it as the *Halloween Letter* because it contains some frightening ideas, and because the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith released it in October. In the *Halloween Letter*, Ratzinger and Bovone (1986) attempt to distinguish between identifying as homosexual and engaging in homosexual acts:

> Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder. (item 3)

This language informed the *Catechism*'s lessons on homosexuality, which can be found in Nos. 2357-59 – a section on chastity within a discussion about the sixth commandment "you shall not commit adultery." According to the *Catechism*, homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" and "contrary to natural law" (Catholic Church, 1992, No. 2357); therefore, the homosexual orientation is presented as "objectively disordered" (No. 2358).

Catholic education leaders tend to enforce infractions outlined in the *Catechism* related to "homosexual persons" more than other elements of the doctrine pertaining to sexuality. For example, in Canada, teachers working for publicly-funded Catholic schools must sign an employment contract containing a Catholicity clause requiring them to uphold all elements of Catholic doctrine 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but the LGBTI teachers have been the ones most held to account. Specifically, lesbian and gay teachers in Canadian Catholic schools have been summarily dismissed for legally marrying their same-sex partners, or for wanting to raise children with their same-sex partners (Callaghan, 2018). Conversely, although the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also forbids cohabitation outside of marriage, the use of contraception, and divorce, it appears that a high percentage of heterosexual teachers are keeping their jobs even though they live with partners outside of the bonds of marriage, or, if and when they do get married, they choose not to have children, plan to have small families of only two or three children, or decide to get divorced.

Religious Freedoms in Australia

In Australia, the experiences of LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools are largely unknown. However, Grey, Harris, and Jones (2016) suggest that the rights of teachers in the Australian state of Victoria who work in state schools are protected by progressive anti-discrimination legislation, but those who work in independent and religious schools "are not subject to state legislation in the area of LGBTI teachers' rights" (p. 290). They go on to state that

> although there is little evidence of LGBTI teachers being dismissed from employment in Australian Catholic schools, research by Ferfolja (2005) reveals that the threat of dismissal has been used to both silence and harass LGBTI teachers working in the Australian Catholic education system. (p. 290)

With a dearth of research in this field, we hope to add to their work, but also to suggest that more studies must be undertaken into the plight of LGBTI people in Catholic schools.

Fundamental international human rights principles stipulate that there should be no hierarchy of rights, but currently in Australia, respect for religious freedom seems to be afforded more weight than respect for the equality rights of LGBTI people. This is especially evident in the arena of public schooling. Following the Australian same-sex marriage plebiscite of 2017, the prime minister at the time called for a review of religious freedom (Australian Government, 2018), which sparked debate about teachers' rights and the rights of religious schools to discriminate in hiring and firing staff. Currently, Australian governments are debating the legal rights of religious institutions, including Catholic schools, to discriminate against LGBTI teachers.

Legislative Boundaries and Exemptions

In Australia, and similarly in Canada, each state and territory (jurisdiction) has differing legislative detail. In the state of Queensland, where the Australian study was undertaken, teachers working in Catholic schools are bound by a "don't ask, don't tell" legislative context. Teachers cannot be dismissed based on their sexual orientation or gender identity according to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld).* However, the Act goes on to define the following:

> It is not unlawful for an employer to discriminate…against a person if…it is a genuine occupational requirement of the employer that the person, in the course of, or in connection with, the person's work, act in a way consistent with the employer's religious beliefs. (p. 28)

This means that teachers can be dismissed if their actions do not align with the religious beliefs of the school. Therefore, if the Catholic institution upholds marriage as solely between a man and a woman, then those who act in ways that are not consistent with these beliefs could be lawfully discriminated against based on their actions.

One might argue that religious freedoms of such organisations should entitle them to employ people who will act in accordance with the tenets of the faith and the ideologies inherent in the establishment. However, in Australia, and similarly to Canada, Catholic schools are government funded. We, therefore, offer a counter argument that publicly funded institutions should be answerable to the laws of the land. Further, Australia, unlike its western democratic counterparts, does not have an overarching charter which establishes human rights and freedoms for all to uphold.

In Canada, Catholic schools have a long and somewhat complicated history, originating with Britain's victory over France for the colonies of North America in the early 1700s. The two main faith groups at the time were Catholics and Protestants. As a concession to the faith group in a minority position in any given community, a separate school system was established to ensure that Catholic families could send their children to Catholic schools if living in a predominantly Protestant area and vice versa. Separate schools currently have constitutional status in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. Separate schools are operated by civil authorities and are accountable to provincial governments rather than church authorities. Religious bodies do not have a constitutional or legal interest in separate schools and, as such, Canadian Catholic separate schools are not private or parochial schools that are common in other countries.

Section 29 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) ensures the right of denominational schools and separate schools to exist in Canada out of respect for special rights conferred to Roman Catholics and Protestants by the colonizers of Canada, which was necessary in order to join the British North American colonies together as a federal union under the new confederation of Canada. The denominational right of Canadian Catholic schools to exist should not be interpreted to mean that they are absolved from respecting other rights and freedoms outlined in the Charter—specifically Section 15, the equality rights provision.

The religious freedom that is guaranteed by Section 2 of the *Charter* also should not be interpreted as the freedom to deny basic human rights to specific groups in the name of that very religious freedom. Respect for Section 29 and Section 2 of the *Charter* is often the crux of the argument advanced by Canadian Catholic schools seeking to be exempt from respecting all forms of equality outlined in Section 15 due to their perceived conflicts with religious beliefs. This anomaly begs the question: Shouldn't educational institutions in receipt of public funding respect the equality rights that are guaranteed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*? A solution to this problem may lie in Section 1 of the *Charter*, which is a limiting clause that has the capacity to legally restrict *Charter* rights and freedoms if the expression of one right calls for the suppression of other rights.

The Original Studies

The original Canadian study (Callaghan, 2018) employed a multi-method qualitative research framework involving three key components: (a) semi-

structured interviews with 20 participants; (b) media accounts that illustrate the Catholic schools' homophobic environment; and (c) two key Catholic policy and curriculum documents from the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Ontario. In order to help explain the phenomenon of religiously-inspired homophobia in Canadian Catholic schools, Callaghan theorized the teachers' experiences using the following critical theories: Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, Althusser's (1970/2008) concept of the Ideological State Apparatus, and Foucault's (1975/1995) theory of disciplinary surveillance.

The original Australian study (van Leent, 2015; van Leent 2017) sought to understand primary school teachers' everyday experiences related to sexuality and contextualised the investigation into the socially constructed nature of teacher knowledge about sexualities. Phenomenography (Marton, 1986) was the research design and methodological approach used for the Australian study. Nineteen teacher participants were interviewed using relatively unstructured, open-ended questioning; a suitable approach given the aim of revealing teachers' conceptions. Heteronormativity (Warner, 1981) was a foundational thoery in understanding concepts such as heterosexism, and various forms of homophobia, which were underpinned by social constructionist theories in pedagogy, sexuality theories, and evolving understandings of sexuality.

The Current Study

Although the two independent studies employed specific theoretical approaches and research designs, they nevertheless align ontologically and epistemologically. Both uncover the experiences of teachers vis-à-vis LGBTI issues and topics, and both studies show that new knowledge is constructed by individuals' experiences in the world. The intention of these studies and the analysis is not to provide replicable or comprehensive representations of teachers' experiences. The aim of this research is to reveal these teachers' experiences only. Theoretically, individuals' experiences are valued and respected as new knowledge, which is constructed by them and their experiences.

Method

The idea for this exploratory analysis was initially conceived of when author Lisa van Leent's university, Queensland University of Technology, invited author Tonya Callaghan to give a guest lecture on her research into religiously-inspired homophobia and transphobia in Catholic schools in Canada. As van Leent listened to Callaghan's presentation, she started

to notice many similarities with a sub-set of her recently-completed study pertaining to the three teachers who had experience with Australian Catholic schools. Throughout the duration of the research visit, we had opportunities to discuss our respective studies and determined that it would be worthwhile to bring our studies together in an analysis because the plight of sexual and gender minority groups in Catholic schools is a neglected research topic due to a conservative deference to the fundamental freedom of religion. It is also due to a corresponding prevailing societal belief that religiously inspired discriminatory practices occurring in publicly funded schools are a normal part of religious freedom that should continue unchallenged.

Our study aims to shed light on the prevelance and seriousness of the problems facing LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools in different parts of the planet. We thought if we could show the similarities of the LGBTI teachers' experiences in Catholic schools in such far away corners of the world, then we might be able to convince other gender and sexuality scholars to include Catholic schools in their studies. Our goal is anti-oppressive in that we hope to provide sufficient evidence that the problem exists in order to start developing solutions. Ultimately, we aim to uncover effective ways to resist homophobia and transphobia in Catholic schools, thereby hopefully empowering silenced and shamed sexual and gender minority groups within those schools.

We started our analysis with an exegesis of one another's studies. That is, we conducted a close reading and re-reading of one another's published and unpublished studies for the purpose of ensuring some equivalence in our data and that they are indeed comparable between the different contexts. We carefully defined the boundaries of our cases to include only those data that pertained to teachers in Catholic school contexts (these were primarily LGBTI teachers, but also one ally and one non-ally teacher). Upon completing our exegesis and defining the boundaries of our cases, we determined that our comparative analysis has three common, functionally eqivalent dimensions: (a) the experiences of LGBTI and other teachers, (b) in Catholic schools, and (c) in two commonwealth nations that share many similarities in terms of history and governance.

We then subjected our data sets from Australia and Canada, which were gathered within the timeframes of 2010-2014, to a content analysis; identifying any discussion of teachers' experiences in Catholic education contexts in relation to their experiences of situations in which diverse sexualities intersected with notions of Catholicism. The total number of participants was 10

(n=10). After applying the content analysis to the full data set to identify the relevant transcripts, we conducted a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis was used to develop the description and summary of the comparison of the teachers' experiences in this paper (Clarke & Braun, 2018). The analysis was informed by the nature of the context in which the data was specifically sought, the similarities of our critical social justice theoretical frameworks, and relevant scholarship in the field of gender and sexuality studies in the discipline of education.

Findings from the Canadian Subset

This discussion is limited to the Canadian teachers' stories, the main facts of which are summarized and analyzed using various critical theories. All of the teacher participants identify as LGBTI, except for one female teacher participant who identifies as a "straight ally." Of the six teacher participants,whose stories are shared here using pseudonyms, four are no longer teaching with their original Catholic school board: three were fired for behaving in ways Catholic school administrators deemed to be contrary to Catholic doctrine vis-à-vis gender and sexual minority groups, and one was harassed about her suspected lesbianism to the point that she chose to quit the profession after she finished out her temporary contract.

Job was fired from his Catholic district in rural Alberta in 2008 because he was transitioning from female to male. Naarai was fired from her Catholic district in rural Alberta in 2009 because she was attempting to conceive a child with her female partner. Anna was fired from her Catholic district in southern Alberta in 2004 for taking on the role of "straight ally" to the LGBTI students in her Catholic school and providing a "positive space" for them to meet in her classroom at lunchtime. Naomi was harassed because of her suspected lesbianism by conservative residents in her northern Ontario town, and by certain colleagues at the elementary school where she had accepted a temporary teaching position. The harassment was so severe that she barely completed the school year in 2005.

The two other teacher participants, who were not fired or forced out of their jobs, are both cisgender gay males, one a principal and the other a teacher, who have been teaching with their respective Catholic school districts since the mid 1990s. They both are only able stay employed as educators by remaining closeted at work and by pretending to be bachelors unlucky in love, despite the fact that both men have long-term male partners with whom they have been living for decades. Mark is a principal at a Catholic

elementary school in Alberta who has developed excellent coping skills in avoiding personal questions that might reveal his sexuality and marital status. Luke is a high school English teacher in Ontario who is fearful that the Catholicity clause in his employment contract might be used to fire him if it becomes known that he has been living with his male partner in a common-law arrangement for decades. Like Mark, Luke has developed coping skills to avoid the religiously inspired homophobia that pervades his school atmosphere. Unlike Mark, Luke finds covert ways to express his sense of human rights activism in his Catholic school.

Findings from the Australian Subset

Primary school teachers (n=19) were the focus of the Australian study and were employed in a variety of contexts; there were a total of three teachers in Catholic schools. For the purposes of this article, only data from the participants who had experiences working in Catholic schools in Queensland, Australia has been included. The following excerpts are from three primary school teachers who shared their experiences in Queensland. They reveal important new knowledge about this little-known phenomenon of religiously inspired homophobia in Catholic schools.

The first participant had a student who died by suicide, which the teacher believed was because the student had difficulty negotiating being gay in a Catholic environment. The teacher did not identify as LGBTI or as an ally, but she described her motivation as being supportive and responsive to students who raise challenges to the Catholic Church on its values and beliefs in relation to diverse genders and sexualities. She goes on to describe the risk she knows she is taking every time this occurs:

> I also have to be very cautious and careful because if I'm seen not to be supportive of the Catholic Church I'm compromising my position...It means you have to be very, very careful because if I put a foot wrong, I can actually be sacked on the spot because Catholic schools are exempt from discrimination based on religious beliefs and practices.

This particular participant was aware that by addressing concepts of diverse sexualities she could lose her professional appointment, but because of her personal experiences and desire to support students, the participant took the calculated risk.

Even when faced with an organisational culture that does not necessarily support the inclusion of diverse sexualities, this participant nevertheless found a way to embrace the concept to support students' individual personal development regarding sexuality. The following excerpt is quite lengthy but in order to gain an understanding of the complexity of the teacher's experience the context has been included.

> I have kids challenge it [diverse sexualities] continuously and say they don't believe what the Church is about and all the rest of it. Fortunately, I've been teaching religious ed. in Catholic schools a long time so I've had a lot of chance to sort of think through the approach and I always take it very cautiously and carefully and say to the kids: The new testament doesn't emphasise anything about homosexuality; Jesus never passed any comment about sexual sin, sexual identity, homosexuality sexual identity—nothing, there is nothing. So therefore, my beliefs are that Jesus is really on about the individual and looking after the individual. The rest is church culture, it's church history over a period of time and that is always evolving you just have to be patient... what I always teach is that the church teaches about free will and conscience and that that is how all decisions have to be made. I always emphasise if you have an informed conscience, and you've spent time understanding who you are as a person and understanding what your sexual identity is about, then that is, in fact, informing your conscience. The church actually says once formed, you have to follow it, and that's how I get around it. So, even though the Church has this culture and beliefs around diverse sexualities, you're choosing a particular section out of that culture that really supports them to be individual and... yeah that's what I tend to do. And I think that's where a lot of informed religious education teachers in Catholic schools will go—they will go that way. They will talk about informed conscience and moral decision making rather than going the hard line about what the church says about homosexuality.

This excerpt indicates that teachers can and will include content in their teaching that is informed by their personal beliefs and not necessarily part of the curriculum or institutional culture. Culturally, the Catholic schools to which these teachers are referring, promote a heteronormative climate which indicates a "silent" condemnation. Although particular Catholic officials articulate a clear stance on condemning sexual diversity in the broader commu-

nity, Catholic schools in Queensland did not, at the time of data collection, have clear policy on homophobic bullying or teacher expectations regarding how teachers should respond to diverse sexualities.

Another participant described their experiences as follows:

> So, I myself am gay but I'm not allowed to be gay, which I think in itself is a hindrance because I just think of how many—if you were allowed to be open in the education department (whether it be state school or a Catholic organization)—it would actually make it normal. Because, at the moment, it's hidden but all the kids know 'cause an ex-student told them so they all keep insinuating: 'Oh, well, [participant name] is a lesbian,' but I'm not allowed to acknowledge that and go: 'Well, yeah, I am.' And I think that's what they're waiting for; they're waiting for clarification. 'Well she is,' and you know just get on with it and we'll all become normal.

This teacher seems unaware of the different protections afforded to teachers in state schools versus religious schools. She states, "I'm not allowed to be gay" and she remains "silent" being fully aware that her position is compromised as a "gay" teacher in a Catholic school. The teacher also reveals a desire for the normalization of being gay.

The third participant did not identify as LGBTI or as an ally, but grapples with the idea that LGBTI themes and issues are "out of bounds" as a teacher in a Catholic school. Although the teacher was unaware of the specificities of the Anti Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld), she was well aware of Catholic ideologies in relation to diverse sexualities:

> I didn't want to shun it 'cause it's a Catholic school but some of them were like, [gasp]: 'What? You can't say that!' And I thought, 'Well, we're not gonna skirt around it.' But I'm not going to go into it because it's not really my place in a Catholic school setting... But then I thought, you are tempted to, like, go into it, but then you think, 'Am I gonna get myself into strife?' and especially because it's so spur of the moment ... And (laugh) I didn't want to be the one to tell them on that particular day and get myself into trouble.

This teacher was grappling with her pedagogical response due to her personal beliefs; that teachers should be able to have open discussion in the

classroom about LGBTI themes and issues and her understanding of the school culture and broader ideologies held by the Catholic institution in which she worked.

Discussion: Exploring Teachers' Experiences across Canada and Australia

The teachers in this exploratory study reveal their experiences of grappling with personal beliefs and institutional culture from working in Catholic schools in both Canada and Australia. Three themes emerge from the data: rights, risks, and resistance. These are explicated in the following sections.

Rights

The legislative and legal platforms in both countries differ and it is logical to conclude that the teachers would subsequently have different understandings about their rights in the context of LGBTI rights. However, our study reveals that all of our teacher participants were critically aware that their right to employment in their respective Catholic school systems was contingent upon their ability to uphold the Catholicity clause in their employment contracts. Many worked in fear. This workplace fear and anxiety had significant impact on their ability to: remain employed, express themselves freely (without serious personal consequences), and exercise their autonomous capacity to challenge the system. For example, some of the teachers in the study have the legal right to challenge being fired, but did not because of personal expense, both emotional and financial. One way to better understand how heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia operate in Catholic schools is to draw upon various critical theories.

Gramsci theorized that consent is as vital as coercion if ideological hegemony is going to function. The two teachers in the Canadian context and the one teacher in the Australian context who continued to work in Catholic schools closeted or hid their gay identity in order to keep their jobs. They strategically acted out their consent to their own domination by pretending to live within the confines of Catholicity as normalised heterosexuality. They experienced a form of doctrinal disciplining in the tremendous amount of emotional and psychological energy they felt obligated to expend in order to avoid having their homosexuality become known by pretending to be heterosexual and single. This dissimulation robbed these teachers of one of the privileges taken for granted by most heterosexual peoples in contemporary Western society—sharing information about the source of their romantic love and happiness with others. Gramsci's writings on hegemony do not

necessarily assume individuals undergo complete psychological acceptance of dominant ideologies. Given that the teachers chose to participate in a study about homophobia and transphobia, they clearly had not consented entirely to Catholic heterosexist and genderist domination. Gramsci's theories account for the ideological domination of Catholic doctrine about non-heterosexuality in Catholic schools, but they also allow for acts of resistance to Church-sanctioned discrimination.

Resistance

Teachers in both Canadian and Australian contexts grappled with their personal beliefs about LGBTI rights in the context of Catholic education. Some of the teachers in both contexts felt a sense of responsibility for student well-being and social justice activism which demonstrated capacity to resist and challenge dominant Catholic discourse. They understood that there are contradictions in their workplace and they struggled to reconcile issues such as the disparity with which particular doctrine about homosexuality is enforced while other doctrine pertaining to sexuality is often overlooked, such as beliefs about contraception, divorce, and adultery. The teachers grappled with other contradictions in relation to students and their right to explore these contradictions through resistance. For example, discussing issues such as "moral decision-making" and "informed conscience" and what these mean for individuals within a Catholic context.

Canadian participants, Luke and Mark, were not totally dominated by the doctrinal disciplining of their Catholic schools in that they both had long-term partners with whom they lived, despite the fact that this is decidedly against Catholic doctrine. The Australian teacher who deliberately chose to support students in questioning Catholic culture was not completely dominated by doctrinal disciplining either. Through the power of personal will, these teachers managed to not fully internalize the disciplining gaze of Foucault's (1975/1995) Panopticon (described in detail below). Unlike Althusser, Foucault does not overlook the possibility of resistance; he also theorizes the productive force of power, which can explain how the heteronormativity of the Catholic school unexpectedly invited new acts of resistance despite significant risks.

Risks

The teachers in Canada who continued to work in Catholic schools were critically aware of their rights, but chose to remain largely silent. The one teacher in Australia who continued to work in a Catholic school also re-

mained silent, but was not aware of the legislative protections afforded to teachers who work in state government schools. All the teachers were critically aware of the potential consequences of being an LGBTI teacher and or discussing LGBTI rights, issues and or topics. Regardless of geography, legislative context, or Catholic school system, the teachers had differing understandings of their rights, but all were critically aware of the risks of not following the status quo.

Like Gramsci, Althusser posited that repression on its own cannot reproduce the existing social relations of production in any given culture and that ideology plays a vital role in the reproduction of the status quo. According to Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus, the "State" that is operating in Catholic schools, in relation to sexual minority groups, is the Vatican and the dominant ideology being circulated is Catholic doctrine. As Althusser (1970/2008, p. 19) explains:

> The Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly *by ideology* [italics in the original], but they also function secondarily by repression. . . . Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to "discipline" not only their shepherds, but also their flocks.

The Catholic Church's position on sexual diversity is circulated in Catholic schools primarily by ideology (i.e. via curriculum taught through a Catholic filter) but also secondarily by repressive policy (informed by Catholic doctrine) that directs Canadian Catholic school administrators to fire LGBTI teachers for behaving in ways deemed contrary to Catholicity. In Althusser's framework, resistance to ideological domination appears futile.

Mark and Luke were not only subject to the wiles of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus the Catholic Church, but they also experienced a kind of Foucaultian disciplinary surveillance known as the Panopticon. In his book, *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1995), Foucault drew upon the work of 18th century British utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) who described the Panopticon as an architectural device that can be used in institutions such as prisons to observe all the prisoners without the observer being seen. Prisoners never know if they are being observed or not, and therefore must act as though they are always being observed. The power of the Panopticon is its ability to cause those being observed to discipline themselves and to "induce [within them] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the

automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 201). The Panopticon reveals how the repressive force of Catholic doctrine causes teachers in Catholic schools to conform to the disciplinary regime required of them.

As Callaghan (2018) points out, the fact that a teacher is forced to remain silent sends a very clear message of oppression and marginalization of diverse gender identities and sexualities to the students and others in the school. The implications for teacher and student health and wellbeing are profound. The teachers in the Australian context were very aware of the unwritten expectations of their Catholic employers. From the ally working within the system to support individuals, to the gay teacher who just wants "it" to be normal, to the ally who is grappling with their personal beliefs, these teachers know the possibilities of being dismissed or getting "into strife." Allen, Rasmussen, Quinlivan, Aspin, Sanjakdar and Bromdal (2014), discuss the concepts of "risky" and "controversial" in the context of intersections between culture, religion and sexuality. These teachers are critically aware of the risky business of discussing, including, or embodying LGBTI identities.

Although the teachers in this comparative study experience varying degrees of fear of punishment and actual punishment (such as fear of "getting into trouble," silencing, harassment, firing), regardless of location, they are all critically aware of the risks that come with feeling the fear and still resisting the heteronormative repression. For example, Canadian teacher Luke and a teacher from the Australian context both find ways to challenge their heteronormative discourse that circulates in their Catholic school systems in order to support LGBTI individuals in their midst, but both are very aware of the associated risks. The Australian teacher participant points out: "I can be sacked on the spot" for showing support for gender and sexual diversity in an Australian Catholic school. All the teachers in the study share experiences that reveal they are critically aware of the risks of being fired or otherwise "getting into trouble." They have all experienced silencing, exclusion, and a fear for their professional status. They are all aware of the professional risks involved in working in Catholic education contexts, as they all grapple with their personal beliefs, the challenge of being themselves and expressing themselves, and sharing their interpretation of Catholic values in the classroom.

This analysis of the Canadian and Australian teachers' experiences through the lens of critical theories reveals that the Vatican is able to assert a dominant and hegemonic power within Catholic schools. In terms of disciplining the sexual conduct of LGBTI educators, the Vatican's power

prevails over other governments such as Canadian provincial ministries of education and the Australian Department of Education and Training in the publicly funded institution of the Australian and Canadian Catholic school. The Vatican's power is "panoptic" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 201) and operates by means of discipline, surveillance and self-regulation. Teacher resistance is muted. This is largely due to the fact that the majority of the LGBTI teacher participants were swiftly fired for behaving in ways that contravened Catholicity and so had no opportunity to resist the systemic homophobia and transphobia of their Catholic schools. All of the LGBTI teacher participants experienced some form of heterosexism in their Catholic schools and none described a Catholic school environment that was accepting and welcoming of gender and sexual diversity. Although the Vatican's power is clearly a dominant force, it is not entirely successful in achieving total domination over gender and sexual minority groups in Catholic schools, and this is evident in the small acts of resistance that some of the LGBTI teachers were able to accomplish.

Overall, this study reveals that teachers who identify as LGBTI are significantly disadvantaged because of the fact that their human rights are impinged upon by Catholic education leaders and they fear for their employment security. Moreover, teachers who do not identify as LGBTI, including those who do and do not consider themselves allies of LGBTI people and concerns, are sharing similar experiences of fear of discrimination for simply addressing LGBTI themes and issues in the classroom. Such teachers' fundamental freedoms of thought, belief, conscience, and expression are seriously curtailed. Allies to the LGBTI equity agenda and those who understand that LGBTI identities and non-heterosexual and non-binary relationships form part of the lived reality of students, teachers, and others involved in education are also at risk of discrimination. Conservative forces in Australia are actively silencing attempts to address LGBTI themes, issues, rights and inclusion in Australian schools and this chilling effect is occurring beyond the familiar lines of identity politics. That is, overt discrimination and fear of oppressive reprisals control not only those educators who identify as LGBTI, or are perceived as such, but also those who are or would be allies to social justice efforts in schools.

Limitations and Implications

The empirical results we have reported in this exploratory study should be considered in light of some limitations and implications. The study reveals findings about the experiences of LGBTI teachers associated with Catholic

schools of two Canadian provinces and one Australian state. We recognize that the experiences of LGBTI teachers in schools is often dependant upon the leadership of those schools and this can vary considerably due to many factors. Nevertheless, the similarities among our findings show a transferability of participant experiences. As qualitative researchers, we do not claim that these findings are generalizable to all Catholic schools around the world. Scholars who research qustions of gender and sexuality in public schooling should not neglect to include Catholic schools in their studies out of a deference for religious freedom and a tendency to leave Catholic schools to their own devices. Future studies into the experiences of LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools should look to uncover instances of surviving, thriving, and resilience.

In Australia, the religious freedoms and rights debate, which began following the same-sex plebiscite in [2017], was largely silenced in recent political campaigning; rather, the primary election issue in relation to education focused on school funding: private versus public. The conservative political party, which supported increases in private school funding and subjected Australians to the brutal same-sex marriage plebiscite and ensuing public debate, have been reinstated. The debate on school funding and religious freedoms, including funding for religious schools, will no doubt continue in the coming months as the government moves on key policies in relation to education.

In Canada, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* contains the important equality rights provision (Section 15), but, as our study has shown, this has not protected LGBTI teachers in Canadian Catholic schools from being harassed and dismissed. Their experiences are quite similar to LGBTI teachers in Australian Catholic schools who do not enjoy such federal protections and given the recent election outcome are unlikely to change. In light of the progress in LGBTI student rights in Canada, especially in relation to provincial legislation that ensures students—including those in Catholic schools—should be allowed to establish Gay/Straight Alliances and use the words "gay" or "queer" in the name of their GSAs (Callaghan, 2014), one might expect that respect for LGBTI teachers' equality rights will follow. As we have seen, legislation, law, and progressive educational policies are very important for safeguarding LGBTI teachers' equality rights, but there should not be loopholes for Catholic schools to simply sidestep these essential rights (in the case of Canada) or be exempt from human rights and federal anti-discrimination laws (in the case of Australia).

LGBTI teachers' rights in Australia are currently, as of 2019, in the hands of a conservative government that must be persuaded to act on the recommendations of the religious freedoms review, which they have ignored since the recommendations were released over the last year. Regardless of the outcome of the state of policital affairs in Australia, the Canadian experiences shows us that the risk is always there for Catholic schools to disrespect equality rights pertaining to LGBTI teachers and to file for exemptions to anti-discrimination laws. In both countries, LGBTI teachers feel the power of the Catholic Church doctrine regardless of the legislative context. The role of religion in the state is not new to scholars (Butler, Habermas, Taylor & West, 2011) and, as our study reveals, is an ongoing topic for discussion and debate; the future of religion and individual rights are imperative for both Australian and Canadian societies.

Conclusion

The experiences of teachers within the Australian Catholic school environment described in this article highlight that it is not only LGBTI teachers who are lawfully discriminated against, but any teacher who acts by discussing or supporting LGBTI themes, issues, rights and inclusion. The Catholic ideology is supported by an essentialist view point in which heterosexuality is deemed to be the only "normal" and "natural" expression of sexuality. In Catholic schools, this kind of heteronormativity (Warner, 1991) is perpetuated and reinforced by "overt and covert practices of invisibility and silencing" (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 150). None of the teachers referred to any Catholic policy or doctorine specifically, but they were all aware of the potential ramifications of identifying as LGBTI, an ally, or by "acting" in ways that contradict the perceived values of the Catholic institution.

In Queensland it is difficult to imagine how teachers in Catholic education reconcile their work on sexualities in the current legislative context; especially when this is compounded by the influences of religious freedom reviews, marriage equality debates, and Bill of Rights discussions. Similarly to the Canadian context, and as Callaghan (2018) has argued, publicly funded institutions such as Catholic schools in Australia should be accountable to human rights legislation. These examples of some teachers' conceptions reveal the realities of teachers' work in Catholic contexts: many experience a real fear of being fired; many have a hyper awareness of the privileging of heterosexuality; and most are devastatingly aware of the potential consequences of the impacts of invisibility and silencing for students.

Although Canada and Australia have different laws and protections regarding LGBTI teachers' rights, this comparative study shows that LGBTI teachers have similar experiences in Catholic schools in such far away corners of the world. Clearly, through the dissemination of punitive doctrine on the topic of "homosexuality," the Vatican is able to exert powerful control over the lives of LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools. The Catholic church is not the only authority governing Catholic schools, however. These schools can receive up to 70% of their operating costs from public monies collected through taxes and are legally accountable to elected trustees. This means that Catholic schools belong to public citizens, not Church officials, and should therefore adhere to human rights legislation that governs the state.

Catholic teachers, staff, parents, and others who do not agree with repressive Catholic school policies regarding sexual and gender minorities are increasingly stepping forward to express their opposition to heterosexist discrimination in Catholic schools. The outlook has been grim for LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools for many years, but the more people discuss their plight the more we may ignite a spark that encourages world-wide opposition to homophobic and transphobic oppression in Catholic schools.

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