Homophobic Bullying in Secondary Schools:
A Prejudice Worth Fighting About

by

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Abstract

A substantial body of evidence suggests that homophobic bullying is still highly prevalent in secondary schools, causing a considerable degree of psychosocial distress, and classroom interruption. Homophobic bullying in adolescence relies on a combination of social and psychosexual factors, as well as school policy and teacher attitudes. This thesis reports on the outcomes of the first mixed-methods controlled trial with cluster randomisation of a manualised anti-homophobia program called *Pride and Prejudice*. The thesis thereby makes an original contribution to the research knowledge into homophobia in teenagers and the potential methods that could be employed to address homophobic bullying. The research was conducted in a co-educational government secondary school with year nine students (n = 72). Evaluation included quantitative measures of outcome and a qualitative evaluation of participants’ perceptions of the program. A second study assessed educators’ views of homophobia in the same school and their preparedness to intervene. Despite an overall lack of statistical significance, effect sizes indicate that the program tended to produce small improvements across the primary and secondary outcome measures, although most of the changes from pre to post-assessment occurred in the control group. Control participants experienced an overall and statistically significant worsening across many of the outcomes including aggressive forms of homophobia, attitudes towards lesbians, immature defence mechanisms, and also relied more heavily on the opinions of their peers to evaluate gay people at post-assessment. Qualitative data suggests that the program has led to an increase in awareness of homophobia, and
importantly, provided an incentive to become more proactive in intervening in some students. The second study highlights the need for teacher training in order to better recognise, interrupt and prioritise the attenuation of homophobic bullying.
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Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Overview

Chapter one of this thesis provides a theoretical framework to the entire thesis. It begins with a definition of homophobia and examines the prior literature and relevant theories, including those relating to the variables in its development, and the individual differences associated with homophobic attitudes. This is followed by theories of minority stress and homosexual identity development.

Chapter two focuses on school-bullying and homophobia in adolescents. It begins with the predictors of bullying which have been identified in the literature, before outlining the particular dynamics of homophobic bullying. Following this, the psychosocial effects of homophobic bullying and the remaining barriers to attenuating it are explored, including the impact of parental acceptance and the school culture.

In light of the previously articulated theories and prior literature, chapter three reviews the literature on existing anti-homophobia resources and programs, before exploring one intervention in detail – the Pride and Prejudice program. The prior evaluations of this program are explored before examining its relevance to the prior theories and research articulated in chapters one and two. Finally, this chapter explores the limitations of the prior evaluations of the
program and highlights their methodological flaws, thereby justifying another evaluation in the form of a controlled trial.

Chapter four outlines the aims of the current investigation and provides a rationale in light of the limitations of the previous evaluations, including the justification for an in-depth qualitative analysis of students’ appraisals of the program, and teachers’ perceptions of homophobia and the remaining obstacles to attenuating it. Finally, the hypotheses of the quantitative study and aims of the two qualitative studies are outlined.

Chapter five serves to report the methods used including the design of the studies, the secondary school, participants and assessment instruments while chapter six is a report of the results from the first study which tested three different hypotheses as stated at the end of chapter four.

Chapter seven presents an in-depth qualitative interpretation and analysis of the student participants’ perceptions and learning as a result of taking part in the program. Chapter eight, also a qualitative analysis, presents an interpretation of educators’ perceptions of homophobia and the remaining obstacles to overcoming it in the same school in which Study One was conducted.

Finally, chapter nine introduces the discussion and is divided into three sections. In section one, the quantitative results of Study One are briefly explained in light of the hypotheses. This is followed by section two, which presents a detailed discussion of the quantitative and qualitative results of both Studies One and Two in light of the prior theories and literature. Section three
concludes the thesis and presents the limitations and strengths of the study before suggesting directions for future research.
Chapter 1  Homophobia — Its Guises and Disguises

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a theoretical background to the thesis in order to present homophobia and some of the debates as to its nature, before discussing the interaction between a homophobic social context, such as the school environment, and the impact of such a context on the identity and well being of same-sex attracted youth (SSAY). Given that adolescents who do not fully identify as heterosexual are also the ones more likely to be subject to homophobic bullying, the acronym SSAY will be used throughout this thesis, to refer to all those young people whose sexual orientations are not necessarily heterosexual and or those who are still coming to terms with an emerging homosexual orientation. Similarly, when referring to gay men or lesbians, the word gay will often be employed to mean gay people (male and/or female) when used alone, otherwise any combination of the terms gay male/men, gay female/women or lesbian, will be used interchangeably. Since this thesis presents an intervention designed to reduce homophobia and homophobic bullying, it is important not only to understand the phenomenon of homophobia, but also its impact on those who are most prone to its impact.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a definition of homophobia, before turning to the second section which draws on relevant theories outlining the functions of homophobia and its associations to defence mechanisms. Section three introduces some of the most commonly held personal attributes that are believed to be correlated with homophobic
attitudes, while in section four the primary sources of psychological distress faced by many same-sex attracted individuals are outlined. The final section explores current models of homosexual identity formation. This should foster an understanding of the unique difficulties faced by many SSAY as they attempt to deal with an emerging sense of difference, and the risks to disclosure, within a predominantly heterosexual society and school system, whose values and attitudes are experienced by many as homophobic (Herek, 1984a).

1.2 Defining Homophobia

The term homophobia, first introduced by Weinberg (1972), refers to an irrational fear of homosexuality and homosexuals. Its meaning has since expanded to encapsulate feelings of disgust, repulsion, rage and anxiety concerning homosexuals, those suspected of being same-sex attracted, and same-sex sexual relations (Finnegan & Cook, 1984; Flavia & Madureira, 2007). Implicit in the term homophobia is the notion of phobia, which provokes intensely irrational feelings of discomfort (Shields & Harriman, 1984). Although homophobia is a fear, the term may also be misleading because, unlike specific phobias relating to discrete events in an individual’s history which produce negative affect and avoidance, homophobia is insidious, and more akin to racial prejudice or sexism (Shields & Harriman). While the notion of phobia suggests an intra-psychic phenomenon akin to other anxiety conditions, the pervasive nature of homophobia in both Western and non-Western societies in otherwise ‘normal’ individuals, suggests that homophobia might be better understood as analogous to other widely held social prejudices
such as racism or sexism which are not in themselves considered forms of psychopathology. From this point of view, homophobia could be viewed as a socially constructed, pervasive and collective prejudice (Flavia & Madureira), perpetuated within a society’s social structures and social norms regarding sexuality, gender, gender roles, and interpersonal relationships between members of the same and opposite sex (Finnegan & Cook; Herek, 1984a).

Conversely, it is important to note that homophobia within Western societies is not a uniform or universal prejudicial attitude. There are identifiable differences in the degree to which individuals endorse homophobic attitudes (Herek, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1993; Lewis & White, 2009). There is also variation within individuals across their own life span, as to the extent to which they will be homophobic (Bowers, Plummer, & Minichiello, 2005). For example, Bowers et al. posit that although males are socialised into cultures of homophobia from early childhood, their levels and associated fears of difference tend to reach a peak by their mid-teens, and then level off in early adulthood. Therefore one of the key research questions in this field is to better understand the source of such variation, and the factors which contribute to these individual differences in homophobia.

Importantly, homophobia differs from other phobias in that homophobic individuals do not always feel responsible for their fears, or even deem their reactions irrational, as is often the case with ego-dystonic phobic individuals. Instead, homophobes tend to perceive the targets of their fears as responsible for their strong and anxiety-provoking negative reactions (Bowers et al., 2005; Shields & Harriman, 1984). Homophobia is more complex than simple
phobias, as there are several different aspects to the definition of homophobia whose relative emphases cross both the psychological and social aspects of the phenomenon. It is also debatable as to the extent to which homophobia could be considered a form of psychopathology and therefore the target of clinical intervention, or whether it is, and will remain, a socially based phenomenon.

In keeping with the notion that homophobia may be a function of both social prejudice and individual intrapsychic differences, the next section will outline prominent theories of homophobia and homophobic aggression. These theories postulate that there are four overarching correlates of homophobic bullying; conformity to socially prescribed heterosexual gender roles, thrill seeking, defence mechanisms, and group dynamics. In addition to this, a number of individual differences serve as mediating factors such as age, gender, religiosity and education. The next section outlines Herek’s (1987a) theory of the functions of homophobia which is based on the notion that prejudice, such as homophobia, is an attitude that is heavily influenced by factors such as the opinions of those we admire in our entourage, our moral and value systems, psychological defence styles, and actual knowledge or contact with openly gay or lesbian persons.

1.3 Herek’s Functions of Homophobia

Herek (1987a) builds a complex and integrated theory of homophobia which serves as a framework for the current research. He maintains that homophobic attitudes do not exist in a vacuum, but serve four discrete, salient and personally relevant functions. Originally based on the content analysis of
315 heterosexual undergraduates’ short essays regarding their attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, Herek factor-analysed the overarching themes to devise the ‘Attitude Functions Inventory’ (AFI), which was tested on another group of 69 heterosexual undergraduates. The following discrete typologies were developed in relation to attitudes to a gay or lesbian target, accounting for 70 per cent of the total variance – experiential-schematic, social-expressive, value-expressive, and defensive-expressive. The experiential-schematic attitude is a reflection of one’s attitudes towards homosexuals as a group, based on past interactions with particular gay men or lesbians. The value-expressive function reflects an ideological or moral view of homosexuality, and serves to uphold these values as part of one’s self-concept. It is often articulated by those holding strong religious views, despite often never actually having met a known gay person. The social-expressive function explains homophobic attitudes based on the premise that our attitudes are shaped in part by those we respect and care about. In turn, this attitude function explains how some individuals of in-groups both delineate and maintain the boundaries separating them from out-group members, thereby reinforcing alleged superiority and bolstering in-group members’ self-esteem. The function of social-expressive homophobic attitudes is therefore to both distance homosexuals, and to indicate membership to the hierarchically (and often heterosexist) superior group, thereby shoring up one’s sense of a particular brand of heterosexuality.

Reflecting Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function, Plummer (1999) posits that homophobia is an intrinsic aspect of Western culture and serves a quasi-initiation purpose that he labels the ‘Homophobic Passage’. This is
especially pertinent for boys, as they attempt to negotiate their masculinity during adolescence (Bowers et al., 2005). Plummer (1999) perceives homophobia as delineating those who express desirable traits of masculinity (including using homophobic slurs) from those who do not (boys who appear or act in ways that are believed to be homosexual). Not surprisingly, it is during adolescence that groups of males are more likely to express their homophobia overtly in the form of school-bullying. However, Plummer suggests that homophobic bullying in boys as a group does not necessarily indicate that each individual of the group hates gay people, but is currently an unfortunate passage to (heterosexual) manhood based on socially constructed and heterosexist notions of masculinity, all of which are reinforced by society.

Herek (1987a) asserts that human beings express particular homophobic attitudes because they are psychologically and socially advantageous. In other words, attitude functions help individuals achieve some personal benefit. For example, it is feasible that in the context of a heterosexist and homophobic school environment, that espousing the homophobic views of one’s peer group may lead to a form of social acceptance, rather than rejection. In terms of group dynamics, this assertion has some merit. For example, physical assualts against individuals believed to be gay are usually enacted by groups of homophobes rather than individuals, or conversely an individual performs a homophobic act to impress his onlookers (Herek, 1992; Franklin, 2000; Weissman, 1992).

From a traditional psychoanalytic perspective, homophobia was believed to defend against the unconscious anxiety produced from same-sex related urges, or the possibility of being homosexual (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996;
West, 1977). However, Herek (1986) believes that homophobic bullying is much broader than this, and instead serves to allay feelings of inadequacy in meeting strict and inflexible heterosexual gender-role demands, rather than merely the unconscious fears of being gay. For example, a young homophobic person who is struggling to maintain his self-identity may attempt to defend against uncomfortable feelings and urges when confronted with those he believes may be gay, because this will allay intrapsychic anxiety about his sense of inadequacy regarding his self-concept of masculinity. Herek (1987a) argues that, given their psychodynamic aetiology, the defensive-expressive attitudes are perhaps the most ingrained: those with defensive attitudes may have difficulty relinquishing their homophobic attitudes, while maintaining their fragile self-concepts. This function is particularly pertinent to those male youths for whom homosexuality threatens a nascent and particular kind of heterosexual masculinity (Herek, 1986).

As a test of Herek’s (1984a, 1987a) idea that homophobic attitudes and defence styles are linked, Lewis and White (2009) examined the correlation between defence mechanisms and levels of homophobia in 86 adolescent males aged 17-18 years, attending an all-boys school in regional Victoria, Australia. Participants’ responses were recorded on The Defense Style Questionnaire-40 (Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993) and the Homophobia Scale (Wright, Adams, & Bernat, 1999) which the researchers reported as having moderate to high reliability coefficients. Consistent with the predicted direction of the hypotheses, there was a statistically significant and moderate correlation between the use of immature defences (e.g. projection, devaluation, denial) and
avoidant homophobia ($r = .24, p = .03$), and an even larger effect for aggressive forms ($r = .43, p < .001$) of homophobia in this sample. Collectively, immature defence styles contributed to higher levels of homophobia than either neurotic or mature defences. In their study, Lewis and White discovered that the immature defence styles which accounted for most of the variance between the adolescent males denoted high or low in homophobia, were denial (17.64%), devaluation (13.10%) and somatisation (11.35%).

The use of immature defences is believed to be associated with distorted perceptions of the self and others as a coping device to protect one’s sense of self-integrity (McWilliams, 1994). The use of immature defences serve as coping styles to the distress that can arise in particular interpersonal transactions. Although Lewis and White’s (2009) research does not examine defences in adolescent females, or in co-educational environments, it suggests that homophobic young men employ immature defence mechanisms, which could conceivably be part of the explanation that suggests that violent and aggressive enactments of homophobia are associated with overall rigidities and limitations in these young people’s psychological development. It should be considered that the need to defend against this anxiety would probably not occur if homosexuality was viewed positively, or equally to heterosexuality, and unrelated to cultured notions of masculinity.

A leading scholar in the field of homophobia, Gonsiorek (1988) posits that adolescents are frequently intolerant of others’ difference, which may in turn lead to ostracising those peers whose perceived difference relates to sexual orientation or gender role behaviour. This is because of the extreme
polarisation that adolescents experience in their gender roles. For example, males are pressured by peers to conform to specific heterosexual gender roles (tough, masculine), while females are urged to be compliant (and passive). While sex roles are social constructions, there is a general misunderstanding and confusion of the difference between gender roles and sexual orientation by adolescents and adults alike (Gonsiorek). Society’s unequal treatment of homosexuals in relation to heterosexuals, and institutionalised homophobia (e.g. unequal rights in law including bans on marriage equality, unequal access to partner’s work and pension benefits, unequal tax benefits, negative media portrayals), where heterosexuality is perceived as superior and the norm, acts to solidify adolescents’ and adults’ fear of difference and non-heterosexuality.

In addition to sex or gender roles, a number of other individual differences have been cited in the literature as correlating with variations in levels of homophobia including gender (Herek, 1988), religion (Herek, 1987b; Shackelford & Besser, 2007), knowing someone gay or lesbian (Herek, 1987a; Herek & Glunt, 1993), race (Walder, Sikka, & Baig, 1999), age (The Pew Research Center, 2006), and educational achievement (Weissman, 1992; Wright et al., 1999). The following section will therefore explore these individual characteristics and ascertain their relevance to homophobic attitudes.

1.4 Individual Differences and Homophobia

As previously noted, homophobia is not a universal feature of human cognition or behaviour, and the variation as to its form, existence and intensity suggests a range of associations with personality, social, cultural and biological
factors, all of which vary within most populations. It is therefore not only important to consider this, but also to factor such variation into the design of any study of homophobia. In particular, these variations in individual differences should play a role in the design of anti-homophobia interventions. Knowing more about the factors that contribute to homophobia should enable anti-homophobia programs to target those who are most susceptible, and also suggest the mechanisms which need to be addressed in such interventions. This section will briefly explore the research that cites these individual differences as potential predictors of homophobia.

The individual characteristics of individuals as predictors of attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexuals are inconsistent, and contradictory findings mean that definitive conclusions about the importance of these variables are difficult to make. Despite differences in measurement and scales, published empirical research from as early as the 1970s suggests that those endorsing a strong degree of religiosity tend to also express higher degrees of homophobia (e.g. Herek, 1987b; Levitt & Klassen, 1974; Schope & Eliason, 2000; Schulte & Battle, 2004). However, other studies demonstrate that it is religious fundamentalism and adherence to authoritarian religious doctrine that is a better predictor of homophobic attitudes, than religiosity per se (e.g. Duck & Hunsberger, 1999; Maher, Sever, & Pichler, 2008). Similarly, although the following studies are somewhat dated, they suggest that non-practising religious people tend to endorse tolerant attitudes towards gay people, compared to practising and regular church attendees (Alston, 1974; Herek, 1987b, 1988; Nyberg & Alston, 1977).
Research on age as a predictor of homophobic attitudes is equally inconsistent. For example, one American nationwide survey demonstrated that the younger the respondent, the more tolerant were his or her attitudes towards gay people (e.g. Pew Research Center, 2006), yet others suggest that the opposite is true (e.g. Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997). However, what seems clear is that mediating variables play an important role in assessing the effects of any one individual characteristic on attitudes towards gay people. For example, race has also been cited as a predictor of negative attitudes towards gay people (e.g. Waldner, Sikka, & Baig, 1999), yet in another study, religiosity mediated this relationship (Schulte & Battle, 2004). Once religion was held constant, differences in attitudes towards gay people between white and black Americans were no longer statistically significant.

Gender has also been found to predict negative attitudes towards homosexuals, although findings are inconsistent. While some studies suggest that overall, females tend to hold less homophobic attitudes than males (e.g. Herek, 1988; Oliver & Hyde, 1995; Whitley & Kite, 1995; Wilkinson, 2004), other research demonstrates that when gender role beliefs are also taken into consideration, they better predict attitudes than gender alone (e.g. Krulewitz & Nash, 1980; Parrot, Adams, & Zeichner, 2002). Moreover, both men and women tend to view gay men more negatively than lesbians (Black & Stevenson, 1984; Lim, 2002; Theodore & Basow, 2000). However, other research suggests that males who identify strongly with masculine gender role traits, also tend to perceive gay men more negatively than they do lesbians (Black & Stevenson, 1984; Herek, 1988).
In keeping with the overall finding that no single individual characteristic can adequately predict homophobic attitudes, and that mediating variables must be taken into consideration, Brown and Henriquez (2008), administered Kerr and Holden’s (1996) Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS), Herek’s (1984b) Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLGS), and a socio-demographic questionnaire to 320 (38% male and 62% female) American undergraduate psychology students ($M$ age = 21.50, $SD = 5.84$). The socio-demographic questionnaire assessed participants’ gender, ethnicity, religiosity, political beliefs and actual experience with gays and lesbians. Results of a path analysis indicated that participants’ race (white or non-white American) ($\beta = -.17, p = .05$), not knowing a gay person (family member or friend) ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$), religiosity (indicating strong religious beliefs) ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), and endorsing more conservative political beliefs ($\beta = .27, p < .001$) were all statistically significantly associated with higher levels of homophobic attitudes. While age ($\beta = -.01, p = .82$) and gender ($\beta = .05, p = .39$) did not directly predict attitudes towards gay men and lesbians, females indicated higher degrees of religiosity than males ($\beta = -.17, p = .003$), which was associated with stronger homophobic attitudes, but also endorsed less traditional gender role beliefs than males ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$). Importantly, it was gender role beliefs that most strongly predicted negative attitudes towards gay people (males and females) ($\beta = -.42, p < .001$) compared to the other variables.

In keeping with Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic function of homophobia, experience with gay people was a statistically significant predictor of homophobic attitudes, as were race, religiosity, political
conservatism, and gender role beliefs, accounting for approximately 50 per
cent of the variance in the ATLG scale in Brown and Henriquez’s (2008)
study. While the results of this study are limited by using only one measure of
homophobia, the reduced age range of participants, and not assessing for other
potentially confounding variables (e.g. personality types, defence styles),
perhaps the most noteworthy finding is that this combination of individual
characteristics accounted for half of the variance in homophobic attitudes and
that gender role beliefs were a better predictor than gender alone.

Yet, in one study, gender role beliefs were more pertinent to males than
females as correlates to homophobic attitudes. For example, in their study,
Polimeni, Hardie and Buzwell (2000) examined the association between gender
roles and homophobia among 110 self-identified heterosexual Australian
undergraduates ($M$ age = 21.74, $SD$ = 5.51). Although there were no
statistically significant differences between males and females in terms of
general homophobia [$t(107) = 1.24, p > .05$], statistically significant
differences in levels of same-sex homophobia were noted [$F(1,66) = 5.60, p <
.05$]. Males reported more homophobic attitudes when the target was a gay
male [$t(41) = -2.98, p < .05$], and females when the target was a lesbian [$t(66)
= 2.92, p < .05$]. Moreover, those males reporting higher levels of homophobia
also held more traditional gender role beliefs, than females with high levels of
homophobia. The authors concluded that homophobia in females, unlike in
males, may be more related to negative affect than the enforcing of traditional
gender roles, as is often the case with males.
As previously mentioned, the prior research into the association between gender and homophobia has not been consistent, but seems to suggest a mediating role of other variables such as gender role beliefs, religiosity and knowing someone gay or lesbian. However, in their study, Schope and Eliason (2000) found that knowing someone gay or lesbian may not necessarily be sufficient to lead to a reduction in homophobic behaviours. In total, 129 American undergraduate psychology students (77% female and 23% male) were surveyed. Thirty per cent of all males admitted to physically harassing or threatening someone believed to be gay in the past year, whereas only one female reported engaging in this type of homophobic bullying. While the findings suggest that prior contact with a gay or lesbian person (friend) is associated with fewer examples of homophobic behaviour, nearly eighty per cent of these same participants admitted to having laughed at a homophobic joke, and forty per cent admitted to making anti-gay jokes, or verbally harassing (insulted using terms such as “fag”, “dyke” or “queer”) someone for (being or appearing) gay or lesbian over the past year.

Not surprisingly, those participants who admitted to engaging in homophobic behaviours scored higher on both the Attitudes Towards Gay Men (ATG) and Attitudes Towards Lesbians subscale (ATL) of the ATLGS (Herek, 1984b), although mean scores were higher on the ATG subscale indicating a tendency for homophobic attitudes to be higher towards gay men than lesbians in this sample. The findings from Schope and Eliason’s study therefore support the notion that at least in their sample, negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians are related to homophobic behaviours and that gender is a contributing
variable. Although knowing a gay or lesbian person resulted in participating in less homophobic behaviours compared with those holding higher homophobic attitudes, it seems that based on the results of this study, that this was not sufficient to prevent all forms of homophobic behaviour. It is therefore possible that the way one endorses Herek’s (1987a, 1988) other functions of homophobia may influence or override the fact that one knows or associates with gay and lesbian people, as expressed by highly endorsing the experiential-schematic function. Yet, these other functions were not assessed in this study.

For example, Herek’s (1987a) value-expressive function explains homophobic attitudes in terms of strong moralistic, conservative values or religious beliefs which are then used to justify homophobic attitudes. In Schope and Eliason’s (2000) study, homophobic behaviour was statistically significantly more likely to be carried out by those participants who indicated that they held conservative or fundamentalist religious beliefs. In fact, seventy-five per cent of this group had participated in verbal homophobia (anti-gay jokes, using offensive epithets) over the previous year, compared to fifty per cent of those holding no particular religious convictions, or tolerant attitudes. Of note was the finding that although those holding strongly religious views made up only twelve per cent of the entire sample, they also represented half of all those participants that reported having made threats to others believed to be gay or lesbian.

While generalisations to all religious fundamentalists cannot be made from a single study, a meta-analysis of the data from 61 published studies (combined n = >50,000) in the outcomes literature, found that those reporting
fundamentalist views tended to also hold the most homophobic attitudes (Whitely, 2009). Whitely examined the relationship between different forms of religiosity including (frequency of attendance at place of worship, fundamentalism, Christian orthodoxy, self-ratings of religiosity, intrinsic, quest and extrinsic religious orientations) and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Fundamentalism relates to the belief that there is only one overriding set of religious teachings; a quest orientation reflects the idea that one uses religion to answer existential questions; an intrinsic orientation is one that uses religion as a guide to living, and an extrinsic orientation is a reflection of how religion can be used to achieve nonreligious goals.

With the exception of quest orientations, all other forms of religiosity were statistically significantly related to negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians. Extrinsic orientation was not related to attitudes towards gay men or lesbians. Mean effect sizes were largest for the fundamentalist group ($d = - .99$), followed by the frequency of attendance ($d = -.68$), the Christian orthodox ($d = -.61$), self-rating of religiosity ($d = -.48$), and finally the intrinsic orientation group ($d = -.48$). In an attempt to explain these findings, Whitely (2009) makes reference to Crandall and Eshleman’s (2003) justification-suppression model which posits that when religious ideals are consistent with prejudice, they also provide the justification for holding negative attitudes – as in the case of those towards homosexuals. However, even accounting for all the previously mentioned individual characteristics, homophobic attitudes may also be driven by unconscious defences (Herek, 1987a).
The clinical implication of these findings is that they lend support to the proposal that addressing homophobia in secondary schools should also entail exposing youths to the distortions of reason through which they justify their homophobia. They may well be based on immature defence mechanisms which distort their perceptions of both themselves and others (McWilliams, 1994). It also suggests that homophobic male adolescents may be using their homophobia to express more pervasive psychological difficulties which have been widely noted as being particularly acute in adolescence, such as those related to sexual identity and gender role definition (Erikson, 1968). This later point implies that homophobia can also be considered in developmental terms, as becoming particularly pronounced in adolescence when the formation of sexual identity is a key developmental goal. The same point also implies that adolescents who are subject to homophobic bullying are highly susceptible to the damaging effects of such bullying on their developing sexual orientations, relationship skills, self-worth and abilities to form salient sexual and romantic partnerships (Bos, Sandfort, de Bruyn, & Hakvoort, 2008; Cass, 1979, 1984; Meyer, 1995).

In summary, on the basis of the work and theories of Herek (1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1987a, 1987b, 1988), supported by the empirical study of Lewis and White (2009), homophobia emerges as a complex attitude, and in turn behaviour, underpinned by an interplay of various individual characteristics including gender, knowledge of gay or lesbian people, religiosity, gender role beliefs, and also socialisation, behavioural reinforcement, and intra-psychical processes. At first glance, it may seem that the only victims of homophobic
bullying are SSAY and gay people generally, but homophobia acts as a social structure which curtails individuals’ agency and especially adolescents, to freely express their sexuality except in a highly prescribed and heterosexist manner. It is therefore reasonable to assume that males and females (both heterosexual and homosexual), suffer from this form of social control associated with sexuality in adolescence. In light of the impediment to the expression of human sexuality and the general distress that homophobia and homophobic bullying necessarily pose to young people, the next section will first explore a model of minority stress, in order to theoretically situate the psychosocial effects of homophobia on SSAY, before examining prominent models of homosexual identity development which will be used to better comprehend the difficulties inherent in ‘coming out’ or disclosure of one’s homosexuality.

1.5 Homophobia and Minority Stress

Meyer (1995) posits that same-sex attracted individuals belong to a minority group and as such experience a particular type of ‘Minority Stress’. Following this theory, the primary sources of Minority Stress for gay individuals are in the form of perceived stigma and the ensuing expectation of rejection, the lived experience of homophobic discrimination and violence, and ‘internalised homophobia’ or a pervasive discomfort with one’s own sexual orientation. These stressors are believed to form an ongoing heuristic which impacts on psychological wellbeing. To test his theory, Meyer assessed the correlation between these sources of Minority Stress and various measures of
mental health among a sample of 741 self-identified gay men living in New York City.

Four of the five dependent variables consisted of existing scales from the Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Instrument (Dohrenwend, Shrout, Egri, & Mendelsohn, 1980) including: ‘Demoralisation’ ($\alpha = .92$), a 27 item scale measuring constructs such as dread, anxiety, sadness and self-esteem; ‘Guilt’ ($\alpha = .79$), consisting of four items measuring rational and irrational guilt feelings; ‘Sex problems’ ($\alpha = .72$), four items tap into perceived sexual intimacy problems; ‘Suicide’ ($\alpha = .52$), consisting of four items measuring suicidal ideation/Attempts, and finally, the ‘AIDS Related Traumatic Stress Response’ ($\alpha = .89$) adapted from the Horowitz Impact of Events Scale (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979), a 17 item measure of psychological responses believed to be related to the AIDS epidemic (e.g. panic attacks, insomnia, avoidance, preoccupation). Results of a multiple regression demonstrated that all three types of Minority Stress produced an independent and statistically significant correlation with each of the various measures of psychological distress except ‘Sex problems’.

Explained variance increased with the addition of each Minority Stressor, although effect sizes were moderate. For example, the combined effects of internalised homophobia, stigma and prejudice produced an ($R^2 = .12$) for ‘Demoralisation’ and ‘Guilt’, and an ($R^2 = .11$) for ‘AIDS Related Traumatic Stress’. The measure of ‘Suicide’ added five per cent of explained variance to the model ($R^2 = .05$). Although statistically significant, the associations between the three overarching and discrete sources of Minority Stress and the
various distress measures employed in this study should be interpreted with caution. First, the measure of ‘Suicide’ had noticeably low reported alpha levels, and all the scales had been adapted from pre-existing measures, which potentially renders these scales unreliable as true measures of these constructs within this study. Second, given that all the men in this study self-identified as gay and were therefore relatively self-accepting, it is likely that their responses did not reveal the true extent of the psychological effects associated with internalised homophobia.

Finally, the model does not address how gay individuals deal with social contexts in which discrimination is deemed likely to occur, nor can it explain how Minority Stress impacts gay women, given the exclusively male sample in this study. Nevertheless, the model provides a starting point onto which homophobic discrimination can be mapped, and attempts to demonstrate the relative contribution of the previously outlined sources of Minority Stress, and the potential mental health consequences that are associated with them. In light of the barriers that homophobia poses to the psychosexual development of same-sex attracted individuals, the next section explores homosexual identity development.

1.6 Homosexual Identity Development

In this section, existing, published models of homosexual identity formation will be explored, and their relevance to this review assessed in terms of their empirical support, advantages and shortcomings. It is anticipated that a consideration of these theoretical models will provide an understanding of
some of the difficulties faced by SSAY, as they face the unique decision to disclose their emerging sexual orientations to others or ‘come out’. Many SSAY face the risk that their disclosure will attract negative interactions, including homophobic bullying, and yet coming out appears to be considered as a major and necessary hurdle to achieving an integrated sexual identity (Cass, 1979). An integrated sexual identity is a process of identity change as one replaces a heterosexual image with a homosexual image of oneself (Cass, 1984).

However this process is fraught with difficulties and a function of one’s ability to accept a stigmatised identity in the face of homophobia, that leaves many SSAY open to ridicule, rejection and harassment. It should also be understood that the coming out process is unique to same-sex attracted individuals, unlike other minority groups whose minority status is usually self-evident. For example, individuals from ethnic minority groups usually share this difference with at least one of two parents and are not expected to attempt to conceal their ethnic origins. However, homophobia is different because the process of disclosing one’s sexual orientation is often mediated by the perceived safety of a given situation, in light of expectations of rejection or an otherwise homophobic response (Meyer, 1995).

In order to conduct a systematic review of the literature, database and bibliographic searches were performed using (Medline, CINAHL, LGBT Life, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, PsycINFO and SocINDEX) using the search terms ‘Homosexual identity, models of sexual orientation, and gay and lesbian identity
development’. Search results revealed a total of ten published theoretical models: seven stage models of homosexual identity development (e.g. Cass, 1979; Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Coleman, 1982; Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Sophie, 1985; & Troiden, 1979), and one life-span model (e.g. D’Augelli, 1994).

Although the exact number of stages and their names vary from model to model, their stages tend to share common developmental characteristics, and are all a function of the difficulties that face SSAY, in light of the negative stigma that homosexuality continues to attract. The earlier stages of the models generally describe the individual’s attempts to suppress the awareness of homosexual feelings in light of growing up in a largely heterosexist society, where one is generally assumed to be heterosexual from birth. According to the stage models, the individual first exerts time and energy trying to deny, then conceal homosexual feelings, but eventually this gives way to the emergence of same-sex attraction and experimentation with being gay and the gay culture. Eventually, if one progresses through the stages, the integration of a homosexual identity leads to a sense of self-acceptance. While most of the authors of these models describe the coming-out process in a stage-like fashion, there is also an acceptance that identity development is fluid and not necessarily a linear process, but rather occurs in fits and starts (Savin-Williams, 1990).

Moreover, the actual differences, such as the number of stages, inherent in these models underscores the difficulty of referring to only one of them, to comprehend the complex and culturally located process of sexual identity
development. Despite the number of models and their potentially useful representation of homosexual identity formation, the majority of them lack empirical support and are largely cross sectional, retrospective accounts from small samples, generally involving white American gay male adults during the late 1970s (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). These models may therefore be inadequate representations of the developmental trajectories and issues that face the current cohort of gay, lesbian or bisexual teenagers in either Western or non-Western cultures.

All of these models developed either out of direct qualitative interviews, or ad hoc accounts from others’ interviews, but have not been subject to rigorous empirical testing with culturally different or larger samples, employing longitudinal designs. In other words, the models have not been tested for accuracy, validity or generalisability beyond their authors’ original studies and conceptualisation. The only stage model to date that has been subject to limited empirical testing is Cass’ (1979) homosexual identity formation (HIF) model and therefore is the only model outlined in any detail in this review. Despite the lack of robust and repeated empirical testing, and in light of a lack of other empirically supported models, it is anticipated that Cass’ model may serve as a useful and relevant heuristic in later chapters, when considering the difficulties that SSAY face as they attempt to navigate the issue of homophobic bullying in secondary schools.

Cass’ (1979) model describes the acquisition of a homosexual identity as a potentially positive and continual process. The first stage (identity confusion), relates to the awareness that one’s thoughts, affect, and actions are
understood as homosexual in spite of a perceived unacceptability, and the unquestioned assumption of one’s heterosexuality. The decision to proceed to stage two (identity comparison) invariably entails accepting one’s probable homosexuality, and intensified alienation when comparing oneself to heterosexuals. The conflict at this stage is between a homosexual identity and one’s actual behaviour. Stage three (identity tolerance) goes beyond merely sexual behaviour and involves seeking out others for social, emotional as well as sexual-need fulfilment. This stage includes ambivalence regarding one’s social role or presented identity; attempts are made to pass as heterosexual among heterosexuals, while presenting as homosexual only among other homosexuals.

Progression to stage four (identity acceptance) hinges on one’s acceptance of one’s sexual orientation and usually entails increasing contact with the gay subculture and the growth of personal networks (Cass, 1979). Although self-acceptance has increased considerably by this stage, attempts continue to conceal one’s homosexuality and pass as heterosexual, especially amidst perceived rejection. If the negative stigma associated with homosexuality has been overcome, foreclosure or stagnation at this stage gives way to stage five (identity pride). The dichotomy here concerns a black/white worldview of oppressed versus oppressor, fuelled by anger towards the perception and realisation of a homophobic society. Disclosure of one’s sexual orientation enables self-validation; if others’ reactions are positive, this defuses the expectation of rejection, leading to the sixth and final stage (identity synthesis). Here, one is forced to relinquish core assumptions about rejection
due to one’s sexual orientation, leading to greater self-acceptance, whereby homosexuality is only one component of one’s personality. Concealing one’s sexual orientation is increasingly futile as one’s homosexual identity merges with other aspects of one’s life. The model outlines the importance of positive and accepting reactions from others, as same-sex attracted individuals make the difficult decision to come out, and fully integrate and accept their sexual orientations.

Despite the abovementioned criticisms of stage models and limited empirical testing, the HIF (Cass, 1979) has since been used, albeit in few published studies, as the basis of research into homosexual identity formation. Attempting to assess the correlation between psychosocial wellbeing and the development of a homosexual identity, Halpin and Allen (2004) plotted the psychosocial wellbeing of an internet-recruited, geographically diverse sample of 425 self-identified gay men on the HIF. Specifically, in keeping with Cass’ model, gay men in the earlier stages would hypothetically experience greater levels of psychological distress manifested as loneliness, lower self-esteem, and less satisfaction overall, whereas those in latter stages would express opposite levels across these domains (Halpin & Allen). Measurement instruments included the ‘Depression-Happiness Scale’ which assesses moods over the past seven days, the ‘Satisfaction with Life Scale’, and the ‘UCLA Loneliness Scale’ which all had internal consistencies of (.93, .87 and .94) respectively. A final scale, the ‘Gay Identity Questionnaire’ developed by Brady and Busse (1994) comprises 45 items intended to represent the six phases of the HIF model. Contrary to expectations, results indicated that
respondents situating themselves in the middle stages actually experienced the highest levels of distress, compared to those in both early and later stages.

Although Halpin and Allen (2004) did not reveal the psychometric properties of the ‘Gay Identity Questionnaire’, there are a number of potential explanations for the findings. Based on Cass’ (1979) theory, the earlier-stage subjects would most likely have been closeted and/or guarded about revealing their sexual orientations to close others, thus being protected from the potential stress, rejection and hostile responses accompanying avowing membership to a stigmatised group (Meyer, 1995). Indeed, the confusion inherent in the earlier stages of one’s homosexual identity formation may not be as stressful as disclosure, entailing perceived or actual rejection, which is a feature of the middle stages of the model, as one begins embracing one’s sexual identity.

Respondents’ reports in the later stages of the model confirm that, at least for this sample, gay men had high self-esteem, lower loneliness levels and were relatively content (Halpin & Allen, 2004), indicating that perhaps one’s adaptation to anti-gay sentiment is also linked to a secure sense of self as a gay person. Importantly, the research supports the notion that the effects of a negative social environment (homophobia and heterosexism) influence adopting a successful homosexual identity, which is consequently associated with psychological distress. The results imply that less stress in the early stages of one’s homosexual identity formation is due to not having disclosed one’s sexual orientation too early. However, limited descriptive information concerning the sample’s school-aged respondents prohibits concluding with any certainty that the youngest respondents in the first stages of the Cass
(1979) model did not experience distress – irrespective of their known sexual orientation as a result of homophobic bullying. Finally, Halpin and Allen’s study is cross-sectional and therefore cannot assess the validity of Cass’ model in its entirety.

In another study, Fassinger and Miller (1996) attempted to test whether the Cass (1979) model could correctly discriminate the developmental stage of sexual-minority adults’ \(M\) age = 34.14, \(SD = 6.91\) (107 female and 31 male) according to four of her six stages. The last four stages were believed to better represent the adult population and so were the only ones applicable to this study. The researchers developed the ‘Attitudes Towards Sexual Orientation Scale’, a 12-item scale whose items reflect the last four stages of the HIF model. The overall scale was reported as having good internal consistency \(\alpha = .83\). Based on a factor analysis, questionnaire items based on the third, fourth and fifth stages of the model loaded onto the first factor and accounted for nearly 37 per cent of the variance. This first factor was labelled the unintegrated stage. Questionnaire items based on the sixth stage of the model accounted for 11.46 per cent of the variance and this second factor was labelled the integrated stage. Results revealed that participants could not be placed into one of the four discrete last stages of the Cass model, but rather perceived their own sexual orientation identity as two-phased. In this sample, the majority of participants endorsed items together that reflected an unintegrated sexual orientation identity.

While Fassinger and Miller (1996) conclude that their study does not support the four last stages of Cass’ six stage model when applied to a group of
adults, because they did not discriminate between these stages, a number of limitations apply to their study. First, unlike Cass’ original sample, the overwhelming majority of participants in this study were gay women and so it is feasible that Cass’ model is only applicable to gay men. One of the problems with trying to gauge in which developmental stage a non-heterosexual identifies, is that sexual orientation and its disclosure is usually a function of a given situation or context (D’Augelli, 1994). For example, one may be quite comfortable with one’s sexual orientation in general, but then feel the need to move back into the closet in certain situations depending on the safety and potential for violence or rejection (D’Augelli, 1994). These factors are generally not adequately considered in stage models of sexual identity development. Finally, the cross-sectional design of Fassinger and Miller’s (1996) study and their choice to exclude adolescents, makes it impossible to ascertain the validity of Cass’ model as a holistic model of sexual identity development.

Despite the lack of longitudinal data and the limitations of earlier studies, the implications of Cass’ (1979) model underline the importance of progressing through one’s homosexual identity development to more functional stages, which simultaneously involve greater levels of self-acceptance. However, the importance of contextual factors cannot be ignored. According to Cass, even the earlier stages of the model imply that self-acceptance is a function of social and emotional support, and that progression to more advanced stages requires one to come out, which counteracts the future expectation of rejection, fostering greater self-validation. It is likely that the experience of homophobic
bullying poses a serious challenge to SSAY. Without the socioemotional support and positive coming out experiences that Cass identifies as linked to self-acceptance, SSAY risk identity foreclosure and the potential for self-rejection, which the literature cited in chapter two highlights, has the potential to significantly impact psychological wellbeing.

It is these contextual factors together with a rejection of the stage-like sequence of sexual orientation development that propelled D’Augelli (1994) to develop a life-span model of identity development. This model accounts for the fluid, back and forth movement of identity development over one’s entire life, in light of perceived and real barriers to the expression of one’s sexual minority status, such as repressive laws, contextual homophobia and a lack of visible role models. D’Augelli proposed six processes of identity formation in his model: Exiting heterosexual identity; developing a personal gay, lesbian or bisexual (glb) identity; developing a glb social status; becoming a glb offspring; developing a glb intimacy status, and joining a glb community.

Unlike the stage models, this life span model attempts to include more than one sexual minority status, and underscores the fluid nature of sexual-identity development by considering the impact on one’s identity of one’s parents and family, the wider glb community and partner status. For example, one may identify as gay and have a same-sex partner, but still be closeted at work or with various members of one’s biological family – something that stage models do not adequately consider. Although, as with the stage models, there is no longitudinal support for D’Augelli’s (1994) model, there is some longitudinal support for the notion that difficulties achieving an integrated
sexual minority identity may have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing (e.g. Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2011). This concept will be taken up again in the following chapter where research into the nature and impact of homophobia and homophobic bullying are explored.

1.7 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has identified salient models of homophobia, the stress caused by homophobia, and homosexual identity formation. These are based on Herek’s (1987a) theory of the functions of homophobia, Meyer’s (1995) model of Minority Stress and Cass’ (1979) HIF model. According to Meyer’s theory, the Minority Stress experienced by gay males impacts on the perceptions that they have of themselves, as well as potentially affecting a number of psychosocial variables including dread, anxiety, sadness, self-esteem, guilt and suicidal ideation. Although Meyer’s (1995) study related solely to an adult male population, the research literature reviewed in subsequent chapters will explore the psychosocial effects of homophobic school-bullying among adolescents, as a result of being perceived as gay or gender-role non-conforming. It is conceivable that the effects of homophobic bullying are particularly acute for many SSAY grappling with their psychosexual development, in light of a newfound awareness of an emerging homosexual identity, and the competing messages of homophobia, both from society and in the school environment (Gonsiorek, 1988).

The research outlined in this chapter also supports the model of Herek’s (1987a) functions of homophobia which will be used in subsequent chapters,
including the empirical component of this thesis. The research presented a positive correlation between the use of immature defence mechanisms and levels of homophobia in adolescent males in a same-sex school environment (Lewis & White, 2009), and there was evidence of rejecting those boys who did not meet socially prescribed notions of masculinity, precisely because this equated with being perceived to be gay (Nayak & Kehily, 1996; Plummer, 2001). If anti-homophobia programs are to successfully reduce homophobia then they should address youths’ assumptions about the nature of masculinity, and the way defensive, socially and value-expressive functions of homophobia (Herek, 1987a) are played out within the context of school-based homophobic bullying.

The next chapter will focus on the bullying aspect of homophobia. It will highlight how homophobic bullying is a distinct class of bullying with particular consequences and maintaining factors. As such, homophobic bullying ought not to be classified together with general school-bullying. The chapter commences by defining school-bullying which is not necessarily based on homophobia, nor directed at those youths perceived to be same-sex attracted, and explores its dynamics and predicting variables. It then leads into a discussion of the extent to which general school-bullying differs from homophobic bullying, and applies this distinction to a consideration of the specific barriers to addressing homophobic bullying in secondary schools.
Chapter 2  School-bullying and Adolescent Homophobia

2.1 Chapter Overview

School-bullying is a broad term encompassing direct forms of bullying such as physical and verbal aggression (acts of violence, name-calling, insults), and indirect forms such as deliberate exclusion (from peer group activities, spreading deleterious rumours), or property damage (Rigby, 2002). Above all, school-bullying involves a systematic power imbalance between bully and victim. According to Rigby, the perpetrator both enjoys harming others, while often experiencing elevated status or position at the victim’s expense, who invariably perceives the unjustified behaviour as hurtful and detrimental. It has been suggested that the negative consequences to victims of bullying are worsened by its stability – the same children often continue to be bullied repeatedly (Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2007). Not surprisingly, the victims of school-bullying tend to under-achieve academically, in addition to suffering a range of emotional consequences such as higher rates of depression, anxiety, social isolation and low self-esteem (Dempsey & Storch, 2008).

Parallel to the negative effects on victims, bullying behaviour can also have a negative impact on bullies including peer rejection, poor academic performance, depression and conduct problems including criminal activity and delinquency (Paul & Cillessen, 2007). In all, bullying seems to set in motion a cycle of negative consequences. Even those children who witness incidences of bullying have reported anger, sadness, and guilt (Batsche & Porter, 2006).
This chapter will begin by examining both the similarities and differences between general school-bullying and compare this to homophobic school-bullying. It will be argued that while the dynamics of both types of school-bullying appear to be gendered, and can be explained with reference to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), psychodynamic theory may also be pertinent to explaining homophobic bullying because of the underlying psychological distress to these bullies in the face of SSAY, or those suspected of being non-heterosexual (West, 1977). A number of constructs have also been identified which clearly differentiate homophobic bullying from general bullying, in terms of the impact on victims, the types of victims that are targeted, and the behaviour of the bullies.

The chapter then discusses some of the key barriers to addressing homophobic bullying in secondary schools, and the lack of support often experienced by SSAY in light of perceived rejection. Relevant research will be used to highlight the way gender-roles and notions of masculinity intersect, to socialise individuals into a culture of homophobia which will be further drawn out in subsequent sections, as the chapter focuses on secondary-school homophobic bullying. Finally, the chapter draws on research which explores and documents the lived realities of school-life for many SSAY, and the psychosocial impact of homophobia on these youths’ everyday lives. In subsequent chapters, there will be a return to the theories and research highlighted in this and the previous chapter, to ascertain the adequacy of existing anti-homophobia interventions.
2.2 The Predictors of Bullying

According to social learning theory, human beings learn behaviour from imitating, observing and modelling each other (Bandura, 1977). Bandura explains this in terms of ‘reciprocal determinism’, or the continual interplay between the environment and the individual. The theory can be applied to school-bullying because bullies are believed to assume these roles, based on both individual and contextual factors. In keeping with Bandura’s theory and in attempting to identify and rate the strength of both contextual and individual predictors of school-based bullying, Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim and Sadek (2010) conducted a meta-analysis involving a final sample of 153 studies of bullying. Inclusion criteria consisted of published studies in English, that included at least one quantitative research study related to either the predictor variables of bullying, or victims of bullying in children and adolescents without an intellectual disability. Studies were published between 1970 and 2006.

The effect sizes for each study for any given predictor were aggregated into one effect size, and the average weighted effect size estimates were reported in terms of Pearson’s $r$. Results indicated that the strongest individual variables predicting bullying, were defiant, aggressive and uncontrollable (externalising) behaviours ($r = .34$) and thoughts, normative beliefs, feelings and attitudes about others (cognitions related to others) ($r = -.34$), both of which were considered medium in strength, following Cohen (1988). Strongest contextual predictors of bulling were the perceived influence of important peers ($r = -.34$) and community factors such as socioeconomic indicators, violence, crime and drug trafficking ($r = -.22$). Effect sizes for both these sets
of predictors were medium in strength. Conversely the weakest effect sizes for predictors of bullying applied to cognitions related to self including thoughts, beliefs and attitudes about oneself including self-efficacy and self-esteem ($r = -0.07$) and internalising behaviours including over-controlled avoidant, depressive or withdrawn responses ($r = 0.12$).

In terms of predictors of being a victim, both peer status (including popularity with peers) ($r = -0.35$) and social competence (including skills required to interact well with others) ($r = -0.30$) produced the largest effect sizes. These were followed by the school climate ($r = -0.16$) which included the perceived respect students had from teachers, and feelings of safety and belonging to the school. In addition to the most important effect sizes summarised, the studies reviewed by Cook et al. (2010) demonstrated a number of attributes typically held by bullies including resorting to externalising behaviours, deficits in social competence and holding negative cognitions and attitudes towards others. Victims tended to display internalising behaviours, have social skill deficits, and perceived the school environment as unsupportive. If interventions are successful in reducing school-based bullying, then it is likely that they would have to address both the identified individual and contextual factors that contribute to its promulgation.

While Cook et al.’s (2010) review did not consider the actual content of bullying behaviour, or what percentage of victims identified as same-sex attracted or non-heterosexual, it is possible that some of the bullying may have been motivated by homophobia. For example, negative attitudes towards others and the influence of one’s peers were both classified as moderate predictors of
being a bully across these studies. Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function outlined in chapter one, explains how the influence of peers is so crucial to understanding bullying and in these studies, peer approval seems to have played an integral role. Parallel to this, the lack of support that victims articulated across studies is in keeping with research on SSAY, which suggests that they do not have access to adequate provisions of support at school (Hillier et al., 1998; Hillier, Turner, & Mitchell, 2005).

In keeping with the idea that peer acceptance plays an integral role in bullying behaviours, O’Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) examined the processes of peer approval within the school playground from a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977). Naturalistic video and remote audio recordings were taken of school children’s activity over three years. The study involved approximately 120 children of both sexes, aged between five and twelve years in two Canadian schools. O’Connell et al. refer to social learning theory to explain how school children model others’ bullying behaviour, especially when they are perceived to be strong, powerful, threatening and in charge. In parallel, the theory also highlights the barriers to students’ defending victims. Conceivably, only students with a high enough social status (i.e. school leaders or popular children) intervene on behalf of victims: their preferential social status is perceived as being equal to, or greater than that of the bully (O’Connell et al.).

The data indicated positive correlations between bullies’ decisions to engage in bullying behaviour and positive reinforcement from onlookers or participants. The latter’s participation had a secondary effect of elevating their
perceived power and becoming the bully’s accomplice. In this study, bullies were reinforced 20 per cent of the time by peers who actively encouraged them, while peers intervened in only 25 per cent of each bullying event. Such intervention was more likely undertaken by females than males. O’Connell et al. posit that according to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), passive participants both reinforce bullies’ motivations for bullying, and sustain their behaviour, fostering repeated bullying episodes.

In keeping with Bandura’s (1977) theory, that bullying is learnt behaviour which is reinforced, Salmivalli, Bjorkqvist, Osterman and Kaukiainen (1996) asked 573 young adolescents aged 12 to 13 years across 11 Finnish schools to rate both themselves and their class peers, according to potential roles in relation to bullying events. The data produced a typology of participant roles in bullying scenarios including Ringleaders (initiators), Followers (who perceive this as an invitation to participate), Reinforcers (who encourage the bully or bullies from the sidelines), Defenders (who assist the victim), Bystanders (who may watch without participating or encouraging), and the Victims. According to the data, these children played out relatively fixed bullying roles – boys were more often classified as Reinforcers or Assistants, and girls as Outsiders and Defenders in overt aggressive bullying scenarios. It appears that in addition to the inherent group dynamics of school based bullying, those acts most likely to lead to overt aggression were more often carried out by boys than girls, in front of onlookers.

Other than the roles these children took up in bullying scenarios, the researchers did not gather information on the nature of the bullying, thereby
possibly diluting it. It is quite possible that the bullying was based on homophobic slurs or exclusion due to perceived difference. In this case, psychodynamic theory may be better able to explain bullying than social learning theory, because as previously explained in chapter one, homophobic bullying in adolescents tends to occur at a time when these youths are trying to come to terms with their psycho-sexual identities. Homophobic bullying may therefore be partly explained by the intra-psychic conflict that is believed to arise as a result of unacceptable cognitions and affect related to homosexuality, or the perceived difference (from heterosexuality) that some youths embody, especially when there is a co-occurring sense of inadequacy regarding one’s self-concept of heterosexuality (Herek, 1984a, 1987a).

Despite occasionally acknowledging homophobia in research on general school-bullying (Rigby, 2002; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003), most studies on the subject do not adequately address bullying which is premised on homophobia (e.g. involving verbal and physical abuse with known homophobic slurs) aimed primarily at those youths perceived to be gay or lesbian, or not displaying the stereotypical traits of heterosexuality (Smith, Smith, Osborn, & Samara, 2008). If research into school-bullying does not explicate the exact nature of bullying, and that any of this bullying is based on homophobia and directed at youth who are either known to be, or believed to be gay or lesbian, then this simultaneously impedes actions to address the potential barriers to tackling homophobic bullying within the school system. The following section draws on research which attempts to define homophobic bulling and expose some of the obstacles to addressing it in schools.
2.3 The Dynamics of Homophobic Bullying

As argued previously, treating all forms of school-bullying in the same manner could serve to disguise or diminish the hostility of specific homophobic bullying towards SSAY as it occurs in adolescence. According to Mishna, Newman, Daley, and Solomon (2007), the failure to distinguish homophobic bullying from other forms of bullying may also ignore other associated and well-documented factors such as an intolerance of difference in others, the development of a particular type of masculine identity, rigid notions of gender and gender role behaviour (Mac an Ghaill, 1994) and Herek’s (1987a) social, value and defensive functions of homophobia previously outlined in chapter one.

Homophobia and its associated fear of stigmatisation as homosexual, maintains not only a fear of homosexuality in others and in oneself (Card, 1990; Herek, 1987a), but also gender role conformity (Neisen, 1990). This is especially so in males; within the broader context of heterosexism, male gender role conformity represents the masculine (and heterosexual) ideal. On the other hand, if male gender role non-conformity represents non-masculinity, implying a lesser status (Britton, 1990; Card, 1990), gender non-conforming males should be rejected (Neisen). Parallel to placing men and women in unequal social positions, the socially constructed and inflexible sex roles dictated by a heterosexist society have the potential to impede gay and straight relationships alike, because they define socially acceptable barriers to emotional and physical intimacy between members of the same sex (Neisen).
Homophobia and heterosexism play a determining role in an individual’s negative reactions and behaviour towards others. The extant literature contains many examples of studies exploring adolescents’ use of homophobic epithets and language including ‘fag’, ‘faggot’, ‘queer’, ‘lesbo’, or the expression ‘you’re so gay’ to denigrate each other at school (e.g. D’Augelli, Pilkington & Hershberger, 2002; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett & Koenig, 2008; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz & Bartkiewicz, 2010; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Mishna et al., 2007; O’Brian & Hohnke, 2007; Ollis, Mitchell, Watson, Hillier & Walsh, 2001; Poteat, 2008; Smith, 2003; Thurlow, 2001), and also in university settings (D’Augelli, 1989; D’Augelli & Rose, 1990; Meghan-Burn, 2000). While such terms necessarily imply that non-heterosexuality is inferior, this type of language is usually, although not always, employed by males directed towards other male SSAY and others (including heterosexual youth) who do not readily conform to strict, culturally condoned gender stereotypes, as acts of aggression, or because one’s peer group endorses and promotes homophobic slurs.

Yet, parallel to the idea that homophobic bullying entails the use of particular homophobic slurs towards particular non-gender role conforming youth, one study suggests that the use of these terms does not necessarily reflect homophobic attitudes or anti-gay sentiment. For example, Meghan-Burn (2000) surveyed 257 American self-identified heterosexual undergraduate males and females aged 18 to 40 years, ($M = 19.39, SD = 2.39$), the majority of whom self-identified as Euro-American (73 per cent), to ascertain how often they used homophobic epithets, and whether they understood this language as
homophobic and discriminatory. In keeping with the notion that homophobic slurs are more often employed by males, results indicated a greater propensity to use homophobic slurs among males than females \( t(246) = 5.73, p < .001 \); (males, \( M = 3.49, SD = 1.20 \); females, \( M = 2.66, SD = 1.07 \) (Cohen's \( d = .73 \)).

Although the majority of males in this sample frequently employed anti-gay sentiment to proclaim and promote their heterosexist notions of masculinity, not all of these males were strongly homophobic. In fact, only half of those males who employed homophobic slurs were strongly homophobic, indicating that the remaining males may have behaved in homophobic ways to impress others. Endorsing both Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function of homophobia, and the notion that males tend to employ homophobic terms more than females, the study highlighted the way that males tended to mimic their male friends’ homophobia more than females \( t(249) = 8.35, p < .001 \); (males, \( M = 4.11, SD = 1.82 \); females, \( M = 2.38, SD = 1.39 \) (Cohen’s \( d = 1.08 \)), even when only about half of these males were strongly homophobic.

Importantly, those males who were outwardly homophobic yet did not necessarily consider themselves to be anti-gay, also indicated that the study made them more aware of the potential negative impact of homophobic language on gay people, compared to those whose attitudes matched their homophobic behaviours \( t(61) = -2.41, p < .01 \), (external conformity group \( M = 3.54, SD = 1.72 \)); (anti-gay group \( M = 2.50, SD = 1.72 \) (Cohen’s \( d = .61 \)). Although this study was based on a sample of university students rather than adolescent school-students, it demonstrates the way outward displays of homophobia such as the use of slurs, do not necessarily reflect core beliefs
about homosexuality, and the potential for education to change beliefs about homophobia, especially where the impact of this type of prejudice has not been previously considered.

Reflecting the idea that homophobic terms are used without consideration of their detrimental impact, Thurlow (2001) asked a total of \( n = 377 \), (191 males and 186 females) aged between 14 to 15 years, to list the most commonly heard pejoratives and rank them according to perceived strength and taboo. While the number of homophobic pejoratives only represented 10 per cent of the total items \( n = 590 \) (including sexist, racist, and phallocentric), less than a third of the homophobic terms were rated by participants as most taboo, whereas for example, 55 per cent of racist terms were considered as such. This disparity in ratings of homophobic vs. racist terms was also statistically significantly different \( t(376) = 7.385, p < .001 \). Overall, homophobic terms were not perceived as taboo or as serious as racist terms, yet compared to girls, boys considered homophobic terms more taboo, and therefore more insulting \( t(309) = 4.096, p < .001 \). Ironically, this was despite acknowledgment that they thoroughly avoided being the brunt of homophobic epithets, given their perception of gay and lesbian youths as social outcasts (Thurlow). Thus, while homophobic epithets are an accepted hate-speech, many youths will continue to employ them, either because they have not considered them to be a form of serious prejudice, or as a conscious means by which to dominate and hurt others.

Homophobic bullying is not restricted to verbal abuse and can also extend to property damage, social exclusion, and physical attacks (e.g
D’Augelli et al., 2002; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; Poteat, 2008; Smith, 1998; Tharinger & Wells, 2000). The use of homophobic slurs usually accompanies targeting particular students, who are then repeatedly harassed, and in some cases physically beaten (Hillier et al, 1998, 2005). For example, in the second Australia-wide report of its kind, Hillier et al. (2005) conducted a study involving 1749 self-identified SSAY between the ages of 17 and 21 across home, community and school settings. Participants completed online surveys comprising both quantitative and qualitative components. The aim was to assess the extent of the effects and prevalence of homophobia compared to that expressed by the previous study’s cohort, and in particular to explore continued shortcomings in school policy. Reflecting the responses articulated by the prior cohort (Hillier et al., 1998), the 2005 sample of SSAY consistently perceived their schools as the most unsafe environment (Hillier et al., 2005). Seventy-four per cent of homophobic abuse (physical and verbal) allegedly occurred at school; this figure was significantly higher for males (80%) than for females (48%). Most alarming were those respondents’ reports of teachers’ inaction to witnessed homophobic abuse, suggesting the need to engage teachers in anti-homophobia intervention training.

A similar large scale national research project was conducted across 48 states of North America involving 887 SSAY (Kosciw, 2004). Participants were recruited via online surveys, community-based and youth advocacy organisations. Key findings underscore widespread homophobia in American secondary schools. Eighty-four per cent of SSAY reported experiencing verbal
harassment (threats or insults) on campus. The vast majority (91 per cent) reported frequently overhearing homophobic epithets (‘fag’, ‘faggot’, ‘dyke’, ‘lesbo’, or the expression ‘that’s gay’) to imply stupidity or inferiority, even if these were not directed at the target individual. A total of 58 per cent of SSAY had property stolen or damaged based on their perceived difference. Furthermore, the youths in Kosciw’s research reported only a three per cent intervention rate among teachers having overheard homophobic verbal abuse. Similarly, no teacher intervention allegedly occurred on 37 per cent of occasions. These youths reported hearing homophobic epithets used by staff themselves 18 per cent of the time. Thirty-nine per cent of these youths also reported suffering physical abuse directly linked to their perceived or known sexual orientation. Such physical abuse included being punched, hit, kicked, shoved, attacked with a weapon, and forms of sexual harassment including inappropriate touching. Accordingly, over 64 per cent of the youths surveyed reported feeling unsafe at school, which primarily resulted in occasional, yet systematic truancy to avoid further humiliation. Overall, 28 per cent of these youths admitted to missing an entire day of school in the past month due to homophobic bullying.

In their latest research, Kosciw et al. (2010) surveyed over seven thousand SSAY across American schools. Key findings from across their study reveal that while there was a tendency towards a reduction in the frequency with which students overheard homophobic slurs, SSAY or those suspected of being gay or lesbian continued to experience homophobic bullying to a similar extent as in the previous study. For example, approximately 60 per cent of
these youths felt unsafe at school, over 80 per cent had been verbally abused, and about 40 per cent physically abused at some point in the year prior to the study. Thirty per cent had missed a class of school in the past month prior to the study due to concerns over safety.

Mirroring the large scale Australian and American studies into homophobic bullying in secondary schools, Stonewall UK conducted surveys of 1145 SSAY about their school experiences of homophobia (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Their findings revealed that two thirds of all participants self-reported being a victim of homophobic bullying in the year prior to the study. Of these youths, 92 per cent of SSAY experienced verbal abuse related to being gay or perceived to be gay (e.g. ‘poof’, ‘dyke’, ‘queer’, ‘bender’) or the word ‘gay’ was used in a derogatory way. A further 41 per cent were physically abused including being punched, kicked, and having objects thrown at them. A further 17 per cent received death threats. Males were more likely to experience physical forms of homophobic bullying, than females (40% vs. 33%). Nearly 80 per cent of the perpetrators of homophobic bullying were male, compared to just over 50 per cent of females. When these incidents occurred in the presence of other students, they were ignored over 60 per cent of the time by those same students. Perhaps more alarming, educators ignored examples of student to student homophobic bullying in nearly half of all incidents. In addition to highlighting the ongoing climate of hostility towards SSAY in schools both locally and internationally, Hillier et al.’s (1998, 2005), Kosciw’s (2004), Kosciw et al.’s (2010), and Hunt and Jensen’s (2007) research supports the actual discrimination and harassment subtheme of Myer’s Model of Minority
Stress (1995) articulated in chapter one. In the next section, the psychosocial effects of being a victim of homophobic bullying will be outlined.

2.4 The Psychosocial Effects of Homophobic Bullying

Regardless of the reasons that adolescents continue to resort to homophobic bullying, the literature suggests that homophobia continues to pollute educational settings, and that SSAY interpret this as a form of hurtful prejudice, leading to self-contempt, internalised homophobia and other forms of psychological distress including suicide (Bos et al., 2008; McNamee, 2006; Rosario et al., 2011). Parallel to this, a number of Commonwealth Acts including the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act, the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act and the 1986 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act outline legislation aimed at both promoting inclusion and protecting students from disadvantages based on gender, poverty, or cultural and linguistic diversity, including sexual orientation (O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007). In addition to such Commonwealth Acts, state and territory laws also make illegal, discrimination based on sexual orientation. For example, the 1995 Victorian Equal Opportunity Act includes discrimination based on the basis of sexual orientation in both primary and secondary schools, including discrimination between staff and students, as well as among students (Ollis et al., 2001). It could be argued that one of the consequences of these Acts, is that enabling homophobic discrimination through inaction is tantamount to assisting that discrimination (Ollis et al.). The existing legislation should oblige schools to provide safe and secure places of learning for all students, regardless of their perceived or actual sexual orientation, or risk potential legal sanctions. In parallel, a vast body of
empirical research demonstrates that such Acts have limited impact on the lived realities of a substantial portion of SSAY in today’s secondary school system (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007; Russell, Seif & Truong, 2001; Stover, 1992).

In their report on Australian suicide among SSAY, Dyson et al., (2003) stated that completed suicides were one of the main causes of death among 15-24 year olds, yet attempted suicide may be up to six times more prevalent in SSAY, than in the general population, with homophobic bullying being a major contributing factor. In terms of some of the psychosocial effects that homophobic bullying can engender, Hillier et al.’s (2005) victims of homophobic abuse were more likely to report a sexually transmissible infection (STI), engage in self-harming behaviours and use alcohol and illicit drugs than SSAY who were not victims of such abuse. Thirty-five per cent of respondents had either contemplated or completed self-harm as a coping device, stemming from their reports of negative affect following homophobic abuse, while of these self-harmers, 64 per cent of male and 23 per cent of female SSAY reported either considering suicide or actually attempted it in response to the emotional pain of being ridiculed for their sexual orientations.

In another large scale research project across Northern Ireland, same-sex attracted men with a mean age of 20 years were up to 30 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexuals their age, due to their appraisals of the accumulated impact of homophobia (McNamee, 2006). Twenty-seven per cent of the 190 respondents reported having attempted suicide, while over 70 per cent had considered it, in direct response to homophobic abuse and the
depressive feelings that it engendered. A further 64 per cent had engaged in self-harming behaviour which was reported as a reaction to internalised homophobia, or the unacceptability of their sexual orientation as per societal homophobia (McNamee).

In Hunt and Jensen’s (2007) study, approximately 70 per cent of those SSAY surveyed and who were also victims to homophobic bullying, reported that it had had a negative impact on their school work, and one in five had missed a day of school more than six times in the past year. In the qualitative data analysis component of their research, excerpts revealed the extent to which homophobic bullying had a profound negative impact on some of these students. In some cases, physical violence led to hospitalisation which then led to absenteeism: ‘On three occasions I have been assaulted and had to go to hospital to be examined and get the police involved’ (Ali, 17, p. 5). ‘...beaten up, unable to walk for nearly a year, only recovering after an operation’ (Jamelia, 18, p.5). For another student, being subject to repeated homophobic bullying at a time when she was in the throes of coming to terms with an emerging homosexual orientation, led to depression and suicidal ideation, ‘I was not aware of my sexuality at the time and girls called me lesbian and bullied me severely which made me depressed and suicidal’ (Saffron, 19, p. 6). And reflecting the data, 12 per cent of respondents also experienced sexual assault, as the following excerpt highlights, ‘The worst experience [of this] I had was a straight lad coming to sit next to me and touching my leg to wind me up. It was an invasion of personal space and very intimidating’, (Alex, 18, p. 6).
Meyer’s (1995) model is supported by the previously outlined research in the following ways: there was a direct link in Hillier et al.’s (1998, 2005) research between one of Meyer’s sources of Minority Stress (the lived experiences of homophobic discrimination) and the resulting negative affect. In McNamee’s study, the second source of Meyer’s Minority Stress (internalised homophobia) was associated with self-harming behaviours, attempted suicide and suicidal ideation. Although data are not available on the other mental health constructs measured by Meyer including guilt and AIDS-related traumatic stress, it is conceivable that feelings of guilt were present, yet not overtly stated by participants in the studies under review, and that negative affect related to AIDS is more pertinent to the older cohort of participants in Meyer’s original sample, at a time when AIDS related illness was more prevalent and personally relevant. Nevertheless, based on Hillier et al.’s (2005) study, being the victim of homophobic bullying seems to be a factor in acquiring an STI, which may include HIV, potentially related to a lack of concern about one’s health.

Although it would seem that being the victim of homophobia is associated with considerable distress in SSAY, it is conceivable that not all victims of homophobia react in self-destructive ways, and may experience particular protective factors, and that a percentage of the youths previously surveyed harboured pre-existing psychological disorders. None of the studies under review considered, or attempted to measure respondents’ prior levels of depression, the presence of personality disorders or any other psychological variables that may have predisposed them to suicidal ideation or attempts, in
response to their reported anguish. Despite this limitation, such large scale studies indicate that homophobic bullying in schools is reported by many SSAY to not only be widespread, but still tolerated by schools, peers and school staff – a potential (and apparently inadequate) source of psychological support (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005), at least insofar as these studies are concerned. In the following section, the potential barriers to adequately addressing homophobic bullying are explored.

2.5 Barriers to Attenuating Homophobic Bullying in Schools

In light of a dearth of research which specifically explores the barriers to systematically addressing homophobic bullying in schools, Mishna et al., (2007) interviewed nine same-sex attracted youth workers, including social workers and counsellors aged between 25 and 44 years, about their perceptions of the prevalence, sites and other mitigating factors surrounding the victimisation of SSAY in the secondary school system in Toronto, Canada. Three major themes emerged from the data relating to the barriers to addressing homophobia in secondary schools: ‘denial’ (the plight of SSAY is largely ignored); ‘dilution’ (treating all forms of bullying in the same manner dilutes the issue of homophobic bullying) and ‘fear of reprisal’ (teachers’ unwillingness to address homophobia in the face of a lack of managerial support and potential parental backlash).

Subsequently, although generalising from only a handful of participants, Mishna et al. (2007) argue that it is conceivable that these barriers may silence the voices and experiences of many SSAY, potentially fostering a climate of
denial which concretises taboos surrounding homosexuality and homophobia in schools. General anti-bullying discourse in schools that ignores homophobia may enable teachers and students alike to sidestep the issue; thus promoting the status quo and pretence that homophobia and SSAY are not included in the school body (Mishna et al.). Importantly, this may impede the development of targeted and efficacious anti-homophobia interventions (Rofes, 1989).

The inadequate provisions to protect SSAY in the majority of schools impede efforts to assist them; the onus is on these young people to want to disclose their sexual orientation to the school and to parents (Hillier et al., 2005). Yet, disclosure poses other problems. Declaring oneself same-sex attracted can lead to intractable ‘labelling’, and an invitation to further abuse (D’Augelli et al., 2002). When contextual factors denote the likelihood of a homophobic response, SSAY may feel obliged to attempt to disguise their sexual orientation as a form of self-protection, reflecting the dilemmas faced by SSAY in the earlier stages of Cass’ (1979) model.

This notion was explored in Lasser and Tharinger’s (2003) qualitative research. Twenty self-identified male and female SSAY (8 males and 12 females) aged 18 years or less ($M = 17.1$, $SD = 1.7$) were asked to describe the lived realities of their school experiences. Thematic analyses of the data revealed a process the researchers tentatively named ‘A theory of visibility management’. This dynamic differs markedly from the act of coming out because unlike the latter, the former relies on a complex interactive process involving a series of cognitive and carefully orchestrated decisions about one’s environment (Lasser & Tharinger). The majority of respondents mentioned
continually and actively monitoring their own and others’ behaviour before deciding to come out – constantly checking body language, dress, speech, verbal references, and eye gaze. Both subtle and overt cues indicated others’ willingness and readiness to accept gay and lesbian individuals. Particular people in many of these youths’ entourage were deemed unsafe, rendering disclosure a function of each and every social interaction, engendering an ambivalence and stress, affecting respondents’ social networks and their potential salience.

In related research exploring youths’ notions of masculinity, homophobia and school life, Nayak and Kehily (1996) interviewed approximately 30 male students aged between 15 and 16 across two secondary schools in the UK. Emerging themes in the data suggested that at least in this sample, the monitoring of gestures and behaviours was especially pertinent. However, unlike participants in Lasser and Tharinger’s (2003) study, this self-monitoring occurred regardless of their known or perceived sexual orientation as part of a ‘performance of hyper-masculinity’ (Nayak & Kehily). The respondents acknowledged adherence to prescribed gender roles, comprising compulsory heterosexuality. Many of these participants’ narratives can be understood with reference to both Herek’s (1987a) theory and also psychodynamic theory (McWilliams, 1994). For example, in Nayak and Kehily’s study, it was reported that to be labelled ‘gay’ denoted weakness, which many boys perceived as inferior, feminine and threatening to traditional, cultured notions of masculinity. Specifically, the negative connotation these boys ascribed to homosexuality could be explained with reference to Herek’s (1987a)
experiential-schematic attitude function, in that the construct was automatically understood as negative, despite little or no actual exposure to a gay person, or gay subculture. The implication was that some boys felt the need to identify themselves as adhering to a particular ‘brand’ of masculinity because this was important to their peers, thereby confirming Herek’s socially expressive function – this behaviour simultaneously promoted them as belonging to the desirable group, while delineating themselves from those boys who did not display this much sought after trait.

However, the performance of homophobia exhibited by the youths in this study could also be understood through Herek’s defensive function of homophobia, and conceived of as an attempt to distance themselves from the fear that displays of behaviour that seem at odds with this brand of masculinity seem to provoke by relying on the defence style of projection. When one employs projection, what one experiences inside is mistakenly believed to come from someone else (or outside oneself) (McWilliams, 1994). What is projected therefore represents the disowned or negative aspects of oneself. Other boys (targets) that are perceived as gay therefore provoke these unconscious conflicts and to defend against them, they become the victims of projection in the form of homophobic bullying.

In keeping with Herek’s (1987a) theory that homophobia serves both to identify with peers, and also to defend against intra-psychic conflicts (Herek, 1986), Plummer’s (2001) study explored the retrospective attitudes held towards sexuality and homophobic prejudice while at school, among a sample of 30 young men of Anglo-Saxon origin (M age = 26), who self-identified as
heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. Some common themes emerged across the data. In this sample, homophobic epithets were perceived as weapons to deride ‘effeminate’ boys or those male non-conformists to the heterosexist, homophobic and misogynistic values promoted by some all-male groups. The data revealed that male homosexual traits included being weak, effeminate, soft, caring, special, different, and to a lesser extent, a loner and conforming to authority.

Although the previously outlined traits may or may not be associated with homosexuality, the assumption that they are linked, partially led to identifying individuals as gay. Thus, in keeping with Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function, homophobia (the use of homophobic slurs, name calling, and physical abuse) together with heterosexism, were seen to be used by some boys as boundary-setting devices to affirm one’s acceptability within the dominant group, while defending against the anxiety that the traits associated with being gay produced (Herek, 1986). Homophobia, competitiveness, displays of toughness and overt misogyny all ally some individuals (especially males) with a heterosexual ideal, while excluding and vilifying those in whom these much sought after, and socioculturally constructed traits are undetected or missing (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

Unlike the general student population, and similar to other minority groups, SSAY may lack the support of peers, teachers, and school administrators (O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007; Rofes, 1989; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005). However what is somewhat unique to SSAY is that the societal stigma surrounding homosexuality may mean that they are disinclined
to report homophobic bullying, to teachers or parents, especially if it is simultaneous with coming to terms with an emerging sexual orientation, and perceived or actual parental rejection, potentially leaving them with few, if any, support sources when needed (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Hillier et al., 2005). In the next section, parents and their reactions to a newfound knowledge of their child’s non-heterosexuality are explored because parents, like teachers and peers, all represent invaluable sources of social support to SSAY, in light of homophobia and homophobic bullying at school.

2.6 Parental Acceptance

The decision to come out or disclose same-sex attraction to parents has been acknowledged as both a unique and difficult developmental achievement for many SSAY (Cass, 1984; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Savin-Williams, 1998, 2001). For SSAY, coming out may be seen as a means ‘to be honest and stop living a lie, to open up communication, to strengthen family bonds, to deepen love, and to provide opportunities for mutual support and caring’ (Ben-Ari, 1995, p. 308). However, the idea of disclosure typically evokes apprehension and anxiety in light of perceived rejection and other negative consequences from parents. In fact, real or perceived parental homophobia can prevent many SSAY from coming out, making homophobic bullying a particularly alienating form of discrimination due to a corresponding lack of perceived parental support. SSAY are unique in this regard because youth belonging to other minority groups generally share this minority status with their parents, which may potentially facilitate an exchange of support when for example, faced with bullying that is based on racism or shared ethnicity. In contrast, parents of
SSAY are more likely to be heterosexual, the generally expected and preferred sexual orientation for their offspring (Pennington & Knight, 2011). Consequently, this fundamental difference in sexual identity could result in many SSAY not always believing that parental support will be forthcoming.

Various stage models have been proposed that attempt to account for parental reactions to their children’s coming out stories (e.g. Anderson, 1987; Bernstein, 1990; Borhek, 1993; Bozett & Sussman, 1989; Brown, 1988; DeVine, 1984; Martin, 1982; Myers, 1982; Robinson, Walters, & Skeen, 1989; Strommen, 1989). Most of these models are similar in content and propose a series of stages ranging from denial and disbelief, to eventual tolerance and acceptance. Perhaps exemplifying the inherent distress that coming out can hold for parents and youth alike, the models tend to mimic Kubler-Ross (1969) and her proposed stages of grief that typically accompany the knowledge of one’s or another’s terminal illness, although the models related to parental reactions to coming out are hypothetical and lack robust empirical support (Savin-Williams, 1998).

Importantly, the models have not been tested longitudinally and cannot account for the variety of parental reactions, cross-cultural differences, the length of time that any one parent or caregiver may stay in any one stage, and the influence of personality and educational factors (Savin-Williams, 1998). Despite these limitations, one model, with limited support, is outlined as a general model of parental acceptance to facilitate an understanding of both the potential stress for parents, and courage that must be mustered by SSAY, when contemplating announcing their emerging same-sex attraction, given the
importance of parental support in the psychological wellbeing of SSAY (DeVine, 1984; Hillier et al., 2005).

DeVine (1984) proposed five discrete stages of parental acceptance. In the subliminal awareness stage, parents suspect but do not necessarily want confirmation of their child’s sexual orientation. This is especially the case if atypical gender role characteristics are displayed. Next, the impact stage involves discovering the child’s homosexual identity, resulting in strong emotions – guilt, blame, denial and shock. The adjustment stage is somewhat of an oxymoron: the child is invariably asked to deny his or her sexual orientation to maintain the appearance of heterosexuality and respect for the family. The resolution stage represents mourning the dreams of heterosexuality parents held for their child, which are gradually and often painfully let go, as they modify their own homophobia and eventual acceptance. The integration stage involves acceptance and integrating this into how this child is thereafter perceived. Importantly, DeVine stresses that achieving the final stage of the model is contingent on whether parents are capable of attaining it. For example, these stages should be perceived as part of a systemic approach, dependent on the relationships between family members, the family’s values, and its interaction with their community. DeVine posits that parental acceptance is important to SSAY, because without it, many face rejection from home, physical and verbal abuse, humiliation and a lack of support at a crucial stage in their psychosocial development.

Despite the hypothetical nature of the model, the research suggests that parents continue to require time to process their child’s confirmation of their
sexual orientation, and that SSAY continue to believe that acceptance will not be forthcoming. Parallel to the belief that many SSAY harbour about parental rejection, there is some evidence to support the idea that particular negative psychological consequences including depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, internalised homophobia, suicide ideation and the suicide attempts of SSAY, are positively correlated with parental reactions to coming out (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, & Nye, 1999; Savin-Williams, 1989; Wong & Tang, 2004). For example, 50 per cent of the adolescent youths in Hillier et al.’s (2005) large-scale research had disclosed their sexual orientation to parents, and 40 per cent reported eventually feeling supported by them at the time of the survey, yet there was a general consensus that this process of acceptance was far from immediate, occurred gradually and required patience by all parties. Nevertheless, and perhaps most notable, approximately half of the respondents in Hillier et al.’s study had not disclosed to parents at the time of the research, possibly indicating that they feared negative reprisals.

In keeping with the expectation of the rejection subtheme of Meyer’s (1995) Minority Stress model, D’Augelli, Grossman and Starks (2005) conducted a cross sectional study comprising semi-structured interviews and surveys of 293 youth aged 15-19 years, ($M = 16.83, SD = 1.21$) recruited from three US community-based organisations providing services to SSAY. The sample was divided into youths who lived with parents who were either aware of ($n = 194$) or unaware of ($n = 99$) their child’s non-heterosexual orientation. Based on a modified version of the Kinsey scale, 23 per cent of participants reported their sexual orientations as ‘totally gay or lesbian’; 20 per cent as
‘almost totally gay or lesbian’; 21 per cent as ‘bisexual, but mostly gay or lesbian’ and 17 per cent as ‘bisexual, but equally gay or lesbian and heterosexual’; and 19 per cent as ‘bisexual, but mostly heterosexual’. One participant’s reported sexual orientation was uncertain or questioning. Overall, more males than females self-identified as gay rather than as bisexual (Cohen’s $d = .32$). Parents’ reactions were reported as equally positive and negative. For example, 55 per cent of mothers were reported as being either ‘positive or very positive’ about their sons’ non heterosexual orientation, whereas 45 per cent were ‘negative or very negative’. Neither mothers’, $[\chi^2(3, n = 190) = .80, p > .05]$, nor fathers’, $[\chi^2(3, n = 73) = 3.14, p > .05]$, reactions towards their sons or daughters were statistically significantly different.

Interestingly, youths also reported statistically significantly less internalised homophobia (Cohen’s $d = .58$), and more family support (Cohen’s $d = .71$) when parents were aware of their non-heterosexually exclusive sexual orientations as measured by the Personal Homonegativity subscale of the Revised Homophobia Attitudes Inventory (Shidlo, 1994) ($\alpha = .79$), than youths whose parents had not been told. This result indicates that it is better both psychologically and socially for non-heterosexual youth to disclose their non-heterosexual orientations to family members, and yet the study also suggests that a pervasive fear of disclosure prevents more youths from this task, which is likely due to the unpredictable reactions from parents. At the time of the research, 15 per cent of boys stated that they had not told their mothers about their non-heterosexual orientations due to a fear of parental rejection, which they believed would ultimately lead to being rejected by the family. Reasons
that youths most cited for not disclosing to fathers were either based on fear, or feeling disconnected. Girls also stated that a fear of rejection and a fear of potential disconnection in the relationship prevented their disclosure to mothers.

In this sample, just over a third of all youths had parents who were oblivious to their non-heterosexual orientations, and nearly three times as many males as females said they were very reluctant about disclosing to their fathers (46%), compared to disclosing to their mothers (16%). More girls also stated a reluctance to disclose to fathers compared to their mothers (43% vs. 35%). When parents knew about their children’s non-heterosexual orientations, it was based on their being gender atypical compared to those whose parents were unaware (Cohen’s $d = .37$). When parents suspected their son or daughter’s homosexuality, but had not been told, this also attracted statistically significantly more verbal homophobic comments from parents, when compared to youth whose parents did not suspect (Cohen’s $d = .63$). While this study exposes the notion that SSAY may display a general reluctance to disclose their sexual orientations to parents based on perceived homophobia, it also suggests that almost half of all parents were homophobic, therefore justifying such fears.

Only about half of the participants in D’Augelli et al.’s (2005) study identified as gay or lesbian, whereas a statistically significant percentage did not identify completely as gay or lesbian in sexual orientation. Attempting to gauge parental reactions to gay and lesbian youth based on a sample whose perceptions of their own sexual identities is fluid, may have impacted on both
the reasons for disclosure and the numbers of those who had disclosed to parents. Nevertheless, coming out to parents appears to be a difficult process for SSAY, and may be a function of existing emotional support (Strommen, 1989). Importantly, the study suggests that when parents are accepting of their child’s non-heterosexuality, this can facilitate the child’s self-acceptance and reduce the experience of internalised homophobia. While this section has highlighted the impact that parents can have on the experience of coming out, the next section of the review explores whether homophobia is still tolerated in secondary schools, and the particular obstacles that remain to attenuating it, including teacher indifference.

2.7 Is Homophobia Still Tolerated in Schools?

When teachers are reluctant to intervene in homophobic bullying, it may be because they ignore its harmfulness, fear parental reprisals, are themselves closeted homosexuals, or worry that their interference could appear to promote homosexuality (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). For example, Buston and Hart (2001) explored the prevalence of heterosexism and homophobia in sex education programs, as well as sex education teachers’ attitudes towards same-sex issues across 25 Scottish schools. Multi-method data collection informed the study, with researcher observations confirming recurring homophobic epithets in class, the playground and the library. The direct targeting of suspected or known gay students was perceived by the researchers as commonplace.

Teacher interviews revealed recurring issues including constraints to including education about homosexuality within the curriculum, and both
student discomfort and management strong-arming allegedly hindered thorough sex education (Buston & Hart, 2001). In other cases, interviews revealed that some teachers in this study overtly problematised non-heterosexual sexual activity during sex-education classes, thereby reinforcing existing homophobic attitudes. Despite this, 16 per cent of teachers reported feeling ‘very confident’ about discussing same-sex attraction, 45 per cent reported feeling ‘confident’, while another 20 per cent were ‘a bit confident’. However, justifying maintaining heterosexist sex-education practices to avoid upsetting homophobic students is akin to removing minority education issues (e.g. racism and sexism), given their potential to rile racist or sexist students (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995). The results of this and similar studies corroborate the perceptions of those SSAY who formed the sample of many of the studies under review – homophobia appears to be a taken-for-granted reality for many SSAY, and that methods designed to address it are either lacking or ineffectual.

Taken together, the research into homophobia in schools highlights teachers’ primary role in participating in a culture of homophobia, either through its tolerance or promotion. Teachers need manageable strategies to discuss homosexuality within education; homophobia and same-sex attraction should no longer be taboo topics given potential backlash from parents, school administrators and students themselves (Buston & Hart, 2001). While incomplete sex-education is linked to structural impediments at societal and management levels, teachers and principals require education about same-sex issues and reminders of the legal sanctions for permitting homophobic bullying.
However, DePalma and Atkinson (2006) argue that if discussions about homosexuality remain rare in curricula, it is likely that many principals, teachers and parents believe the mere mention of homosexuality virtually encourages homosexual behaviour in children. Supporters of this notion believe that sexual orientation is a choice, to be adopted at will. Reversing the argument highlights its irrationality. Given that heterosexist school curricula proclaim heterosexuality as the norm, no one need then doubt his or her sexual orientation, as everyone is, ipso facto, heterosexual (DePalma & Atkinson). Similarly irrational is the favourite argument of many moral conservatives: if children learn that homophobia is discriminatory and unnecessarily harms members of sexual minorities, then this somehow condones homosexuality. Macgillivray (2004) posits that this argument intensifies the reticence to discuss homophobia and homosexuality in schools today.

Apart from excluding SSAY, a secondary effect of heterosexist bias in sex education is reinforcing discourses of a ‘preferred’ sexuality (Bay-Cheng, 2003). The majority of participants’ responses in Hillier et al.’s (2005) study highlight how inadequately sex-education programs informed them about same-sex issues. Given their almost exclusive heterosexist focus on the mechanics of heterosexual reproductive biology, 80 per cent of respondents questioned the utility of current programs. Homosexuality was usually mentioned peripherally, without mention of any non-heterosexual sexual activity. Similarly, in Kosciw’s (2004) large-scale American survey, over 76 per cent of participants reported no positive discussions of homosexuality in class, and over 33 per cent reported being unaware of their school’s anti-
homophobia policy. Education about non-heterosexual sexuality and acknowledgment of homosexuality as a valid sexual and emotional orientation continue to be key same-sex sexuality issues (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

2.8 Chapter Summary

So far, this chapter has explored some of the key differences and similarities between general and homophobic school-bullying. In terms of the overarching similarities, research suggests that adolescent boys are generally the main perpetrators of aggressive bullying and tend to occupy more leading bullying roles in relation to girls. Referring to Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, O’Connell et al. (1999) explained bullying with reference to passive participants and onlookers who both reinforced bullies’ motivations and fuelled repeated bullying episodes, regardless of the exact nature of the bullying. Yet, this theory presupposes that all forms of bullying are equal, both in terms of sanctions, frequency and access to victims, and that bullying can conceivably be addressed as a single entity.

Addressing bullying as a single construct ignores the other associated and previously documented factors such as: an intolerance of difference in others, the development of a particular type of masculine identity, rigid notions of gender and gender role behaviour, and the social and defensive functions of homophobia (Herek, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1987a) which all ally some individuals (especially males) with a heterosexual ideal, while actively excluding and often vilifying those in whom these much sought after, and
socio-culturally constructed traits are undetected (Herek, 1986; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Plummer, 2001).

There is also some evidence to suggest that racially and sexist-based harassment is often considered more taboo than homophobic abuse (Thurlow, 2001), and that conceptualising all school-based bullying in the same way could actually dilute some of the core differences between general and homophobic bullying (Mishna et al., 2007). Another of the problems in an argument about the relative degree of social prohibition of different forms of bullying is that it suggests that broader social values and behavioural norms might constitute some forms of social aggression as acceptable, while others would be unacceptable, irrespective of the degree of damage they cause to victims of these different types of bullying. In the case of homophobic bullying, this may suggest that one of the key perpetuating factors is the implicit acceptance amongst authority figures in schools of a certain degree of homophobic violence – perhaps because educators do not feel equipped to address it adequately. Teachers are often disinclined to address instances of homophobia without clearly articulated school policy, which entails both managerial and parental support (Buston & Hart, 2001; Hillier et al., 2005; Ollis et al., 2001).

The literature under review suggests that there is good reason to believe that SSAY are still a particularly vulnerable population of young people. Unlike the majority of heterosexual students, SSAY may lack the social and emotional support of peers, teachers, and parents, leaving them with few, if any forms of social support (O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007; Rofes, 1989; Williams et
al., 2005). Many SSAY do not always believe that parental support will be forthcoming following disclosure about the homophobic nature of their bullying experiences at school, which often lead to premature confirmations about sexual identity (D’Augelli et al., 2005).

The reluctance that many SSAY experience regarding coming out is based on both the negative stigma surrounding homosexuality (Meyer, 1995) and the assumption, often taken-for-granted that they are expected to be (or act) heterosexual. This is generally promoted by schools, parents and society as the preferred sexual orientation for all (Mishna et al., 2007). Consequently, this lack of support means that the victims of homophobic bullying who are also more likely to be SSAY, suffer in silence as they grapple with their psychosexual development (Cass, 1979; Hillier et al., 2005; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Smith, 1998). Many SSAY continue to be the subject of homophobic abuse which can lead to serious negative psychological outcomes including depression and suicide attempts (Dyson et al., 2003; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Hillier et al., 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; McNamee, 2006).

Based on the literature reviewed thus far, it is timely that measures be taken to target the homophobia that is still apparently so embedded in secondary schools. One means of accomplishing this would be to provide schools with user-friendly and easily implemented strategies which can be implemented into existing curricula on a systematic basis as students enter early adolescence, given that this appears to be the age range in which homophobic bullying is most prevalent (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005). Chapter
three will therefore explore the relevant resources and interventions which are specifically designed to reduce and interrupt high school homophobia.
Chapter 3 Interventions Targeting Homophobic Bullying In Schools

3.1 Chapter Overview

As discussed in previous chapters, the prevalence and negative psychological impact of homophobic bullying continues to be reported by SSAY (e.g. Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; Poteat, 2008; Smith, 1998). Yet, parallel to this, there appear to be existing obstacles to systematically attenuating homophobic bullying, despite the existence of school policies on bullying and anti-discrimination legislation (O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007).

In this chapter there will be an examination of the existing resources and interventions that have been designed and previously evaluated to address homophobia in school settings. The chapter begins with a systematic literature review to locate existing anti-homophobia resources before exploring each of these in turn. First, the literature relating to a range of available educative films and DVDs is presented, before exploring two formally evaluated interventions designed to combat homophobia in secondary schools. Despite a range of resources available, only one program met criteria, was currently in circulation and had been subject to two previous formal evaluations. This program is assessed in light of the previously reviewed literature and theories to ascertain its relevance and potential as a viable and valid anti-homophobia intervention in secondary schools. Finally, it is anticipated that these limitations together with the literature reviewed in previous chapters, the continued reports of homophobia in schools, and the dearth of available manualised programs
specifically designed to reduce homophobic bullying among adolescents, will provide a strong rationale for further research of one anti-homophobia program, using an improved and robust methodological design.

3.2 A Review of Existing Anti-Homophobia Resources

Four main search strategies were employed to identify existing anti-homophobia programs and resources for use in secondary schools that have already been subject to empirical evaluation. First, a systematic literature search employing the databases (Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, LGBT Life, Medline, CINAHL, Professional Development Collection, PsychARTICLES, PsychBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection and Professional Development Collection), was conducted to search relevant and available literature between 1970 and 2010 using the search terms ‘homophobia, homophobic bullying, anti-homophobia programs, interventions and teaching modules, gay and lesbian bullying, and school bullying’.

Second, the same terms were entered into ‘Google’ on the world-wide web. Third, the content of journals likely to publish such studies was examined (e.g. the journal of homosexuality, the journal of adolescence, the journal of health promotion, the journal of social psychology, and youth studies Australia). Finally, bibliographical searches were undertaken using the reference lists of identified articles or previous reviews of anti-homophobia programs to ascertain if there remained any unidentified papers meeting
selection criteria. Literature that reviewed programs and resources was included if it met the following criteria: the study needed to include an identifiable intervention for homophobia in a school context, the intervention had to be manualised and currently available for purchase, hire or download, and details of appropriate training and/or monitoring of facilitator compliance with the intervention were included. The study also needed to include a psychometrically robust measure of homophobia as a dependent variable. Both randomised and controlled studies were preferred, but the review also included quasi-experimental studies and uncontrolled studies. Following this process, only two comprehensive programs were identified that met the inclusion criteria. However, only one of these met the inclusion criteria of being in circulation and currently available for purchase, hire or download.

This systematic literature review revealed limited empirical literature into existing school-based anti-homophobia interventions. This limitation explains the lack of a more comparative and exhaustive appraisal – the majority of available resources specifically designed to counter or tackle homophobia in schools comprise educative DVDs, none of which has been formally evaluated at least to the level of being published in the scientific literature. The chapter will begin with an outline of a range of resources before reviewing one existing, formally evaluated and manualised program in depth. The strengths of this intervention in terms of its relevance to the prior research and theories, together with the shortfalls of the prior research into its effectiveness will be outlined.
3.3 Anti-Homophobia Resources

This review located the following classroom resources which have been designed to specifically target homophobic bullying in schools, giving educators brief and flexible ways to educate students. The review will begin by exploring a variety of DVD resources which are currently available to educate students about homophobia. All these resources can be integrated into existing school curricula but do not exist as stand-alone anti-homophobia programs in their own right.

The National Film Board of Canada has produced two DVDs (Rofes, 2005). ‘Sticks and Stones’ for students in grades three to seven, concentrates on how particular language shapes homophobia and sexism. The DVD runs for approximately 17 minutes and employs a combination of interviews, animation and documentary footage to initiate discussions about diverse family structures, gender stereotypes and bullying. In the DVD, children aged five to 12 describe their reactions to negative evaluations of themselves or their families. The second DVD, ‘In Other Words’ takes approximately 25 minutes and attempts to interrupt the use of homophobic slurs by exposing the audience to words such as ‘fag’, ‘queer’ and ‘gay’ and their associated negative connotations. The negative experiences of a group of SSAY are explored including a discussion of the way language shapes attitudes towards others (Rofes).

‘GroundSpark’ has produced and distributed educational resources and campaigns on issues that include homophobic bullying in schools (“Groundspark”, 2010). To date, the organisation has made available five
educational DVDs about tackling homophobia in schools that also include a teacher’s guide: ‘Straightlaced: How Gender’s Got Us All Tied Up’, ‘Let’s Get Real’, ‘That’s a Family’, ‘It’s Elementary’, and ‘It’s Still Elementary’.

The DVD ‘Straightlaced’ (“Groundspark”, 2010) runs for 67 minutes and portrays the unscripted stories of over 50 adolescents who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning or straight and includes their perspectives on topics such as gender roles, homophobia, sexuality, difference, body image, fitting in, stereotypes, relationships, race, culture, and violence. For example, in one part of the film, boys discuss their sexual prowess in an attempt to prove their heterosexuality, while girls discuss their body image in relation to cultured messages about the ideal body type. The educational DVD is designed to be used with older high school students (aged 14 to 18). At the time of accessing the producer’s website, a teacher’s guide was currently in production.

In the brief DVD ‘Let’s Get Real’ which runs for about 30 minutes, youths discuss diversity, and the types of bullying it attracts – racial, homophobic, religious and that based on disability (Letellier, 2003). It is designed to promote discussion around different forms of harassment in students aged 11 to 14 years, and also includes a teacher’s guide. Importantly, professional workshops are available to guide educators about maximising the film’s message about eradicating bullying (Letellier).

‘That’s a Family’ (“Groundspark”, 2010) is an educational resource which includes a DVD which runs for 35 minutes designed for elementary
school aged children. It introduces them to the notion that families comprise different types of configurations including parents who are single, multi-racial, same-sex, adoptive or legal guardians. Children’s narratives inform the audience about their experiences of growing up in each type of family configuration. Accompanied by a teacher’s guide including lesson plans and discussion tips, teachers may also access training on the use of this resource. While not specifically aimed at homophobic bullying, the resource is an interesting first step at introducing the concept of difference to young children before they experience the pressures of adolescence.

Since the 78 minute resource ‘It’s Elementary’ (“Groundspark”, 2010) was produced more than a decade ago, it has been viewed on over 100 American public television stations. In keeping with the previous Groundspark films, it also includes a teacher’s guide. The DVD portrays children from kindergarten to the first year of high school, across six different educational settings as they discuss their views of homophobia, teasing, human rights, family diversity, and other related topics that infiltrate children’s discussions and shape attitudes. The 37 minute DVD ‘It’s Still Elementary’ (“Groundspark”) is also available and is a training video for teachers and parents about how to change attitudes and create safer schools through the use of documentary films.

While all of these resources provide a creative and useful starting point to promote discussion around same-sex issues including homophobic bullying in an easy to administer and flexible package, none of these resources has been formally evaluated in a randomised-control or matched-control design.
Moreover, all of the DVDs under review explore homophobia but do not make it the focus of the resource. Given their brevity, they may not give students time to process, integrate, consider, discuss or negotiate the information contained in them unless they are included in ongoing education about homophobic bullying. While these DVDs could feasibly be included in ongoing discussions about homophobia and its impact, within the school curriculum, none of them has been uniquely designed to educate students about homophobic bullying progressively, via debate and discussion in a prescribed way according to a manual. The resources therefore are likely to be used as adjuncts to existing classes, which means that they are also likely to be administered differentially by facilitators or educators.

In addition to these DVDs, a number of anti-homophobia projects designed as part of a whole-school approach are worthy of consideration, although none has yet been formally or empirically evaluated. One of the first whole-school initiatives designed to tackle homophobic bullying is Uribe’s (1994) ‘Project 10’. This educative model, first developed in the early eighties and implemented in many American and Canadian schools, focuses on SSAY support groups and workshops for counsellors and teachers. The overarching aim is to prevent school dropout and suicide in SSAY by providing them with tools for handling discrimination. Students receive advocacy in a safe outlet within each school setting, to speak freely and discuss homophobic bullying issues with trained personnel (Uribe).

‘Out With Homophobia’ developed by the Family Planning association of Queensland’s education team (Murray, 2001), is another workshop-based
program to assist secondary-school educators to acknowledge and better handle homophobic bullying. The workshop includes a trainer’s manual, activities, lesson plans, readings and resources; it is designed to run over six hours. The first section outlines the program’s rationale and guidance for teachers’ apprehensions on addressing homophobia in school. Next, specific strategies target sexism, homophobia and heterosexism. Although the multifaceted educational approach pinpoints a range of homophobia-related factors, there is currently no formal evaluation of the program’s efficacy.

The Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society (ARCSHS) developed ‘Catching On’ (Ollis & Roberts, 2003) to be implemented in years nine and ten as part of a school’s sexual health education curriculum. Ollis and Roberts praise the resource’s flexibility – teachers requiring additional resources on alternative relationships, STIs, sexual-identity and gender issues can draw on these components. Use of the resource pack requires teachers to attend a one-day professional development program run regularly by the ARCSHS. However, ‘Catching On’ was neither designed specifically as an anti-homophobia tool, nor has it been formally evaluated.

3.4 Manualised Anti-Homophobia Programs

In keeping with the notion that schools require programs that specifically target bullying and violence in secondary schools, in 1991, the NSW Department of School Education developed ‘Resources for teaching against violence’ which included a module targeting homophobic prejudice (Van de Ven, 1995). In his evaluation, Van de Ven refers to this resource as ‘the
homophobia kit’ and describes it as consisting of six individual lessons which run for approximately 50 minutes each. In the first session, students are introduced to the commonly held assumptions and stereotypes concerning homosexual persons and these are discussed. The second session proposes an association between holding prejudicial views and how these may translate to acts of violence against same-sex attracted individuals. The aim of the third session is to dispel the previously discussed stereotypes by inviting a panel of speakers consisting of out gay and lesbian spokespeople to discuss their experiences of being gay. In the fourth to final sessions, students are urged to consider the experiences of gay and lesbian people and encouraged to find positive ways of relating to them, the relevant laws and pieces of legislation against violence towards gay and lesbian people are reviewed, and a reflection of the previous sessions and how to make a positive difference is discussed.

Van de Ven (1995) conducted the only uncontrolled trial of the resource in a pre and post-test design involving 130 year nine students (median age = 14 years) from six government secondary schools in the Sydney metropolitan area. Of these schools, two were boys, two coeducational and two all girls schools. The facilitators of the program were also teachers known to the students. All the relevant teachers received training prior to the study which was delivered by the NSW Department of School Education and Van de Ven. Measures included: The Modified Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Scale (MATHS) (α = .94) (Price, 1982); The Affective Reactions to Homosexuality Scale (ARHS) (Innala & Ernulf, 1992) (α from .90 to .94); The Homophobic Behaviour of Students Scale (HBSS) (α = .86) (Bornholt & Bailey, 1996; Van
de Ven); and ‘a written short story’ which involved a description of a
conversation with someone about homosexuality, and the attitudes of the
characters towards gay people.

Results revealed a statistically significant between-subjects effect for sex
\[ F(1, 126) = 54.65, \ p < .01 \], but not for the type of school or any interactions
between sex and school. Differences were noted between boys and girls
regardless of the type of school they came from. A statistically significant
between-groups difference for sex was noted for cognitive forms of
homophobia \[ F(1, 126) = 50.01, \ p < .05 \]. Boys’ levels of cognitive
homophobia were statistically significantly higher than for girls. Boys’ levels
of cognitive homophobia over both types of school differed statistically
significantly from pre-test to post-test \[ F(1, 60) = 21.88, \ p < .05 \] and from
post-test to follow-up \[ F(1,60) = 10.03, \ p < .01 \]. However, there were no
differences between boys’ overall pre-test and follow-up levels, meaning that
any change in cognitive homophobic attitudes was temporary. Boys’ levels
across schools were similar to pre-test within three months following the
intervention. For example, boys in single sex schools exhibited statistically
significantly less cognitive homophobia at post-test \( M = 48.8, \ SD = 20.0 \) than
at pre-test \( M = 56.4, \ SD = 20.2 \) (Cohen’s \( d = -.37 \)) but not follow-up \( M =
53.8, \ SD = 18.0 \).

In terms of cognitive forms of homophobia, girls’ levels across schools
were statistically significantly less from pre-test to post-test \[ F(1,68) = 24.52, \ p
< .05 \] and this was maintained at follow-up. Pre-test to follow-up differences
were statistically significant \[ F(1, 68) = 21.93, \ p < .05 \]. For example girls in
single-sex schools exhibited a reduction in levels on this variable from pre-test ($M = 29, SD = 21$) to post-test ($M = 22.9, SD = 20.8$) (Cohen’s $d = .29$) and follow-up ($M = 22.8, SD = 22.6$). The impact of the program on girls’ levels of this type of homophobia seemed to have lasted past the end of the last session of the program and was maintained at three months indicating that any changes in females’ levels may be longer lasting than for males.

In terms of homophobic anger, boys were statistically significantly more homophobic than girls [$F(1, 126) = 49.60, p < .05$] at pre-test. However both boys and girls experienced reductions across schools from pre to post-test [$F(1, 129) = 6.76, p < .05$] and from pre-test to follow-up [$F(1,129) = 4.20, p < .05$]. For example boys in single-sex schools experienced a reduction in levels of this dependent variable from pre-test ($M = 57.7, SD = 20.7$) to post-test ($M = 56.1, SD = 20.7$) (Cohen’s $d = .08$). Although follow-up ($M = 59.2, SD = 22.1$) levels were higher than pre-test, this difference was not statistically significantly different to pre-test levels. However, it indicates a tendency in boys scores to slightly worsen through the three months after the end of the intervention.

Girls in single-sex schools experienced reductions in levels of this type of homophobia from pre-test ($M = 31.2, SD = 26.9$) to post-test ($M = 26.2, SD = 27.7$) (Cohen’s $d = .18$) and this was similar at follow-up ($M = 26.1, SD = 27.7$). Overall, in terms of homophobic anger, there were statistically significant differences for both girls and boys in terms of pre-test and post-test scores, but no statistically significant differences between post-test and follow-up indicating that any reductions were maintained into the three months.
following the intervention, but did not continue to improve. However, as mentioned, boys’ levels of homophobic anger tended to worsen at the end of the program indicating that treatment effects were not maintained.

Van de Ven’s (1995) trial is one of only three studies investigating the effects of a manualised anti-homophobia program that has made it into the research literature. In his evaluation, attempts have been made to measure homophobia as an outcome in a pre and post-test design, and the use of teacher training improves the treatment fidelity of the program. The results of the evaluation indicate the potential of the program to reduce adolescents’ cognitive and aggressive forms of homophobia. The study also highlights the higher levels of homophobia in boys compared to girls, and that boys’ homophobia is more entrenched, and that attempts to shift or ameliorate attitudes may only last as long as the program is running and then revert to their former levels. This was apparent in terms of boys’ levels of cognitive forms of homophobia and a tendency to worsen was noted in their levels of homophobic anger. This may be indicative of the shortfalls of the program or it may highlight the need for ongoing and systemic approaches to tackling homophobia even after such programs have ended, especially in boys, where homophobia tends to intersect with cultured notions of masculinity (Herek, 1986), the promotion of a homophobic performance (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Plummer, 2001) and immature defence styles (Herek, 1987a; Lewis & White, 2009).

Despite the promising results of Van de Ven’s (1995) study, a number of limitations are worthy of consideration. First, the study’s lack of a control
group makes it impossible to compare outcome measure scores with those students attending a regular class. Second, the study does not report correlations of pre and post-treatment and therefore the homogeneity of treatment effects cannot be discerned. There is also no mention of whether students across any of the six schools were highly or moderately homophobic, which may have been possible with reference to community norms of the homophobia measures employed.

While the participants’ teachers were also the facilitators of the program thereby rendering the study ecologically valid, they were also the administrators of the testing stages, suggesting the potential for researcher bias (Kazdin, 2003). The third session of the program includes a gay and lesbian speaker panel which is a positive step in exposing students to out gay and lesbian individuals. While this approach is theoretically sound and reflects Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic function of homophobic attitudes based on one’s knowledge of and contact with known gay people, it could be difficult for schools to sustain this approach if panel speakers are not available. There is no alternative to this option in the program such as a DVD with gay and lesbian characters explaining their experiences of being gay, coming out or school bullying based on being same-sex attracted. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this resource is no longer in current circulation and communications with the NSW Education Department during the writing of this review indicate that it is no longer in use and therefore not available for loan, purchase or electronic download. Based on these limitations, it was therefore decided not to conduct a controlled trial of this program.
3.5 The Pride and Prejudice Program

The Pride and Prejudice program is the only existing program focussed exclusively on anti-homophobia for use in secondary schools, which has been subject to formal published evaluation since its inception (Bridge, 2007; Higgins, King, & Witthaus, 2001). A manualised program accompanied by a 45 minute DVD broken up into six discrete sections, it is designed to be run over six separate sessions, over six weeks, lasting approximately fifty minutes each session. Facilitators must also be trained to correctly administer the program and at the time of this review, the author (Daniel Witthaus) was conducting training sessions throughout the school year. Unlike some of the DVD resources reviewed earlier, each session of this intervention builds on from the last, with the overarching aim being to get students to gradually consider the multiple ways in which homophobia develops and the intersecting factors that perpetuate it.

Witthaus (2002) posits that the specific aims of the program are to facilitate an exploration of social difference, to increase awareness and to recognise how this difference is associated with prejudice and discrimination, to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about gender, gender-roles, gay people and sexuality, and finally, it proposes methods to address homophobia within the class or school. Importantly, the program is designed to be delivered flexibly and respectfully, based on logic rather than emotion, within a safe and yet challenging environment, where students are encouraged to voice and openly debate their beliefs and attitudes without teacher redress (Witthaus). Instead, it is other student participants who provide alternative ways of
considering the stereotypes and bullying that make up school-based homophobia, in light of the session content.

Higgins et al. (2001) briefly outline the overall stages of the program. An exploration of social groups and diversity, prevailing stereotypes and those who may be the target of discrimination is followed by an exploration of the constructs of homophobia, masculinity, femininity and gender roles. Students are given an opportunity to navigate an understanding of interactions with SSAY, their prevalence in the school body and the language used to describe non-heterosexuals, and the way the words they use generate particular meanings. Building on from the previous content, the program ends encouraging all students to appreciate the perceptions and experiences of SSAY in their particular school, and how they may be better supported. The following section critically appraises the previous research into the program and highlights its shortcomings. It will be argued that the prior evaluations of the program contain methodological flaws rendering them unreliable and insufficient to ascertain the effectiveness of the intervention, despite its previously outlined strengths.

3.6 Previous Evaluations of Pride and Prejudice

The initial uncontrolled repeated measures evaluation of the program was a pre and post-test design involving year 10 students \( n = 23 \) from a Victorian regional coeducational state school, whereby the author of the program was also the facilitator (Higgins et al., 2001). Measures included: The Homosexuality Attitudes Scale (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .92 \) (Kite & Deaux, 1986); the
Australian Sex Role Questionnaire (α from .70 to .84) (Antill, Cunningham, Russell, & Thompson, 1981); the Social Interaction Questionnaire (SIQ) (Manor-Bullock, Lock, & Dixon, 1995); the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965); the Modern Racism Scale (Cronbach’s α = .85) (Augoustinos, Ahrens, & Innes, 1994); and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), which Loo and Loewen (2004) found to display overall internal consistencies of (.75). The SIQ was originally normed on a sample of gifted children but was later factor-analysed using a community sample of Australian children (Moore & Mellor, 2003) resulting in a modified version with two independent factors – ‘social/popular’ and ‘confident/studious’. The former factor was found to have good internal reliabilities (.82), whereas the latter appears to lack sufficient reliability (.60).

Since the inception of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, alpha levels have generally fallen in the moderate range.

Results indicated a statistically significant amelioration of attitudes towards gay men at post-test (Cohen’s $d = .38$) which was experienced by all students compared to their pre-test levels and this change was not a result of social desirability bias (Higgins et al., 2001). Similarly, a statistically significant change in attitudes was noted regarding gay women at post-test (Cohen’s $d = .44$) compared to pre-test levels. While Higgins et al. (2001) do not indicate statistical differences between males and females on any of the measures under study, mean differences indicate that males may have experienced greater reductions in homophobia than females as a result of the
program, given that males’ pre-test levels \((M = 27.25, SD = 6.76)\) were higher than females’ \((M = 18.86, SD = 4.30)\).

A regression analysis revealed that the number of sessions attended was the singular statistically significant predicting variable (compared to self-esteem, social-desirability, and gender of participant) of an amelioration in attitude change towards gay males (adjusted \(R^2 = .56, p < .05\)), but not towards gay females (adjusted \(R^2 = .04, p > .05\)). Conversely, participation in the program did not lead to statistically significant changes in measured levels of social connectedness, self-esteem, racial or gender role attitudes (Higgins et al., 2001). However, no other statistics are reported by Higgins et al. including semipartial correlations, beta weights or the order that the variables were entered into the regression analysis and the small sample size is likely to render these particular results invalid.

The small sample size limits the study’s ability to draw conclusions about the program beyond the scope of this study, and a lack of any follow-up research impedes assessment of its medium to long-term impact. It is feasible that students’ self-reported levels of homophobia reverted to pre-testing levels within a short period of time, or regressed even further several months after the end of the intervention. Finally, the researchers did not use any control group and therefore could not employ randomisation which is a more robust evaluative method (Kazdin, 2003). This subsequently impeded the comparison of scores on the dependent variables to a regular class, not having been exposed to the program. There was also no comment as to why this particular
school was chosen, its particular issues with homophobic bullying or justifications for not including a control group.

The second and last published uncontrolled evaluation of *Pride and Prejudice* was conducted by Bridge (2007) with data from students across years eight and nine in two public, and one Catholic independent school (n = 43). The minimum criterion for data inclusion was a student’s attendance in at least four of the six sessions. In keeping with the previous evaluation, Bridge’s study employed the same scales. Unlike the study by Higgins et al. (2001), Bridge’s research evaluated the training package in three different settings where the school teachers who had received prior training, although not necessarily from the author of the program, were also the facilitators, thereby improving its ecological validity. Although Bridge did not report the statistical analyses or results of any of the measures with the exception of percentages, he claims that a small all-female group at the Catholic school demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in levels of homophobia at post-test. However, he also states that the other two schools did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvements on attitudes towards gay men or lesbians. Bridge suggested that the positive results of the all-girls group were likely due to girls taking on more of the messages of anti-homophobia programs relative to boys, whose heterosexist assumptions may be more difficult to interrupt.

Bridge (2007) states that homophobic attitudes regarding gay men had decreased at post-test, albeit not statistically significantly for all students, yet does not report any statistics to confirm these findings. Male students’ attitudes towards lesbians remained the same at post-test. A small number of students
(9.3%) experienced an increase in their homophobic attitudes towards gay men and women at post-test, although it remains unclear as to the precise reasons for this occurrence. Bridge suggested that this may be due to some students’ disinclination to reveal their true levels of homophobia at the pre-testing stage, and that consequently any post-test measure was likely to be skewed. Although no correlation was noted between self-esteem and homophobia, Bridge claims that a weak and positive association was found between homophobia and racism at post-test.

Yet, as previously stated, Bridge (2007) did not report on any of the statistical outcomes with the exception of percentages so any interpretation of these claims must be made with caution. Furthermore, the lack of a control group limits comparisons with a no treatment group as previously explained in relation to Van de Ven’s (1995) and Higgins et al.’s (2001) studies. Interestingly, Bridge notes that 25 per cent of his original sample withdrew from the study prior to completion but cannot account for this occurrence. Based on the results of Bridge’s study, it is possible to hypothesise that when the author of the program is not the facilitator, that achieving reductions in levels of homophobia may be more difficult to achieve.

Despite the limitations of both of these studies, in the following section, the program will be critically appraised to ascertain whether and how it proposes to address secondary school-based homophobia based on the previously canvassed research and theories. It is possible that *Pride and Prejudice* is an effective intervention in reducing secondary-school students’
levels of homophobia, but this cannot be ascertained based on the previous two studies given the methodological flaws that have been outlined.

3.7 Connecting Prior Theory and Research to Pride and Prejudice

Chapter one presented theories supporting the notion that homophobia as a phenomenon has a number of purposes and functions (Herek, 1987a) and that it is an overarching source of stress that many gay people are likely to experience negatively (Meyer, 1995). It was also argued that the experience of stigma associated with homophobia is likely to co-occur at a time when young people are coming to terms with their psychosexual development (Cass, 1979, 1984). This Minority Stress (Myer, 1995) therefore acts as a disincentive to coming out or public disclosure, leading to potential isolation and self-loathing (Cass, 1979). The previous chapters referred to the prior research and highlighted the realities of homophobia and homophobic bullying that many SSAY experience as a regular occurrence at school. Interventions which purport to address secondary-school homophobia should therefore be congruent with both the information gleaned from previous studies into the phenomenon, and be based on strong and robust theoretical foundations. The focus of this section is therefore to outline the relevance that the Pride and Prejudice program has to the research previously canvassed, and to articulate the ways in which it relates to prior theory.

The notion that individuals can refer to ideological and socially constructed societal views to justify their subjectively held attitudes is in keeping with Herek’s (1987a) previously outlined value-expressive function.
Although Herek’s theory relates primarily to the functions or personal benefits of homophobia, it is possible that students’ attitudes towards other social groups are also based on taken-for-granted assumptions about their perceived social acceptability. The program addresses this aspect of Herek’s theory by encouraging students to voice and debate their interpretations of same-sex attracted persons based on assumptions that are believed to be condoned by society. The aim is to allow students to voice a multitude of opinions, so that those holding value-expressive views may appreciate that some students do not necessarily endorse these perceptions.

Similarly, the research literature is replete with examples of the way traditional notions of masculinity imply certain behaviours and performances. For example, it was previously argued that in light of homophobia and homophobic environments, many SSAY feel obligated to conceal their sexual orientations (Britton, 1990; Meyer, 1995; Neisen, 1990). As discussed in the previous chapter, one means of achieving this is via a ‘performance of visibility management’ (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003) entailing the self-monitoring of those behaviours and gestures which may allude to being perceived as homosexual. Similarly, Nayak and Kehily’s (1996) study revealed a process that the researchers referred to as ‘performances of masculinity’ to describe the ways many heterosexual adolescent males adhere to gender roles, which are seen to reflect a compulsory and traditional form of heterosexuality, often in order to be perceived as heterosexual rather than homosexual. Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function explains how the homophobic attitudes of in-group members actively separate them from homosexuals or out-group
members based on beliefs about the former members’ superiority. In attempts to win over or retain approval from peers, youths may therefore perform acts such as homophobic bullying.

Reflecting the importance that many young people, especially males, place on being perceived as straight as opposed to gay (Herek, 1986; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Plummer, 2001), and the way this can impact on which types of students are targeted for homophobic bullying, the program contains activities designed to encourage an awareness of the concepts of stereotyping, contexts of acceptable and unacceptable same-sex intimacy, gender role beliefs and in particular, traditional notions of masculinity, femininity and masculine, acceptable feminine behaviour. The program is premised in part on the notion that not fitting into these categories often results in becoming the victim of homophobic bullying. In doing so, it may also address Herek’s (1987a) final defensive function of homophobia, which explains homophobic bullying in terms of projecting personal anxiety onto gay people as they may represent a threat to traditional sex roles and fragile psycho-sexual identities.

Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic attitude function is based on those attitudes acquired from personal experiences with known gay or lesbian people (Herek & Glunt, 1993). Reflecting Herek and clearly articulated in the program, is the possibility that negative views towards homosexuals as a group are not derived from actual contact with known gay or lesbian individuals. In one session, students are asked to volunteer their experiences with gay or lesbian people from their knowledge of family members or friends outside of the school setting, in order to provide alternative views, and foster a discussion
based on actual experience rather than prejudice. The aim of this activity is to encourage participants to offer views about gay and lesbian people in their entourage which are likely to oppose those held by some other participants who instead rely on myths, stereotypes and prejudice to formulate their opinions.

The way homophobic epithets are used to either denigrate others or alternatively used in an off-hand manner despite the hurtful effects this can have on SSAY was highlighted in chapter two in both Meghan-Burn’s (2000) and Thurlow’s (2001) research. Similarly, Hillier et al. (1998, 2005), Kosciw (2004), Kosciw et al., (2010) and Plummer (2001) revealed the manner in which homophobic slurs are both tolerated and also used as verbal weapons to belittle those adolescents who are perceived to be gay. During *Pride and Prejudice*, students are asked to voice as many commonly used words (including slurs which they believe correspond with the categories gay and lesbian) and then to consider the impact that these might have on a young person at school who is questioning his or her sexual orientation, or who is known to be gay or lesbian. In parallel and reflecting the inherent difficulties faced by SSAY in the earlier stages of Cass’ (1979) model as they grapple with an emerging sexual orientation, the program encourages students to consider the obstacles that homophobia and homophobic attitudes pose for SSAY, and how these may mitigate decisions to come out at school. This process is underpinned by a DVD depicting different young people who only come out in the final section, which is timed to occur during the last session of the program.

In keeping with Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic function of homophobic attitudes, this activity is designed to counter students’ previously
held stereotypes of gay people and therefore about the youths depicted in the DVD, who do not necessarily meet the typically held beliefs about gay and lesbian youth. Finally, the program also covers available support networks for SSAY so that those who are either gay or questioning leave the program armed with another form of socioemotional support. As previously discussed, many SSAY do not feel adequately supported by peers, parents or teachers (O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007; Williams et al., 2005). It is conceivable that providing phone numbers of support groups during the course of the program may alleviate some of the isolation that homophobia can engender in school-aged adolescents (Witthaus, 2002).

This section has explored the relevance of Pride and Prejudice to some of the prior research and theories previously outlined in the review. The following section will summarise the key limitations of the prior studies and provide a justification for the development of a further evaluation based on robust methodology. The section will also consider some of the key criteria employed to evaluate the efficacy of interventions.

3.8 Limitations of Prior Research into Pride and Prejudice

Kazdin (2003) outlines three important criteria pertaining specifically to the characteristics of efficacy research including cost, disseminability, and acceptability. Kazdin posits that the costs associated with an intervention may have a direct bearing on the extent to which it is a feasible and cost effective means of addressing a particular phenomenon of interest. Witthaus (2002) claims that the training of Pride and Prejudice is delivered to teachers and
facilitators in groups, in order to maximise cost effectiveness, and also to provide schools with a form of professional development. It is therefore feasible that the costs associated with implementing this program would not necessarily be considered an obstacle, especially if the program has an impact on levels of homophobic bullying, in terms of educating students about its nature and ameliorating their attitudes.

Second, the issue of disseminability would concern the program’s complexity, how it fares in different training settings, the actual training requirements, and to what extent a lack of adherence to the prescribed session format would result in a lack of its effectiveness (Kazdin, 2003). As previously stated, the intervention is a manualised program designed to be administered in specific stages. If the successful implementation of the program is a function of facilitators receiving the prescribed training (currently two full days) (Witthaus, 2002), then teachers and facilitators alike are in a sense, at the mercy of pre-determined dates and locations of training sessions. This may impede program implementation, and or motivate facilitators to administer it in an ad hoc manner, thereby potentially compromising program fidelity. For example, there was no comment made in Bridge’s (2007) study as to what measures were taken to control for program validity, indicating that uniform delivery of the program may have been compromised. Furthermore, Bridge chose attendance in at least four of the six sessions as an arbitrary minimum criterion for a student’s data inclusion, although this minimum figure is not clearly stated as a prerequisite in the manual. Rather than relying on the author of the program to become available for training sessions, it may be more useful
to develop a program facilitator training DVD and guide, which could be added to the program, thereby reducing both costs and increasing the likelihood of schools implementing it correctly.

Neither Higgins et al. (2001) nor Bridge (2007) evaluated this program for its efficacy in an all-boys environment, and only a small sample was used in Bridge’s study involving an all-girls class. Questions remain as to why some students experienced a rise in their levels of homophobia at post-test in Bridge’s study, and why some chose to prematurely exit the program prior to completion in both Higgins et al.’s and Bridge’s study. Neither study included the random allocation of participants to a control group or alternatively, designed a matched-control study. Addressing this oversight would reliably allow comparisons to be made across participants’ levels of the dependent variables. Finally, no comment was made regarding the interpretation of the modified version of the SIQ, potentially rendering the results based on this measure unreliable.

Third, the criterion of acceptability relates to the users’ subjective assessment of a treatment or intervention (Kazdin, 2003). It was stated that *Pride and Prejudice* was evaluated favourably at the end of the intervention by students in both Higgins et al.’s (2001) and Bridge’s (2007) research, although the write-up of these participant evaluations is scant and does little to elucidate the factors that students found most interesting or challenging. It would have been useful to know exactly which aspects of the program informed students better about homophobic bullying or the difficulties faced by SSAY. A qualitative evaluation of participants’ experiences may have also provided a
form of triangulation to the quantitative analyses. Any differences in terms of these types of results may have shed light on the factors that the quantitative results conceal, or otherwise cannot explain.

Furthermore, no measures were taken to assess teachers’ perceptions of the acceptability of the contents of the program in either of the previous evaluations. Although teachers and facilitators are expected to participate in the prescribed training prior to delivering the program, it would be interesting to note which aspects of the program are considered by teachers as less acceptable or relevant. Kazdin (2003) claims that it is these components of interventions which are less likely to be delivered appropriately or correctly. This may be particularly important in a program that aims to tackle homophobia, given the potential for teacher prejudice to interfere with the effective delivery, or modification of such an intervention.

Although *Pride and Prejudice* remains the only formally evaluated, existing and manualised intervention designed to interrupt homophobia over the course of six weeks, the results of Bridge’s (2007) and Higgins et al.’s (2001) research contain too many methodological flaws to ascertain whether the program has the potential to make an impact on secondary-school students’ levels of homophobia in both the short or medium terms. Together, it is anticipated that this chapter has provided sufficient justification for a re-trial of the program using a robust methodological design, in a matched-control study.
3.9 Chapter Summary

Curbing homophobia in schools must necessarily entail educating all youth, and in particular adolescent males, about alternative behaviour, attitudes and discourses surrounding masculine identity development and gender (Plummer, 2001). This would potentially widen and challenge the boundaries of taken-for-granted ideals of masculinity and simultaneously heighten awareness of the destructive practices involved in homophobic bullying including aggression and the use of homophobic pejoratives, the impact of which is most commonly experienced in secondary schools (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2007; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010). Given the association between homophobic attitudes and its expression in the form of bullying, school interventions aimed at alleviating homophobia should also address the way homophobic banter is expressed as a form of peer endorsed aggression, especially among those groups who display and promote homophobic values in the knowledge that this will not be penalised in the same manner as racial or sexist abuse (Poteat, 2008; Thurlow, 2001).

As previously discussed, homophobia stems in part from irrational and misguided sociocultural attitudes about same-sex attracted persons, particular notions of masculinity and gender appropriate behaviour, stereotypes, peer group pressure, conformity, minority oppression, heterosexism and immature defence mechanisms. As outlined in chapter one, theoretically, homophobia serves a number of discrete functions (Herek, 1987a) and is also likely to occur at a time when many SSAY are in the throes of their psychosexual development (Cass, 1984) and therefore represent a particularly vulnerable
subset of the student population. Indeed, a substantial body of previously canvassed research highlighted the negative impact that Minority Stress (Myer, 1995) relating to homophobic abuse can engender on many SSAY (e.g. Hillier et al., 2005; Hunter & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010).

To date, the *Pride and Prejudice* program is the only formally evaluated and targeted anti-homophobia intervention which attempts to address homophobia in light of many of the previously presented theories, and intersecting and related social variables. Although promising in terms of it being the only available manualised anti-homophobia intervention for use in secondary schools, its prior evaluations contain too many methodological flaws to establish its efficacy in interrupting homophobic attitudes in secondary-school students. The program has never been subject to any follow-up evaluation in any of the schools that have trialled it, which leaves the question of its medium to long term impact unanswered. The prior research suggests that homophobic attitudes and bullying in school-aged boys are the result of a complex interplay of peer pressure to conform to an idealised heterosexual norm entailing a particular kind of masculinity (Herek, 1986), positive reinforcement from onlookers (Bandura, 1977), the development of less adaptive defence mechanisms (Lewis & White, 2009), a means by which some youth enhance their social status (Herek, 1987a), aggressiveness (Herek, 1992), and an overarching awareness that homophobic bullying at school is generally taken less seriously than other kinds of abuse (Bandura, 1977; Buston & Hart, 2001; Hillier et al., 2005; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995; Thurlow, 2001).
The prior research into the theoretical underpinnings of homophobia warrants the assessment of these constructs in a future trial of this program. Similarly, given that homophobia and homophobic bullying continue to be a serious issue in secondary-schools, research must also ascertain educators’ experiences of school-based homophobia and the perceived personal and organisational barriers to addressing it. This issue will also be considered in a qualitative study of teachers in chapter eight of this thesis. It is clear from the literature canvassed in this review, that homophobia in secondary schools remains a prejudice worth fighting about.

The aim of the next chapter is therefore to provide a justification for a retrial of *Pride and Prejudice* which not only addresses the previously outlined methodological limitations of the previous evaluations, but extends the research into homophobic bullying by employing measures that are in keeping with the previously articulated theories of homophobia. This will include a thorough exploration of student participants’ views of *Pride and Prejudice*, teachers’ views of homophobia and the perceived obstacles to attenuating it, as it pertains to the student body, staff members and school management.
Chapter 4 Aims And Rationale Of The Current Research

4.1 Chapter Overview

As previously explained in the preceding chapter, there is very little published empirical research on existing manualised anti-homophobia programs for use in secondary-schools. To date, there has been one published evaluation of one homophobia program, although as stated in the previous chapter, it is no longer in circulation. The remaining two evaluations have been of one existing anti-homophobia program (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001). These evaluations refer to Pride and Prejudice, an existing manualised program which specifically targets secondary-school homophobia. Pride and Prejudice adequately targets many of the core dynamics underpinning homophobia in secondary schools, is theoretically driven and can be integrated into secondary schools wishing to tackle homophobic bullying.

However, as outlined in the previous chapter, the prior studies exploring its effectiveness contain significant design flaws and raise unanswered questions, justifying additional and methodologically robust empirical research. In light of the limitations of the previous trials, the aim of Study One is to conduct a repeated measures controlled trial with cluster randomisation to ascertain the association between some of the previously identified theoretical and maintaining factors related to adolescent homophobia outlined in the literature, and the intervention’s strength as a sustainable and feasible solution to the widespread occurrence and detrimental effects of homophobic bullying in secondary schools.
The justification for conducting two qualitative studies will also be discussed. First, by asking students to report on their experiences of participating in the program, to determine the potential impact it had on educating them about homophobia and how they might better support SSAY and second, with reference to the potential impediments perceived by teachers and school principals in addressing homophobic bullying in secondary schools.

4.2 A Summary of the Limitations of the Previous Evaluations

The first similarity and perhaps most important limitation of the two previous trials is the lack of a control group so that observations on outcome measures can be compared across levels of the independent variable. This no-treatment control condition then becomes the baseline against which the scores from the treatment condition are compared (Kazdin, 2003). Neither, Higgins et al. (2001), nor Bridge (2007) made use of a wait-list or fully formed control group, and therefore reliable comparisons cannot be made on any of their outcome measures.

In order to make up for this limitation, the proposed study of Pride and Prejudice will involve a repeated measures controlled study whereby existing classes of students are randomly assigned to either treatment or control groups. Unlike Higgins et al. (2001), this study will also employ facilitators who are not directly affiliated with the program. It is conceivable that by employing the author of the program to also participate in the trial, that this could be considered a form of researcher bias. Importantly, if results indicate that levels of homophobia are less prone to amelioration when the author of the program
is not the facilitator, as in Bridge’s (2007) study, then it is possible that the core ingredients of the program are not transmissible, and this therefore impedes its ecological validity. Another similarity between the two previous evaluations relates to the choice of dependent variables.

In his study, Bridge (2007) chose to use measures identical to Higgins et al. (2001), presumably in order to replicate the study. While this cannot be considered a limitation as such, it suggests that Bridge has made the assumption that these were the primary constructs of interest in the study of adolescents and homophobia. However, based on the review of the literature so far, this assumption cannot be fully supported.

For example, both previous evaluations relied on The Homosexuality Attitudes Scale (HAS) (Kite & Deaux, 1986) as their sole measure of homophobia, and yet neither Bridge (2007) nor Higgins et al. (2001) reported reliability coefficients for their samples. Given that the scale was originally normed on American college students (Kite & Deaux), it is impossible to determine whether the items were internally consistent for the groups of adolescents in the previous two studies. Moreover, the HAS is a 21-item scale whose items do not differentiate between gay men and lesbians. Based on the face validity of the items, the majority appear to tap into the cognitive and affective underpinnings of attitudes towards homosexuals as a homogeneous group. This may be problematic insofar as heterosexual males and females do not necessarily harbour the same levels of homophobia, or evaluate gay men and women in the same manner (e.g. Meghan-Burn, 2000; Nayak & Kehily, 1996; Plummer, 2001; Polimeni et al., 2000; Van de Ven, 1995).
It is likely that lesbians are more likely to be perceived less negatively by adolescent males, precisely because they do not represent a threat to heteronormative notions of masculinity. Second, research suggests that homophobic bullying in secondary schools often takes on aggressive forms, especially when it is perpetrated by adolescent males (e.g. Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Lewis & White, 2009; Wright et al., 1999), so measures should ideally tap into this aggressive type of homophobia, via items that measure overt acts of homophobic intent.

As previously expressed by Herek (1987a) and outlined in chapter one, homophobic attitudes serve particular functions. It would be informative to ascertain whether students who endorsed functions known to be associated with more overt homophobic attitudes continued to do so after being part of the program, compared to the control group. For example, as previously discussed, religiosity and moral conservatism have been associated with homophobic attitudes (Schope & Eliason, 2000; Schulte & Battle, 2004) and therefore serves a particular function of homophobia (Herek, 1987a, 1987b). Yet this was not measured in the previous two evaluations of the program. If students justified their homophobic attitudes on the basis of a particular religious outlook, they would likely also to be strongly endorsing Herek’s (1987a) value-expressive function. Similarly, students who display an increase in levels of homophobia, and who refer to peers to formulate their opinions of gay people should also highly endorse Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function. Exploring these constructs in the previous two evaluations would have allowed some knowledge of the self-serving factors associated with homophobia, and
allowed the researchers to hold constant or at least gain knowledge of these factors, in light of levels of overall homophobia at post-test, when evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

The previous chapters also highlighted the way particular defence styles can be used to allay particular anxieties about homosexuality (e.g. Herek, 1987a). Specifically, homophobia appears to serve a defensive function in that it allows for the alleviation of personal anxiety which homosexuality or homosexual persons may trigger in homophobes or others with an unstable sexual orientation, or gender-role adherence (Herek, 1987a). Parallel to this, there is empirical evidence in the literature that associates adolescent homophobia with the use of immature defences (Lewis & White, 2009). Although defence mechanisms do not feature directly in the content of *Pride and Prejudice*, the program educates students about gender roles and their importance, and also exposes them directly to pictures of same-sex intimacy (e.g. footballers hugging on the football field, members of same-sex couples showing affection towards each other) before asking them to justify their reasons for believing that one set of pictures is more acceptable than another. In doing so, it likely puts students in touch with some of their discomfort and anxiety concerning same-sex affection.

According to Lewis and White (2009), it is possible that the use of immature defences plays a role in making adolescent homophobes less receptive to changes in attitudes, since their homophobia may be part of a broader developmental immaturity. In doing so, the use of such defences touches on Herek’s (1987a) defensive function of homophobia, as it is the non-
adherence or inadequacy of one’s non-heterosexual characteristics that Herek posits are likely to elicit a defensive reaction from particular students – especially those whose psycho-sexual identities are linked to a particular brand of heterosexuality. Knowing more about the relationship that immature defence styles have to homophobic attitudes may enable schools to identify why particular students hold entrenched homophobic values, and if anti-homophobia programs are sufficient to change these. If those students exhibiting immature defence styles also score highly on measures of homophobia then *Pride and Prejudice* or other programs may do little to alter these students’ attitudes unless the reasons that immature defences are being employed are also explored. Importantly, the correlation between the use of immature defence styles and aggressive forms of homophobia would presumably place SSAY at a higher risk of being targeted and attacked, by those students who score highly on these constructs.

### 4.3 Teachers’ Perceptions of Homophobia

The previous section has outlined the main limitations of the previous two evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice*, following a more thorough exploration in the previous chapter. As discussed in chapter two, the expression of homophobia in secondary schools is part of an overarching system, not solely limited to students, and which is often overlooked by teachers and administrators (e.g. Cook et al., 2010; Hillier et al., 2005; Kosciw, 2004). Neither Higgins et al. (2001) nor Bridge (2007) assessed teachers’ attitudes towards the *Pride and Prejudice* program, and neither study evaluated whether teachers felt competent to deliver such a program, their perceptions of
homophobia in their particular school, and if aspects of its content were at odds with their own individual value systems. It is conceivable that if teachers are uncomfortable delivering a program whose aim is to interrupt homophobia, then they may be disinclined to deliver it according to the manual, and therefore compromise program fidelity (e.g. Kazdin, 2003).

Similarly, if teachers do not recognise incidents of verbal and aggressive homophobia as bullying, then it is unlikely that an anti-homophobia program can adequately address student-to-student homophobia. If teachers are not trained to deliver anti-homophobia programs and educated about homophobia and homophobic bullying, then programs that address student homophobia may be undermined by structural homophobia in the form of teachers and administrators who are ineffective, or unwilling to address it. Homophobia is a systemic prejudice and schools operate as subsystems within the wider society (Bowers et al., 2005). If homophobia in schools is to be fully addressed, then it is logical that teachers and students alike will require adequate and relevant education.

It is possible that teachers do not feel equipped to deal with examples of homophobia when they witness its occurrence, or conversely may not recognise specific acts of bullying as examples of homophobia. If teachers are unaware of both the overt and subtle forms that homophobia can take within the school setting, then they may be missing opportunities to interrupt it when it presents itself inside, or outside the classroom. Parallel to this, there is also the possibility that some teachers are homophobic, do not intervene in examples of homophobic bullying and therefore perpetuate student
homophobia. The prior research indicates that all of these issues may be present (e.g. Buston & Hart, 2001; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2007). Although many teachers may not feel empowered to tackle homophobia for fear of negative repressions from school management and parents, student accounts continue to highlight the fact that they do not feel protected at school, and that some teachers may continue to overlook examples of homophobic bullying (e.g. Buston & Hart, 2001; D’Augelli et al., 2002; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004).

In order to determine if teachers’ perceptions of homophobia may be contributing to a lack of systematic interruption of it as it occurs, the present research will therefore include a second qualitative study. The aim of this study will be to specifically explore teachers’ views about homophobic bullying in their school, how they may be better equipped to deal with it, and if they would be comfortable delivering a program such as *Pride and Prejudice*.

4.4 Students’ Perceptions of Homophobia and *Pride and Prejudice*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a detailed account of the perceptions that previous student participants may hold towards *Pride and Prejudice* remains largely unknown. Although Higgins et al. (2001) conducted a form of process evaluation of students’ opinions of the program in the form of a five-point Likert-type scale, this has only generated overall information about its perceived difficulty and does not indicate which aspects of the program are perceived to be most beneficial or salient. Students reported a mid-range score indicating that that they neither found the program too
difficult, nor too easy. Higgins et al. also reported that their sample expressed a
desire for further exploration of same-sex issues and content in their school
curricula, but there is no further explanation for these views. Similarly, Bridge
(2007) assessed the students’ perceived difficulty of the program using a
similar five point scale, and found that they also evaluated the program’s
difficulty as moderate. Bridge also reported that over 90 per cent of students in
his sample evaluated the program positively scoring 3.5 or above, and 96 per
cent found it enjoyable and interesting. However, the justifications that
students hold for evaluating the program in this manner are also missing, or
unexplored in Bridge’s review.

Although students in the two previous trials have evaluated *Pride and
Prejudice* favourably, it would be useful to learn exactly which aspects they
found interesting, educative and how participation in the program may have
shaped or altered their attitudes towards homophobia and SSAY. Although the
program contains a set of sentence stems that students can complete regarding
their experiences of the program, it seems that neither Higgins et al. (2001) nor
Bridge (2007) have analysed this data thematically. A complete thematic
analysis may reveal the reasons that participants enjoyed this program, and in
what respects they may consider that their attitudes towards gay people and
homophobia have changed as a result of the program. In light of a need to learn
more about which specific aspects of *Pride and Prejudice* students find most
appealing, or useful in terms of educating them about the mechanisms of
homophobia, how it develops and its detrimental impact on SSAY, the current
research will provide a qualitative analysis of students’ perceptions of the program, based on the post-program evaluation sentence stems (Appendix A).

4.5 Aims and Hypotheses

According to the mixed method approach (e.g., Mason, 2006) taken in this thesis of both qualitative and quantitative studies, the quantitative study is oriented by hypotheses, while the qualitative study is oriented by study aims. The current research will therefore attempt to address many of the limitations of the previous studies by examining homophobia and the program *Pride and Prejudice*, using a multi-measures and multi-methods approach. First, Study One will be based on a repeated measures controlled study with cluster randomisation.

As discussed in previous chapters, homophobia is a complex prejudice that has affective, cognitive, and behavioural components. Measures that do not tap into these domains may miss important information about the way in which homophobia and homophobic bullying are expressed in adolescents. Study One of the current research will therefore employ a measure that taps into all three components of homophobic attitudes. Based on the literature and theories presented in chapters one through three, this study will measure attitudes towards gay men and lesbians; aggressive, avoidant and cognitive forms of homophobia; immature defence styles, and the social-expressive, defensive, and experiential-schematic functions of homophobia. Therefore, the specific hypotheses for Study One are as follows:
Hypotheses of Study One

The primary outcomes predicted in the study are that when compared to the no-treatment control group, the program will produce statistically significant reductions in levels of homophobia including homophobic aggression, avoidance and negative cognitions, as well as homophobic attitudes towards lesbians and gay men.

The secondary outcomes predicted in this study are that when compared to the no-treatment control group, the program will produce (i) an improvement in the endorsement of the attitude functions of homophobia including social-expressive, defensive and experiential-schematic and (ii) produce a reduction in immature defence styles.

The tertiary outcomes predicted in this study are that participants’ gender and parental levels of education will be associated with the degree of change at post-test assessment, after controlling for program type, in both levels of homophobic aggression and the attitude functions social-expressive and experiential-schematic.

4.5.2 Aims of Qualitative Study (Students)

While this qualitative study serves as a form of program evaluation and is therefore a component of Study One, the aim is also to provide a thorough explanation of students’ perceptions of the program following their participation over the course of the six sessions. Specifically, the aims of this study are to better understand: (i) the trajectory that students have taken in terms of their attitude change from session one to session six of the program,
(ii) the educational framework it has provided in their learning about homophobia, and (iii) their understanding of the impact of homophobic bullying on SSAY. It is also anticipated that this study will enhance the findings from the quantitative study because it should produce additional information about the impact of the program on students’ overall learning about homophobia, which may have been missed by relying solely on the quantitative measures employed pre and post-test.

4.5.3 Aims of Qualitative Study Two (Teachers)

The aim of Study Two is to: (i) make up for a gap in the outcomes literature surrounding teachers’ views of homophobia, (ii) to assess teachers’ interpretations of what constitutes homophobia and homophobic bullying, and (iii) to assess to what extent teachers feel adequately trained to address homophobic bullying – in students and also among school staff. Teachers will therefore have an opportunity to express their views candidly and anonymously via an online questionnaire. The information gleaned through this study should provide further information on the systemic obstacles that remain in reducing homophobic bullying in secondary schools, as well as highlighting the specific training requirements that would need to be considered if teachers are to deliver a program such as *Pride and Prejudice* effectively, and according to the manual.
4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter it was argued that *Pride and Prejudice* is the most appropriate intervention to evaluate, in light of the methodological limitations of the previous two evaluations. The primary study in this thesis will also extend prior research into adolescents and homophobia by employing measures aimed at capturing the complexity of homophobia, including cognitive, avoidant and aggressive forms, attitude functions of homophobia and defence styles. The first component of Study One will therefore comprise a repeated measures controlled study with cluster randomisation employing facilitators who are independent to the author of the program. This study will then examine the views of program students, about their experiences of *Pride and Prejudice*. Qualitative teacher data will be gathered to learn more about the potential structural impediments to attenuating homophobic bullying in secondary schools. The remaining five chapters include the methodological design, the results of Study One and interpretations of the two qualitative studies. In the final chapter, the results are discussed in depth in light of the hypotheses, the qualitative studies, and the prior literature and theories before concluding and outlining future directions to the research.
Chapter 5 Methods

STUDY 1 (Quantitative Methods)

5.1 Participants

Participants were defined as year 10 secondary-school students \( n = 72 \) from a co-educational public secondary school in a North-Western suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Thirty-six were allocated to the control group and 36 to the program group. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 16 years, with an average age of \( M = 15.34, SD = 0.48 \) (program) and \( M = 15.47, SD = 0.51 \) (control) which did not differ statistically significantly between groups. The total number of males was 15 (39.5%) and females 23 (60.5%) in the program group, and 19 (52.8%) males and 15 females (41.7%) in the control group. Three participants completed pre-testing questionnaires but failed to complete post-testing.

5.2 Procedure

Approval for the trial of the *Pride and Prejudice* program was sought and obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Deakin University (Appendix B), and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of Victoria, Australia (Appendix C).

Schools were selected on the basis of their potential need for a manualised anti-homophobia program, based on a review of their existing anti-bullying policies, school-location and the student researcher’s knowledge of teachers who were connected with particular schools in need of anti-
homophobia resources at the time of the research. Twenty-six secondary schools were approached by the student researcher (16 private and 10 public) across the state of Victoria, and one private school in the state of New South Wales. In some instances, this initial contact led to invitations to schools where a thorough presentation of the scope and intentions of the study were outlined to relevant staff members. A co-educational public secondary school situated in Melbourne Australia expressed a strong interest in the program and the research, and a desire to participate. A series of meetings were set up and all the relevant school staff briefed about the nature and outline of the study, and given a copy of the program manual.

Participants from four pre-existing classes were randomly assigned by allocating half the class lists into the program group (2 classes) or control group (2 classes) to ensure that their overall characteristics, such as age, gender, cognitive abilities and levels of prejudice were approximately matched across the groups. Specifically, the student researcher and school chaplain tossed a coin to determine which of the four pre-determined class lists should be allocated to either the control, or the program group. Next, all the pre and post-test booklets were coded so that individual student test booklets remained anonymous and could not be identified without referring to the list of codes and names. Coding allowed the research team to determine if a participant was in the control or program group by marking the letters (C or P) before a number corresponding to the booklet in the numerical sequence. Together, the student researcher pre-coded the control booklets and the school chaplain pre-coded the program booklets.
Flyers (Appendix D) were developed and distributed via email to the caregivers of students in these four existing classes of year 10 students, to inform them of the impending study. Next, the school administrators sent packs to the caregivers of both potential control and program group participants, containing a hard copy of the flyer, demographic data questionnaire form (Appendix E), pre-coded consent forms (Appendix F) and plain language statements for caregivers (Appendix G). Potential student participants were also sent their own pre-coded plain language statement (Appendix H) and consent forms (Appendix I). Initially, a total of 120 invitation packs were sent to the families of potential student participants (60 control and 60 program). Forty-four signed and pre-coded consent forms (student and caregiver) were returned for those students allocated to the program group, and 37 signed consent forms (student and caregiver) were returned for those allocated to the control group.

The caregivers of sixteen program, and 23 control students did not return signed consent forms prior to the pre-testing stage. Six program participants and one control participant withdrew from the study prior to its beginning, without explanation and therefore did not generate any pre or post-test data. Adhering to ethical considerations, the data of those students who withdrew from the study or whose caregivers did not return signed consent forms were not included in any of the analyses. The total return rate of signed consent forms was 67.5%: 61.7% (control) and 73.3% (program). The final number of participants included in the study was 72 (38 program group or 52.77%) and (34 control or 47.22%). Those participants who had been allocated to the
control group participated in their classes as usual, after completing the pre-test questionnaires.

Caregivers of student participants completed an anonymous demographic questionnaire two weeks prior to their child participating in the study. All student participants completed: (1) Pre and post-program questionnaires one week before and one week after program completion, and all program participants completed (2) Post-session evaluation forms at the end of the last session of the program. It is the post-session student evaluation data that forms the basis of the qualitative component to Study One.

Participants completed the pre and post-testing questionnaires together under examination conditions in two groups monitored by two teachers in the same school in which the study took place. Each participant then placed his or her pre-coded and completed booklet into a sealed box marked ‘Confidential – For The Deakin University Research Team Only’, left the room and joined in his or her usual activities. Participants were not allowed to return to the examination room once they had completed the questionnaires.

5.3 Pride and Prejudice (The Program)

As outlined and discussed in chapters three and four, *Pride and Prejudice* is the only manualised anti-homophobia program currently in circulation that has been subject to formal and published research into its effectiveness. Given that the program is the independent variable in Study One, this section of the chapter will begin by describing the content of each session of *Pride and Prejudice*. The program is also unique in that it gently introduces the topic of
homophobia to students, by first exploring stereotypes and perceived
difference, before moving on to homophobia and homophobic bullying. This is
achieved in an emotionally safe atmosphere where a circular learning dynamic
takes place between fellow students and the facilitator, rather than a top-down
approach where the teacher is the expert. Students are encouraged to speak
freely and debate the topics introduced in each session, so that multiple
perspectives are heard and discussed (Witthaus, 2002).

The first session ‘difference and our reactions’ introduces students to the
framework of discrimination and stereotypes using different social groups as
examples, and the attributes that determine whether they are considered
acceptable or unacceptable. In the second session, ‘framing a gender’, gender is
explored and in particular gender roles and stereotypes, and how these act as
social structures which constrain what is possible for men and women in terms
of behaviour, occupation, and demonstrations of affection and in what
circumstances. The third session, ‘not everyone’s straight’ introduces the
concept of homophobia, its associated slurs and behaviours, and the common
stereotypes surrounding gay people. The fourth session ‘all your questions
answered’ presents answers to typical questions that students would likely pose
to gay and lesbian youth after following the stories of the actors in the DVD
who come out to the class. The fifth session, ‘What’s it got to do with me’,
explores the students’ reactions to the characters in the DVD and the
prevalence of gay and lesbian people, and also encourages participation in
homework that challenges them to consider the positions of SSAY in the
school. In the final session, ‘bringing it all together’, the program content is
reviewed in its totality. Students are encouraged to think about how they might better support SSAY in their school, armed with the knowledge of what constitutes homophobia and homophobic bullying.

5.4 Training and Program Delivery

Two weeks prior to facilitation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the author Daniel Witthaus, trained both the student researcher (Pennington) and the school chaplain separately over two full days, on how to deliver the program and its content according to the manual. This aspect of the research was to ensure program fidelity. The program sessions took place over five consecutive weeks and were administered to two separate groups of students (herein known as the program group) on the same day, and consecutively. Contrary to the standard protocol, sessions five and six of the program occurred within the same week due to class conflicts within the school’s schedule. Session five occurred on a Tuesday and session six on a Friday.

The program was facilitated by the school chaplain who, although known to the students, did not teach any class subjects at the school, and was co-facilitated by the student researcher. A teacher from the school, also known to the students, was present at each of the sessions. In addition to being a legal requirement in the state of Victoria, Australia, this teacher was also to oversee, class manage and to learn how the program was conducted and therefore served as a firsthand observer of its delivery. These teachers were not required to participate directly in any activities of the program.
5.5 Measures

5.5.1 Demographic Variables

An anonymous and pre-coded demographic data questionnaire form (Appendix E) was developed for this study in order to glean information directly from participating students’ primary caregivers. Demographic data included that which related directly to students including gender and age, and also to the students’ caregivers and family including the relationship to the student of the person completing the form (e.g. biological parent, step parent, foster parent, other caregiver etc.), relationship status of parents (legally married, partnered, de facto, single parent etc.), relationship duration, highest level of parental education and the degree of the family’s religious convictions or beliefs. In terms of this latter question, caregivers were asked, ‘Using the nine-point scale shown below, please tick the box below the number on the scale which corresponds to the strength of your family’s religious convictions or beliefs’. The Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (not at all religious) to 9 (strongly religious).

5.5.2 Defence Styles (Mechanisms)

Defence styles were measured using The DSQ-40 (Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993) (Appendix J). The DSQ-40 is a short form of the original 88-item Defence Style Questionnaire developed by Bond, Gardner, Christian and Sigal (1983). Currently the most frequently used measure for defence styles (Chabrol et al., 2005), the DSQ-40 is designed to measure defence mechanisms as described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision* (DSM-IV-TR) (APA, 2000). The DSQ-40 comprises 20 defence
mechanisms in total, which are subsumed under three subscales (mature, neurotic and immature). Each of the 20 defences comprises two items. Respondents use a nine-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 9 (‘strongly agree’) to rate the extent to which they agree with each statement that corresponds to each item. The mature factor is made up of four defences (humour, sublimation, suppression and anticipation) and contains items such as ‘I work out my anxiety by doing something constructive like painting or woodwork’ (sublimation). The neurotic factor contains a further four defences (undoing, pseudo-altruism, reaction-formation and idealisation) and corresponds to items such as ‘I always feel that someone I know is like a guardian angel’ (idealisation). Finally, the immature factor comprises 12 defences (projection, acting out, passive-aggression, autistic fantasy, isolation, devaluation, denial, displacement, splitting, dissociation, rationalisation and somatisation) and contains items such as ‘As far as I’m concerned, people are either good or bad’ (splitting) (Andrews et al., 1993). Subscale total scores (for both the mature and neurotic scales individually) range from 4 to 36, and from 12 to 108 (for the immature scale), with higher scores indicating a stronger endorsement and use of that particular set of defence mechanisms.

Andrews et al. (1993) describe the coefficient-alphas for the three subscales as moderate to high. In related research, Watson and Sinha (1998) reported an overall internal consistency level of ($\alpha = .80$), whereas more recently, Zeigler-Hill and Pratt (2007) reported reliabilities for the immature defence subscale ($\alpha = .80$), mature ($\alpha = .59$), and neurotic ($\alpha = .54$). For the present sample of participants, internal consistencies were similar to Zeigler-
Hill and Pratt’s: mature ($\alpha = .56$), neurotic ($\alpha = .63$) and immature ($\alpha = 0.83$).

In other research, Hayashi, Miyake and Minakawa (2004) found that a Japanese version of the instrument also demonstrated concurrent validity with scales on the 80-item Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI) (Eysenck, 1959).

Specifically, there was a statistically significant correlation between the Extraversion tendency scale of the MPI and mature defences on the DSQ-40 ($r = .15$) and also neurotic defences ($r = .11$) and immature defences ($r = -.19$).

There were also statistically significant correlations between the neurotic tendency scale of the MPI and neurotic defence styles ($r = .25$), the immature defence styles ($r = .46$) and the mature defence styles ($r = -.18$). Test-retest reliability on their sample ($n = 284$) after two months represented as the mean difference of each item’s retest and original test scores, produced an average difference of ($r = .23$). Of all the items, 26 demonstrated no statistically significant differences.

**5.5.3 Homophobia**

Homophobia will be measured in two different ways in Study One. First, one of the scales employed explores homophobic prejudice towards both gay men and lesbians combined. The scale includes three subscales which tap into three different types of homophobic reactions based on avoidance, negative cognitions or aggressive tendencies. It is therefore anticipated that this scale will elucidate the most common form of homophobia in the current sample.

Second, the attitudes towards gay men and lesbians short form scales (ATLG-S and ATLS-S) devised by Herek (1984b) (Appendix K) divides homophobia according to that based on whether the target is a gay male or female. This is
because homophobic attitudes may differ based on the gender of the participant and the target (Herek, 1984a, 1988).

The homophobia scale developed by Wright et al. (1999) (Appendix L) is a 25-item measure of homophobia. Participants use a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to rate their thoughts, feelings and likely behaviours towards gay people. Despite the existence of other measures of homophobia, the homophobia scale was favoured in the present study as it includes not only cognitive and avoidant subscales but also a component that assesses intentions to commit aggressive behaviour which was expected to be a distinct manifestation of male adolescent homophobia, and has previously been found to be associated with the use of more immature psychological defence mechanisms (e.g. Lewis & White, 2009). O’Donohue and Caselles (1993) posit that if homophobia is essentially an anxiety laden and phobic response to gay and lesbian people, then it follows that the behavioural element should be aggressive or avoidant. The homophobia scale is currently the only valid and reliable measure of homophobia with this added component.

The scale comprises three overarching subscales. Subscales one and two contain 10 items each, such as ‘If I discovered a friend was gay, I would end the friendship’ (avoidance) and ‘I would hit a homosexual for coming on to me’ (aggression). The third subscale (negative cognitions) contains five items such as ‘homosexuality is acceptable to me’. Subscale scores range from 5 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher levels of homophobia. An overall reliability coefficient was reported by Wright et al. (1999) to be (\(\alpha = .94\)) indicating high internal consistency and measurement of a stable construct, and
a test-retest reliability after one week of \((r = .96)\). Wright et al. found a statistically significant correlation between the index of homophobia (IPH) (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980) and the homophobia scale \((r = .66, p < .01)\) indicating concurrent validity between the two measures of the construct of homophobia.

Other studies employing nonclinical samples have reported equally strong internal consistencies (e.g. Parrott, Adams, & Zeichner, 2002; Parrott & Zeichner, 2006). Parrott et al. (2002) also established convergent validity between the hypermasculinity index (HI) (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984) and the homophobia scale. Wright et al. (1999) also found a positive correlation between the two measures. They assessed discriminant validity and there were no statistically significant correlations between the authors’ measures of alcoholism, depression, trait anxiety or sexual coercion. However, a positive correlation was found between measures of depression and anxiety and the negative cognitions subscale of the homophobia scale. For the present sample of participants, individual subscale consistencies were: (avoidance) \((\alpha = .89)\), (aggression) \((\alpha = .68)\) and (negative cognitions) \((\alpha = .81)\).

Herek (1984b) condensed his original 20-item version of the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men scale (ATLG) to its short form equivalent, while maintaining its internal consistency reliability. Both the original scale and its shorter version have undergone extensive testing for factor structure, item analysis, construct validity and reliability (Herek, 1984a, 1984b, 1988). The ATLG-S is a 10-item scale with five statements concerning attitudes toward lesbians (ATL subscale) (e.g. ‘lesbians just can’t fit into our society’) and five
statements directed at gay men (ATG subscale) (e.g. ‘I think male homosexuals are disgusting’) (Herek, 1988). Following Herek’s (1988) recommendations, participants use a nine-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 9 (‘strongly agree’) to rate the extent to which they agree with the statement pertaining to the particular subscale item.

A score of five serves as the midpoint and indicates a neutral or uncertain response to the statement. Higher scores are a reflection of more negatively held attitudes towards gay people (male and/or female). Herek (1988, 1994) reports that internal consistencies of the ATLG-S range from (\(\alpha = .90\) to .95) and test-retest reliability (\(r = .90\)). More recently, reliabilities have been reported ranging from (\(\alpha = .89\)) (Kissinger, Lee, Twitty & Kisner, 2009), (\(\alpha = .96\)) (Poteat, 2008) and (\(\alpha = .94\)) (White & Kurpius, 2002). For the present sample, internal consistencies were: ATL-S (\(\alpha = .63\)), and ATG-S (\(\alpha = .86\)).

5.5.4 The Functions of Homophobic Attitudes

The attitude functions inventory (AFI) (Herek, 1987a) (Appendix M) is designed to measure the personal and psychological advantages of holding attitudes towards various stigmatised groups. Herek originally validated different versions of the scale by assessing attitudes towards different stigmatised subgroups including AIDS patients, gay people, cancer patients, and those with a diagnosable mental illness. Herek’s (1987a) reasoning behind the development of the AFI as a measure of homophobia is based on the premise that prejudice as an attitude, is influenced by one’s peer group and important others, one’s moral and value system, psychological defence styles, and contact with openly gay or lesbian people. The underlying notion is that
humans express particular attitudes because they are psychologically or personally beneficial. For example, Herek’s social-expressive attitude function of homophobia relates to one’s attitudes based on those of one’s peers, because agreeing with their perception of this minority group leads to peer-approval, or conversely reduces the chances of peer-rejection. Similarly, Herek’s defensive function relates to feelings of insecurity about an emerging homosexual orientation or inadequacy about fitting into prescribed gender roles, which may lead one to feel repulsion at homosexuality which in turn leads to the need to defend against this anxiety, and thereby reduce the associated stress and discomfort.

The AFI yields scores on four subscales corresponding to the attitude function categories devised by Herek (1987a). Participants use a nine-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all true of me, to 9 = very true of me) to indicate the extent to which each statement relates to them. The experiential-schematic function (attitudes based on past experience with known gay men or lesbians) contains items such as ‘my opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on whether or not someone I care about is gay’; the social-expressive function (attitudes based on group membership/solidarity) ‘my opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on learning how gay people are viewed by the people whose opinions I most respect’; the defensive function (attitudes based on the relief of intrapsychic anxiety) ‘my opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on my personal feelings of discomfort or revulsion at homosexuality’, and the value-expressive function (attitudes about gay men and lesbians are based on the expression of values important to one’s self-
concept) ‘my opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on my moral beliefs about how things should be’. With the exception of the experiential-schematic subscale which contains four items, the remaining subscales all contain two items each. Participants will therefore likely endorse more than one function that corresponds to and exerts an influence on their attitudes towards gay people.

In the current study, AFI responses will be used to assess participants’ changes in their endorsement of these functions of homophobia from pre to post-assessment, in order to tap into the subtle and yet influential personally beneficial reasons behind their attitudes towards gay people, and to further elucidate the primary outcome measures. Responses to items on each function are summed, resulting in a continuous total score for each of the attitude functions. Herek (1987a) reported internal consistencies for the experiential, social-expressive, defensive and value-expressive functions to be (\(\alpha = .81, .75, .80, \) and .87) respectively. Recent studies employing the AFI have reported varying internal consistency reliabilities depending on the subscale. For example, Barron, Struckman-Johnson, Quevillon, and Banka (2008) found (\(\alpha = .63, .71, .85, \) and .62) for the same subscales. Internal consistency reliabilities in the current study were: experiential-schematic (\(\alpha = .80\)), social-expressive (\(\alpha = .76\)), defensive (\(\alpha = .83\)), and value-expressive (\(\alpha = .51\)). Given the low reliability coefficients calculated for the value-expressive attitude function, it was decided not to include the results on this function in any of the data analyses.
5.6 Data Analysis

Following coding, all data was entered into SPSS (version 18) and then screened and cleaned. During data screening, less than five per cent of the data set was found to be incomplete and these were randomly spread across the cases. However, three cases had missing data across all post-test variables. This was because these participants did not participate in the post-test assessment yet these pre-data were retained in the baseline data analyses. It was decided that missing data would not be replaced or imputed in any way for the current analyses, given the small amount of missing data, and in order to maintain the integrity and ecological validity of the data set. However, pair-wise deletion was performed across all statistical analyses to preserve as much data as possible. This option only excludes cases if the data required for a particular analysis is missing, as opposed to excluding cases listwise, which only includes cases if there is data on all the variables for that case (Pallant, 2005). It is for this reason that sample sizes may vary by a few cases between control and program groups across some of the analyses performed. In total, five univariate outliers were identified and then reduced to values equal to three standard deviations above or below the mean for each variable, in order to reduce their potential influence (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The normality of the distribution of scores was assessed, and no significant problems were identified. All the assumptions of parametric statistics were met.

Chi square tests for nominal variables and independent samples t test analyses for interval variables were first performed, in order to ascertain whether the program and control groups were similar across the demographic
variables at baseline. As explained previously in this chapter, this demographic information was originally procured from the caregivers’ questionnaires prior to pre-testing the students. Second, a series of mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVAs) was used to investigate the effect of the program on the primary outcome measures, that is, students’ levels of homophobia. The same techniques were also used to examine the effect of the program on the secondary outcome variables, of attitude functions and defence styles.

There were two independent variables: a between-subjects variable (Group: program/control) and a within subjects variable (Time: pre program/post program). The significance value obtained by the interaction effect (Group x Time) will be taken as an indication that there are statistically significant differences between the program and control groups on change in mean scores from pre to post assessment on each dependent variable. Partial eta squared was used as an effect size for the ANOVAs. Means, standard deviations, tests for group differences in mean scores from pre to post assessment, correlations and effect sizes were also reported for the dependent variables. Pre and post-score correlations were calculated to ascertain whether the degree of change from pre to post assessment within groups was homogeneous and is reported in terms of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson’s $r$). Pearson’s $r$ measures the association or linearity between two variables and varies from $+1$ (there is a perfect positive relationship between variables) to $-1$ (there is a perfect negative relationship between the variables) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).
Mean change scores were calculated by subtracting post from pre
assessment means. Cohen’s $d$ has been calculated for the standardised mean
difference between each dependent variable. Cohen’s $d$ is a measure of the
strength of the difference (effect size) between two groups, calculated by using
the difference between the two groups’ means divided by the standard
deviation of either group (Cohen, 1988). The difference in effect sizes between
program and control group is reported. These results will be considered
according to the criteria proposed by Cohen in terms of small (0 to .2), medium
(.2 to .8) and large (> .8) effect sizes.

It was considered appropriate to utilise a series of between-within
ANOVAs rather than multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) despite the
existence of several dependent variables, and the subsequent increased risk of
Type I error rates. This was primarily due to the small sample size which
would have been much less suitable for MANOVA, and a desire for parsimony
in the interpretation of outcomes across the primary and secondary outcome
measures, which is more likely achieved when performing ANOVA compared
to MANOVA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

However, due to the existence of multiple ANOVAs and the increased
risk of Type I error inflation, the alpha level for significance testing of effects
was corrected by using the False Discovery Rate Method (FDR) (Benjamin &
Hochberg, 1995). The FDR technique not only results in greater power in the
detection of true effects, but also controls for the family wise error rate
(Benjamin & Hochberg, 1995; Keselman, Cribbie, & Holland, 2002). The FDR
criterion was chosen in preference to other correction methods (e.g. the
Bonferroni Correction Method) because the former is the least conservative. As such, it is more appropriate when the sample size is small, such as in the current study.

When using the FDR method, it is first necessary to calculate the number of individual tests and apply a probability value such as \( p = .05 \). The probability values are ordered and then assigned indices that equal the number of overall tests. Next, a threshold or FDR is calculated for the probability values. The \( p \) values are then compared to the threshold values of that test. By controlling the FDR at .05, only a small percentage of the rejected tests are invalid. However, using the Bonferroni Correction Method for the same amount of tests would result in rejecting most of the tests, even when the results are not spurious, owing to the stringent probability values required for statistical significance, which is more appropriate with larger sample sizes. For the current analyses, the order in which the tests were conducted was in the following order: The homophobia subscales (Wright et al., 1999), the attitudes towards gay men and lesbians scales (Herek, 1984b), the attitude functions scales (Herek, 1987a) and finally, the defence styles subscales (Andrews et al., 1999).

The alpha criterion for the ANOVA effects are therefore based on FDR corrections and these are clearly stated in both the textual and tabular components of the results along with the \( p \) values obtained. Finally, three hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted using homophobic aggression, and the attitude functions (experiential-schematic and social-expressive) as criterion variables, and program type, gender, and parental
education as predictor variables. In terms of the coding of these variables, program type was coded as (1 = program, 0 = control), gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and parental education (1 = year 7-10 high school, 2 = completion of year 10, 3 = completion of year 11, 4= completion of year 12, 5 = completion of TAFE, 6 = completion of a university degree). The next section of this chapter will describe the qualitative component of Study One which refers to the post-program student evaluation.
Qualitative Methods

Students’ Appraisals of *Pride and Prejudice*

5.7 Post-Program Qualitative Evaluation

As previously mentioned, a one page qualitative program evaluation sheet formed part of the manualised program (Appendix A). This post-program evaluation comprised nine sentence stems aimed at eliciting qualitative feedback from student participants about issues such as the program content (e.g. the most useful things in the program were...), views about particular topics (e.g. an example of homophobia is...), and which aspects of the program were the most salient (e.g. the most useful things in the program were...). The evaluation acted as a qualitative gauge of participants’ perceptions and grasp of some of the most relevant material covered in the program over the course of six sessions. It also provided an indication of the depth of knowledge attained and potential indications of how attitudes towards SSAY and homophobia may have changed, as a result of participation in the program. However, given the potential richness of the data gleaned from this evaluation, it was decided to subject participants’ responses to a complete analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) rather than merely calculating the total number of responses to a given sentence stem.

Content analysis was considered an appropriate approach to analysing the data because it was recorded in written form, as opposed to spoken in the context of an interview. This approach is essentially a tool that first allows for the search of regularities of units of analysis (words), based on the frequency with which these are commonly used and understood. Meanings are grouped
and assigned a content variable, and it is the frequency and manner in which particular meanings are employed, that is used to analyse the data for patterns and structures (themes). Krippendorff (1980, p. 88) defines a content variable in the following way ‘...a variable that partitions a set of all recording units into mutually exclusive classes.’ Unlike conversation analysis, content analysis assumes that meanings are not built up over many conversations. Given that the participants completed sentence stems and were therefore not involved in conversations about their perceptions, it was not appropriate to utilise conversation analysis.

Analysing the data in this manner allowed a glimpse into the cognitive trajectories that these students took as they reflected on their own learning and grasp of the material presented in the program. Importantly, the evaluations have given rise to a qualitative chapter that is replete with insightful excerpts. Together, these suggest that students have taken on most of the key concepts that Pride and Prejudice aims to deliver, and at times have either modified or expanded their understanding of gay people, homophobia and its detrimental consequences to fellow gay and lesbian students.

The qualitative program evaluation was handed out to all participants in the treatment program at the end of the sixth and final session. A total of \( n = 35 \) participants were present at the sixth and final session of the program which represents 92 per cent of the overall treatment sample. It is anticipated that this qualitative program evaluation along with the teacher’s qualitative study (Study Two) will serve to enhance and enrich the findings from the quantitative data component of the research.
5.8 Data Coding

In keeping with the theoretical approach of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980), coding was organised around both manifest and latent content in order to sort it into meaningful themes that respected the essence of participants’ written responses together with the theoretical and conceptual framework on which *Pride and Prejudice* is founded. As a preamble to searching for overarching structures, the coding process first identified all manifest content in the data which took into consideration the nature of and content of the sentence stems. Next, all latent content was coded and this pertained to the manner in which underlying meanings were inferred or implied. Analysing the data in this way allowed themes and categories to emerge from the quotes. Using the manifest content from student quotes and sentence stems, data was categorised according to the following six overarching domains or themes: 1) Stereotypes and perceptions; 2) The proportion of gay and lesbian people; 3) Homophobia and its consequences; 4) The program’s impact on me; 5) Suggested changes to the program; and 6) Further comments.

Next, the student researcher and associate supervisor independently read all transcripts and coded quotations according to these domains. Next, potential subthemes were conceptualised, founded on the framework underpinning the program and the prior literature on homophobic bullying and relevant theories. Additional emergent categories and sub-categories were inductively formed that did not relate to pre-conceived theoretical constructs, but instead relied more on the latent content. The analysis continued until it was not possible to locate further underlying uniformities to create either categories or
subcategories. A final review of the thematic categories in light of the initial overarching themes allowed for a synthesis and reduction of conceptual domains. The comparative method of content analysis involved comparing and contrasting students’ responses to sentence stems with all the other quotations and themes, in an effort to both unite quotes with similar meaning, and to separate and make clear, quotes with alternative meanings (Babbie, 2005).

A final consensus was achieved between the student researcher (Pennington) and the associate supervisor (Knight) leading to the final main themes and subthemes: ‘No longer visible’ (with subthemes ‘Just like us but different’ and ‘They are everywhere’); and ‘From ignorance to insight’ (with subthemes ‘homophobia and its impact’ and ‘empathy and understanding’). It is from these final thematic categories that participant quotes are incorporated into the interpretation of the qualitative data from this study, to allow a direct glimpse into the journey that the students have taken in their participation in the program, and how they arrived at an understanding of the construct of homophobia, homophobic bullying and its consequences.
STUDY TWO

Teachers’ Views of Homophobia and the Obstacles to Attenuating it

Unlike the qualitative component of Study One, whereby student participants in the program were given pre-designed evaluation forms which are part of *Pride and Prejudice* to complete at the end of the last program session, teachers were invited to participate in the second study from across the school body. However, these teachers did not have to be directly involved in *Pride and Prejudice* or even teach subjects that were related to sex education, social sciences or social inclusion. The study was open to all permanent teaching staff, and this served as the only form of inclusion criterion.

5.9 Recruitment and Data Collection

After obtaining the school’s informed consent for teachers to be involved in the research (Appendix N), the assistant principal placed a brief notice on the school’s internal electronic bulletin board alerting all the permanent teaching staff of the upcoming study and its aims, and encouraged them to participate. A few weeks after this initial stage, the assistant principal of the school announced during a meeting that most teachers attended, that the study would be going online, that participation was voluntary and that teachers could complete the questionnaire anywhere and at a time of their choosing. It was announced that the study would stay open and online for approximately three months and that participating would allow the school to develop better ways to tackle homophobic bullying.
Based on the literature reviewed thus far, it was apparent that in order to successfully implement a program such as *Pride and Prejudice*, that more information was required concerning teachers’ perceptions of homophobia, its occurrence and their readiness and confidence to tackle it systematically. A questionnaire was therefore developed (Appendix O) in addition to a plain language statement and consent form (Appendix P). The study was placed online to protect teachers’ identities and anonymity, and to make it easier for them to provide confidential information about homophobic bullying in the same school as that used for the trial of *Pride and Prejudice*. Participating teachers had only to click on a link which would provide them with all the relevant information.

Following approval from the Deakin University Ethics Committee, consent to participate was obtained by clicking a box online, and no identifying information was requested. Participants were first asked to provide some demographic information including gender, age range, and the number of years of employment at the school (Appendix Q), before accessing the eleven-item, online questionnaire. The aim of the questions was to provide information about these teachers’ understanding of homophobia, the remaining obstacles to addressing it in their school, whether a program designed to reduce homophobia might be useful, and whether a student could be accepted as openly gay or lesbian in this school. Overall, it was hoped that these questions might act as a gauge of teachers’ awareness of homophobia and also their readiness to tackle it. For example, the question ‘What do you understand by the term homophobia?’ was designed to procure information about teachers’
knowledge of the term, while the question ‘Have you ever witnessed any form of homophobia by staff or by students and where?’ should indicate whether teachers are correctly distinguishing homophobic bullying from other forms of bullying.

Presumably if teachers are unsure about the definition of homophobia, then citing examples of its occurrence may be difficult. The question ‘If you were to interrupt an example of homophobia by addressing it, what would be the result?’ was designed to assess the degree to which teachers feel confident in intervening in examples of homophobic bullying. If teachers are witnessing homophobia but do not know if, or how far they should go in attempting to address it, then this would presumably serve to indicate to all students that homophobia is acceptable and that redress is futile.

5.10 Data Coding

A similar content analytic approach (Krippendorff, 1980) to that used for the student data was employed to sort, code and analyse teachers’ responses to the pre-designed questionnaires. A form of inter-rater reliability was achieved by the student researcher and the associate supervisor independently reading the transcripts several times and identifying major themes in the data according to the manner in which the data had been coded. Following this process, one overarching theme was initially identified ‘What is homophobia and does it happen here?’ and quotations were coded accordingly. Identified patterns were then expanded and related quotations were combined into subthemes. Themes were then related back to the prior literature which allowed for insights into the
manner in which participants had positioned themselves in relation to the topic of homophobia. The analysis continued until no further patterns or themes could be identified and all the data could be placed under one of the themes. This comparative method of content analysis, described earlier, compares each participant’s response with others’ quotes with similar meaning and then unifies these under the emergent themes (Krippendorff).

By analysing data in this way, those quotations with alternative meanings can then be used to start the process again and develop alternative and more inclusive themes. A final consensus was achieved between the student researcher and associate supervisor leading to the following main theme: ‘What’s the problem and what’s it got to do with me?, and the four subthemes (‘does homophobia happen here?’ ‘action versus inaction’, ‘out on their own’, and, ‘a question of priorities’). In the next chapter, the results of the quantitative component of Study One are presented.
Chapter 6 Results

6.1 Demographics

The means, standard deviations, frequencies and results (Chi-Square and t-tests) of the demographic variables pertaining to (age and gender of child, age of caregiver and caregiver status) are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, there were 15 (39.5%) male and 23 (60.5%) female adolescents in the program group. In comparison, there were 19 (52.8%) male and 15 (41.7%) female adolescents in the control group. The frequencies of the male and female children in both groups were not statistically significantly different. A higher number of mothers completed the questionnaire than fathers, or other caregivers for both the program and control group, and this result was approaching statistical significance $[\chi^2 (1) = 1.05, p = .06]$. The majority of those completing the caregiver questionnaires were mothers, and this is to be noted when considering the results of the caregiver data. In some instances, caregivers did not complete particular questions on the demographic questionnaires and this must also be taken into consideration when considering the results. This will be highlighted in the relevant section of the demographic results.

The means, standard deviations, frequencies and results (Chi-Square and t-tests) of the demographic variables pertaining to (caregiver relationship status and duration, and employment status) are presented in Table 2. The majority of caregivers of students in the study consisted of legally married heterosexual couples. Twenty-three (60.5%) were parents of children in the program group.
and 20 (55.6%) were parents of children in the control group. Moreover, there were no statistically significant differences between any category of relationship status of the caregivers of children in either the program or control groups. The mean relationship duration for all categories of caregivers for children in the program group was slightly longer ($M = 20.86, SD = 5.29$) than the control group ($M = 18.67, SD = 5.36$). However, this difference was not significant. Four caregivers of children in the program group, and five of children in the control group did not supply details of their caregiver status on the demographic information questionnaire and therefore are not included in these results.

In terms of employment status of caregivers completing the demographic questionnaire, 15 (39.5%) caregivers of children in the program group were working full time, versus 14 (36.8%) working part time. However, a higher frequency of caregivers (20, or 55.6%) of children in the control group reported working full time, and (10, or 27.8%) part time. These differences were not statistically significant. In terms of the employment status of partners of caregivers completing the questionnaires for children in the program group, 22 (57.9%) were working full time, and 3 (7.9%) part time. For partners of caregivers of children in the control group, 18 (50%) were working full time and 2 (5.6%) part time. These differences were not statistically significant.

The means, standard deviations, frequencies and results (Chi-Square and t-tests) of the demographic variables pertaining to (caregiver’s partner’s employment status, highest levels of caregiver educational attainment and familial religiosity) are presented in Table 3. There were similar reported
frequencies of levels of educational attainment of caregivers completing the demographic questionnaire. For example, 11 (28.9%) of those caregivers of children in the program group had completed a university degree versus 10 (27.7%) caregivers of children in the control group. However, none of the frequencies of reported educational levels were statistically significant across program versus control groups. Six caregivers of children in the program group did not supply information relating to highest levels of educational attainment, and four caregivers of children in the control group. This should be considered when viewing the results on this variable. The mean degree of familial religiosity for the program group \( M = 3.88, SD = 2.69 \) was similar to that of the control group \( M = 3.66, SD = 2.25 \) and this was not statistically significant.

Together, the overall similarity of the program and control groups suggests that the groups were reasonably well matched. Any differences found at post-test assessment are more likely to be an effect of the program rather than reflecting any pre-existing demographic differences between the two groups.

Table 4 presents the intercorrelations of the main study variables in terms of Pearson’s \( r \). Correlations between the main study variables suggest that measures performed in the manner expected. For example, subscales for homophobia were generally strongly correlated ranging from \( r = .50 \) to \( r = .85 \). While defense mechanisms were moderately correlated with each other, only the immature defenses were significantly correlated with aggressive forms of homophobia (aggression). The defensive attitude function (Herek, 1987a) was
well correlated with measures of homophobia, but interestingly not with the other defence style subscales.
Table 1
*Means, Standard Deviations, Frequencies, Chi-Square and t-test Results for the Demographic Features (age and gender of child, age and status of caregiver)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Control</th>
<th>(\chi^2)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>15.47</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.04</td>
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</tr>
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<td>(source)</td>
<td>44.47</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>45.94</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<td><strong>Age Caregiver 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(partner)</td>
<td>48.34</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>47.93</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>R'ship to child</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(source of data)</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2

**Means, Standard Deviations, Frequencies, Chi-Square and t-test Results for the Demographic Features (caregivers relationship status and duration, employment status)**

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<th>( t )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
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<td><strong>Caregivers relationship status</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>legally married</td>
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<td>20 55.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>defacto/partnered</td>
<td>2 5.3</td>
<td>2 5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>separated/divorced</td>
<td>7 18.4</td>
<td>6 16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>single parent</td>
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<td>with step parent</td>
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<td>Caregiver (source)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>full time</td>
<td>15 39.5</td>
<td>20 55.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>part time</td>
<td>14 36.8</td>
<td>10 27.8</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>.27</td>
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Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, Frequencies, Chi-Square and t-test Results for the Demographic Features (caregiver partner employment status, highest level of caregiver education and familial religiosity)

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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 7-10 High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>completion yr 10</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>(Employment partner) full time</td>
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<td>completion yr 11</td>
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<td>completion yr 12</td>
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<td>TAFE or certificate</td>
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<td>18.4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>3.66</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
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Table 4

Pearson’s Correlation Matrix for Main Study Variables

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Gender</td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>-.51**</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td>-.57**</td>
<td>-.51**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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Notes. The variable gender was analysed using the point-biserial correlation [male = 0, female = 1]. * p < .05, ** p < .001
6.2 Primary Outcomes for Homophobia

As mentioned at the end of chapter four, it was predicted in the first hypothesis that compared to the no-treatment control group, the program would produce reductions in levels of homophobic aggression, avoidance and negative cognitions, as well as homophobic attitudes towards gay men and lesbians at post-test assessment. Results for the test of this hypothesis are presented in Tables 5 and 6 respectively.

In terms of homophobic aggression, although there were no statistically significant main effects of time or group, a statistically significant interaction effect was found \([F(1, 69) = 4.19, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06]\). Although this interaction was statistically significant, only 5.7\% of the observed variance in the dependent variable can be attributed to the program group. The effect sizes of the program and control groups indicate that the control group (Cohen’s \(d = -.21\)) experienced a small to moderate deterioration compared to the program group (Cohen’s \(d = .08\)) which experienced a slight improvement. The mean change for the aggression subscale was \((M = -.5)\) from pre to post assessment for the program group, which was not statistically significant. However, there was a statistically significant worsening of aggression for the control group \((t(34) = -2.04, p = .05)\). The mean change from pre to post assessment was \((M = 1.17)\).

In terms of homophobic avoidance, there were no statistically significant main effects for time, or group, nor any interaction effects. The effect sizes of the program and control groups indicate that the majority of change occurred in
the control group (Cohen’s $d = -.18$) compared to the program group (Cohen’s $d = .01$). The program produced a negligible improvement in levels of this variable, while the control group produced a slight worsening on this variable. These variations were not statistically significant.

In terms of homophobic negative cognitions, there were no statistically significant main effects for time or group, nor any interaction effects. There was a very slight worsening in the control group (Cohen’s $d = -.02$) and a very slight improvement in the program group (Cohen’s $d = .03$) although none of the variations were statistically significant, suggesting that the program was not effective in reducing cognitive or avoidant forms of homophobia.
Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, Effect Sizes, Mean Change Scores, FDR criterion, and Pearson’s r, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results for the Interaction Effect (group x time) for Homophobic Aggression, Avoidance and Negative Cognitions

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Notes. $r$ = Change in homogeneity of variance from pre to post test; $t$ = significance test of change (Cohen’s $d$) from pre to post test; FDR = False discovery rate criterion; Partial $\eta^2$ = a measure of the effect size of the interaction equal to the proportion of variation. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. 

Table 6
Means, Standard Deviations, Effect Sizes, Mean Change Scores, FDR criterion, and Pearson’s r, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results for the Interaction Effect (group x time) for Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men

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<td><strong>Attitudes (gay men)</strong></td>
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</table>

Notes. $r$ = Change in homogeneity of variance from pre to post test; $t$ = significance test of change (Cohen’s $d$) from pre to post test; FDR = False discovery rate criterion; Partial η² = a measure of effect size of the interaction equal to the proportion of variation. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. 
In terms of attitudes towards lesbians (Table 6), there was a statistically significant main effect of time \[F(1, 69) = 11.08, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .14\]. There was also a statistically significant interaction effect \[F(1, 69) = 4.79, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06\]. These results indicate that almost 14% of the observed variation in the ATLS is accounted for by time, while only 6.5% of the variance can be attributed to the program. In terms of effect sizes, the control group experienced a moderate deterioration (Cohen’s \(d = -.59\)) compared to the program group (Cohen’s \(d = -.11\)) which experienced a small deterioration in attitudes, although this was not statistically significant. The mean change from pre to post assessment was \((M = 3.23)\) for the control group, and \((M = 0.67)\) for the program group. This worsening of attitudes was also statistically significant \([t(34) = -3.77, p < .01]\). These results indicate a greater and significant degree of increase in negative attitudes towards lesbians for the control group compared to the program group at post assessment.

In terms of attitudes towards gay men (Table 6), results indicate that there were no main effects for group or time, and no interaction effects. However, unlike the previously mentioned subscale, the majority of change occurred in the program group which experienced a small improvement (Cohen’s \(d = .15\)) compared to the control group (Cohen’s \(d = -.06\)) which experienced a negligible deterioration. However, none of these variations reached statistical significance, and it is therefore difficult to determine if the program was effective in reducing homophobic attitudes towards gay men as a discrete subgroup.
6.3 Secondary Outcomes: Attitude Functions of Homophobia

It was predicted in the second hypothesis that when compared to the no-treatment control group, that the program would produce an improvement in the endorsement of the social-expressive, defensive and experiential-schematic attitude functions of homophobia. Results for the test of this hypothesis prior to and following the program for both groups are presented in Table 7.

The experiential-schematic function aims to account for homophobic attitudes based on one’s interactions with known gay people (Herek, 1987a, 1988, 1993). The results of this component indicate that there was a statistically significant main effect of time \[ F(1, 70) = 6.49, p = .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09 \]. However the interaction and main effect for group were not statistically significant. This indicates that almost 9% of the observed variation in this variable is accounted for by time. In terms of effect sizes, there were approximately similar and moderate levels of change in endorsement of this attitude across both the control group (Cohen’s \( d = -.31 \)) and program group (Cohen’s \( d = -.32 \)). A similar mean increase in levels of this attitude function from pre to post assessment for both groups was also noted: \( M = 2.27 \) (control) and \( M = 2.19 \) (program). Although this difference did not reach statistical significance in either group, results indicate that the difference was approaching significance for the program group \( t(35) = -1.85, p = .07 \) and to a slightly lesser extent, also for the control group \( t(35) = -1.76, p = .08 \). This indicates that for both program and control groups, opinions tended to be more firmly based on perceived or actual interactions with gay people from pre to post assessment.
The social-expressive function aims to account for homophobic attitudes based on the expression of views, believed to be consistent with those of one’s peer group or important others (Herek, 1987a). The results of this attitude function indicate that there was a statistically significant main effect of time \([F(1, 70) = 4.84, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06]\). There was also a statistically significant interaction effect \([F(1, 70) = 7.26, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09]\). These results indicate that almost 31% of the observed variation in this attitude function was accounted for by time, while 9% of the variance can be attributed to the program group. In terms of effect sizes, a moderate amount of change occurred in the control group (Cohen’s \(d = -.65\)) compared to a negligible amount in the program group (Cohen’s \(d = .07\)). The mean change was \((M = 2.46)\) from pre to post assessment for the control group and was also statistically significant \([t(35) = -3.15, p < .01]\). These results indicate that from pre to post assessment, the control group tended to more strongly endorse the views that they believed were held by their peers in relation to gay men and lesbians compared to the program group, whose mean change was \((M = -.25)\). Although not statistically significant, the program group produced a tendency towards becoming more independent in their thinking about gay men and lesbians.

The defensive function accounts for homophobic attitudes based on the extent to which respondents’ attempt to repress fears or discomfort with their own sexual orientation and inadequacy regarding heterosexist gender roles and characteristics (Herek, 1987a). Results indicate that there were no statistically significant main effects for time or group, or any interaction effects. Effect
sizes were similar for both control and program groups with a slight non statistically significant mean increase in the defensive function for the control group, and a slight non statistically significant mean decrease for the program group, from pre to post assessment. This result indicates a tendency towards a decline in defensive cognitions regarding homosexuality for those in the program group.
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Notes. $r = \text{Change in homogeneity of variance from pre to post test};$ $t = \text{significance test of change (Cohen’s }d\text{) from pre to post test};$ $\text{FDR} = \text{False discovery rate criterion};$ Partial $\eta^2 = \text{a measure of effect size of the interactions equal to the proportion of variation}.$ $^* p < .05,$ $^* * p < .001.$
6.4 Secondary Outcomes: Immature Defence Styles

The second part of this hypothesis predicted that the program would produce a reduction in participants’ immature defence styles from pre to post assessment. Results for the test of this hypothesis for both the program and control groups are presented in Table 8. There were no statistically significant main effects for time or group. However, the interaction effect on immature defences was approaching significance according to the revised FDR alpha criterion.

A negligible amount of improvement occurred on the mature subscale. The majority of this change occurred in the control group (Cohen’s $d = -.15$) compared to the program group (Cohen’s $d = -.04$). However, neither of these variations was statistically significant. Effect sizes for neurotic defences also indicate that the majority of change occurred in the control group (Cohen’s $d = -.13$) compared to the program group (Cohen’s $d = -.09$). Similar to the mature subscale, this change was not statistically significant, but results indicate that the extent to which participants’ neurotic defences worsened was slightly more pronounced in the control group relative to the program group.

As previously mentioned, there were no statistically significant results across any of the defensive functioning scales. However, it is noteworthy that the results indicate that the interaction [$F(1, 70) = 3.70, p = .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$] and main effects of time [$F(1, 70) = 3.54, p = .06$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$], demonstrated a tendency towards statistical significance for immature
defences, even when the alpha level has been conservatively adjusted downwards according to the FDR criterion. These results indicate that about 5% of the observed variation in this defence style is equally accounted for by time and the program group. Although both groups experienced moderate amounts of change, the majority of this change occurred in the control group (Cohen’s $d = -.33$) whose use of immature defences worsened, compared to the program group (Cohen’s $d = .00$), which remained the same on this variable. The mean change ($M = 7.70$) for this variable increased from pre to post assessment for the control group. The control group’s immature defences have worsened from pre to post assessment, and this deterioration was statistically significant [$t(35) = -2.45, p = .02]$.
Table 8

*Means, Standard Deviations, Effect Sizes, Mean Change Scores, FDR criterion, and Pearson’s r, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results for the Interaction Effect (group x time) for The Defence Mechanisms (Mature, Neurotic and Immature)*

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</table>

Notes. *r = Change in homogeneity of variance from pre to post test; t = significance test of change (Cohen’s d) from pre to post test; FDR = False discovery rate criterion; Partial η² = a measure of effect size of the interactions equal to the proportion of variation. * p < or = .05, ** p < .001.
6.5 Predictors of Homophobia

In the third hypothesis, it was predicted that participants’ gender, and parental levels of education would be associated with the degree of change at post-test assessment, after controlling for program type, in both levels of homophobic aggression and the attitude functions social-expressive and experiential-schematic. Tables 9 to 11 represent the results of three hierarchical multiple regression analyses, with the abovementioned criteria and predictor variables.

6.5.1 Homophobic Aggression

Using changes in homophobic aggression as the criterion variable, gender and parental education were entered into stage one, and program type entered into stage two. At stage one, the overall model explained less than half of one per cent of the variation in aggression \( R^2 = .00 \), \( F(2,58) = .08, p = .93 \). After adding program type, the overall model explained an additional six per cent of the variance \( R^2 \) Change = .06), which was approaching statistical significance \( F(1, 57) = 3.53, p = .07 \). While the model as a whole was not statistically significant, and none of the variables made a statistically significant contribution to the model, the variable program type was approaching statistical significance \( \beta = .25, t(57) = 1.88, p = .07 \).

6.5.2 Social-Expressive Attitude Function

Changes in the endorsement of the social-expressive attitude function from pre to post assessment was employed as the criterion variable. The predictor variables gender and parental education were both entered into stage
one, and program type entered into stage two. The model as a whole was found to be statistically significant \[ F(3, 58) = 4.33, \ p = .01 \].

At stage one, the model explained eight per cent of the variation in the criterion variable (\( R^2 = .08 \)). After including program type, the overall model explained an additional 10.7 per cent of the variance (\( R^2 \) Change = .11). This change in \( R^2 \) was also statistically significant \[ F(1, 58) = 7.57, \ p = .01 \]. In this model, program type was the most important and statistically significant predictor of change in the endorsement of the social-expressive attitude function \[ \text{Beta} = .33, t(58) = 2.75, \ p = .01 \], followed by levels of parental education \[ \text{Beta} = -.30, t(58) = -2.51, \ p = .02 \]. Gender did not make a statistically significant contribution to the model.

6.5.3 Experiential-Schematic Attitude Function

Finally, change in the endorsement of the experiential-schematic attitude function was the criterion variable. The predictor variables gender and parental education were both entered into stage one. Program type was entered into stage two. The model as a whole was not statistically significant. At stage one, the model explained just over two per cent of the variation in the criterion variable (\( R^2 = .02 \)). The addition of the variable program type explained virtually no further variance (\( R^2 \) Change = .00) to the overall model \[ F(1, 58) = .06, \ p = .81 \]. Although not statistically significant, gender was the most important predictor in the model \[ \text{Beta} = -.14, t(58) = -1.07, \ p = .29 \].
Table 9
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Changes in Levels of Homophobic Aggression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>sr</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>R²</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 10
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Changes in Levels of the Social-Expressive Attitude Function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>sr</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Changes in Levels of Experiential-Schematic Attitude Function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Beta</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
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Notes. * p < or = .05, ** p < .001
Having reviewed the results of Study One, the following two chapters will explore the results and interpretations of the two qualitative studies. The first of these pertains to the student evaluations of their participation in *Pride and Prejudice* and forms the qualitative component of Study One. Chapter eight introduces Study Two, which as explained previously, is a thorough interpretation of the teachers’ perceptions of homophobia and the remaining obstacles to attenuating it in the same school in which *Pride and Prejudice* was trialled.
Chapter 7 Students’ Appraisals of *Pride and Prejudice*

7.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will present and explore the themes that were identified in chapter five (methods), as they pertain to the student responses to the sentence stems of the *Pride and Prejudice* program evaluation questionnaire (Appendix A). Overall, the data suggest that participants have not only learnt about homophobia and its detrimental impact, but that in many cases, the program has fostered a newfound understanding of SSAY as a group. In particular, there was an awareness of the kinds of issues that same-sex attracted students are likely to encounter when confronted with homophobia and homophobic bullying. The participant data has lent itself to two major themes, each with two subthemes. Based on the overall interpretation of the data, Figure 1 represents a visual depiction of the potential learning trajectories taken by participants regarding homophobia and its consequences, over the course of the program.

The first major structure to emerge from the qualitative data analysis, ‘*no longer invisible*’ describes students’ awareness of gay people as a substantial minority group. A group consisting of those who are often assumed to be heterosexual, unless their behaviour and appearance is stereotypically homosexual or the individual is forthright about his or her sexual orientation. It has two corresponding subthemes ‘*they’re everywhere*’ and ‘*just like us but different*’ which reflect the majority of participants’ responses, suggesting that the program not only brought to their awareness the existence of other gay
students and gay people generally, but also facilitated breaking down taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypes. The first structure could therefore be conceived of as a foundation theme, as it paves the way for a deeper knowledge acquisition about homophobia and its impact on fellow gay students.

The second major structure ‘from ignorance to insight’ reflects the program’s ultimate learning goal, and the overall journey that participants have taken during the course of the program. The data suggest that students’ stereotypes, combined with gay students’ general invisibility, mean that participants had not adequately or previously given much thought to homophobic bullying and its impact. On the whole, responses indicate that the program has filled a much-needed gap in these students’ education about homophobia. They were not only informed about gay youth, their similarities, and the kinds of struggles that they face, but about the negative impact and injustice that homophobia and homophobic bullying represent, especially in the school context.

Two subthemes have been derived from this second major structure and depict the trajectory that many students have taken during the program in terms of awareness building and potential for attitude change. The first of these, ‘homophobia and its impact’ reflects participants’ understanding of the prejudicial nature of homophobia and how it, like all prejudice, can be used as a weapon to deride and bully others based on perceived difference. Embedded in some students’ responses is not only an understanding of homophobia, but how one’s actions can be used, either to hinder or help others, who may be the
target of such prejudice. In some cases, participants’ understanding went a step further and involved articulating surprise and empathy for the kinds of problems SSAY face, as a result of homophobic bullying.

The second subtheme, ‘empathy and understanding’ therefore relates to those responses that indicate a deeper level of understanding about homophobia and its impact on gay people, including same-sex attracted students and their lives. The potential for change is evident in these students’ quotations. However, also evident from the data is that almost half of all female students and over 15 per cent of male students did not consider themselves to be homophobic prior to their participation in the program. Despite this, and perhaps more noteworthy is that the data indicate that the program has strengthened some students resolve to take positive action. This action could involve standing up for SSAY, or changing their language in light of how this can contribute to homophobia and isolating SSAY. Participant excerpts have been integrated throughout the chapter, to bring the essence of each theme to light.
Figure 1. Potential Trajectory of Participant Learning – *Pride and Prejudice*
7.2 No Longer Invisible

Two of the fundamental aims of *Pride and Prejudice* are to challenge participants’ assumptions about homophobia, and to educate them about the ways these assumptions, which are often based on prejudice, can negatively impact those who are perceived to be gay or lesbian. The program achieves this by first exposing participants to the socially constructed concepts of difference and normality, and then asks them to consider why certain groups are deemed to be acceptable or unacceptable in today’s society. Throughout the program, participants are invited to address their own assumptions, and are also given the opportunity to re-evaluate them in light of a newfound awareness and insight. In addition to ongoing debate and discussion, the program achieves this via a DVD excerpt for a portion of each of the six sessions. All of the actors talk about their own experiences and articulate aspects of the program content for that particular session, except that none of them reveal their non-heterosexual orientations until the last session of the program. In doing so, participants’ assumptions are challenged, as they examine their own prejudice, given that the majority of the actors do not fit the taken-for-granted stereotypes that most participants have articulated about gay people, up to this point in the program.

In a similar exercise, participants are asked to evaluate, based on appearance and prior knowledge, which celebrities and other famous people might not be heterosexual and then justify their answers. In doing so, participants revealed that it was easier to identify gay celebrities when they were regularly portrayed in the media and identified as gay or lesbian,
otherwise stereotypes acted as a default position to guide assessment about their potential sexual orientation. Participants’ responses indicated that not only had most students increased their knowledge about the proportion of gay people in society, but that they recognised that gay people, just as other minority groups, do not always fit widely held stereotypes.

7.2.1 They’re Everywhere

In order to educate students about the nature of homophobic prejudice, they are first asked to estimate the actual numbers of gay people in society, including the likely percentage of teenagers that are same-sex attracted. While population based surveys suggests that approximately ten per cent of all adults and about nine per cent of all 14-18 year olds self-describe as same-sex attracted (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005), the overwhelming majority of students expressed surprise at these figures, and the realisation that many fellow classmates may be same-sex attracted, even if they have not come out as gay, or fit the standard effeminate/butch stereotypes. Overall, both male and female participants correctly recalled the number of students that are likely to be gay or lesbian at the end of the final session of the program. As the following female student remarked:

Almost two students in every class are gay!

And another:

I am now aware of how many gay teens there are
Embedded in these responses is both an acknowledgement and surprise at the realisation that at least one or two students on average, in each class of the school timetable, are same-sex attracted. This realisation had a two-fold impact; although gay students may at times be invisible, they represent a substantial minority of the student body. As such, they are likely to overhear homophobic epithets, even if they are not directly targeted for homophobic bullying.

When students were asked to recall the names of famous gay people, the majority cited those celebrities that they have learnt to be openly gay, via the media. For example, the most cited famous lesbian by female students was Ellen de Generes, while the most cited famous gay man by males was Elton John. However, when a homosexual celebrity did not enjoy the same media attention, students were less likely to nominate him or her, suggesting that the media plays a major role in informing youth about gay people’s achievement of celebrity status and perhaps more importantly, making gay people visible to the general public. Not surprisingly then, identifying the existence of ordinary gay people, including fellow students is difficult, especially when they do not fit the standard stereotypes, or remain invisible. As previously mentioned in chapter two, this invisibility is often due to a fear of homophobic bullying (e.g. Lasser & Tharinger, 2003).

7.2.2 Just Like Us – But Different

Reflecting Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive attitude function of homophobia, which is in part premised on the notion that homophobic attitudes serve as an approval-seeking mechanism in adolescents – especially males,
homophobic stereotypes are often employed, to identify, bully and create distance from those perceived to be same-sex attracted (Plummer, 2001). This dynamic thereby solidifies membership of the dominant heterosexually orientated group, leading many SSAY to perceive the school environment as particularly unsafe and unwelcoming (Hillier et al., 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010). The typical stereotypes for gay boys revolve around particular traits including acting effeminate, weak, caring, or different and generally defying or threatening socially constructed notions of masculinity (Nayak & Kehily, 1996). For girls, these traits include being masculine, butch or displaying tom-boy behaviour (Plummer). Yet, in keeping with Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic attitude function, homophobic stereotypes are often perpetuated by those with no real past interactions with openly gay people (Herek & Capitanio, 1996).

Most of the participants’ responses exemplified the notion that the gay youth depicted in the DVD excerpts did not fit taken-for-granted gay stereotypes. As these male participants stated:

*The video* showed that you can’t always tell if somebody is gay or lesbian

I was surprised to see that they were all so straight!

Reflected in these responses is the awareness that previously held stereotypes are no longer reliable, and may need to be adjusted in light of this newly acquired information that ‘*gay people are just like normal people*’. In some cases, students’ responses indicated that they had reflected on stereotypes
further and that once the stereotype has been challenged, gay people seem strangely familiar. It made them ‘think that anyone could be gay or lesbian and that they are just like us’. Many participants had come to understand and appreciate the gay characters at the end of the program recognising that gay people ‘are the same, except that they like people of the same sex’.

Once the veil of heterosexist assumptions had been removed, even temporarily, many of these students were able to see gay youth as people, who in many ways spoke, behaved and perceived life in the same ways as they do. However, despite the similarities that SSAY may have with their heterosexually oriented peers, chapter two refers to literature that states that the majority of SSAY continue to face homophobia as a regular occurrence while at school (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010). It is likely that the continued prejudice that SSAY face is because students have neither been adequately educated about what homophobia is, nor exposed to its impact.

Barriers to addressing school-based homophobic bullying remain, and have been documented in earlier chapters of this thesis. These include a lack of empirical research into homophobic bullying as a distinct phenomenon (Rigby, 2002; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003; Smith et al., 2008), and diluting homophobic bullying by treating all types of bullying in the same manner, which eliminates the need for education targeted specifically at the mechanisms that drive homophobic prejudice (Mishna et al., 2007). If students are to understand why SSAY remain closeted in light of perceived rejection from parents and fellow students, then educating them about what homophobia looks like and its
potential consequences is a logical next step, and one that comprises a key component of *Pride and Prejudice*. The next section explores students’ responses as they directly pertain to homophobia and illuminates a potential transition from ignorance to insight.

### 7.3 From Ignorance to Insight

This second main structure explores a fundamental shift in participants’ learning about gay people in general, and homophobia and its consequences in particular. As articulated under the first major structure and relevant subthemes, the program appears to have instilled new ways of conceptualising homophobia and its impact on gay people. There was a realisation that gay people not only exist as a substantial minority in both the general population and the school body, but that they can also achieve celebrity status, and in fact operate in all walks of life. Based on the data, in many cases negative stereotypes appear to have been examined, questioned and even overturned in place of a renewed understanding and appreciation for gay people. However, it is one thing to know how many gay people exist and cannot always be identified by resorting to stereotypes, and another to understand the unique struggles that gay people face, and in particular fellow class-mates who may be same-sex attracted.

In order to achieve this transition, the program provides students with a working definition of homophobia, invites discussion around the potential reasons that people may be homophobic, and then delves into what homophobic bullying comprises and its potential impact on others. The
synthesising segment of the DVD excerpts focuses on the narratives of the gay characters who describe their experiences of being gay – both at school and at home with their families. This powerfully juxtaposes the realisation that these youths do not ‘look gay’ and yet have been the target of homophobic bullying. It is these issues that comprise the responses that form this second major structure and its subthemes.

7.3.1 Homophobia and Its Impact

‘Homophobia and its impact’ represents the first subtheme under the second major structure of ‘from ignorance to insight’, and reflects those participant responses that both offer a definition of homophobia, and also indicate an understanding of its impact on SSAY and those that fit the stereotypes. Responses that related to defining homophobia ranged from broad definitions to giving actual behavioural examples. For instance, this male participant first articulated his understanding of homophobia in this way: ‘I learnt more about how homophobia affects people’, and later on, he offered a more focused example: ‘[Homophobia] is any time that homosexuality is seen as inherently wrong’.

This participant’s definition of homophobia mirrors what has been identified in prior research (e.g. D’Augelli et al., 2005; Thurlow, 2001; Smith, 1998). Specifically, it has been established that homophobia, like all prejudice, is founded on ignorance yet also colours one’s understanding and appraisal of those who do not readily fit in with, or attempt to comply with socially constructed notions of normality, especially gender roles (Herek, 1984a, 1986). For example, Nayak and Kehily (1996) demonstrated that their male
participants’ adherence to prescribed gender roles was intentional and designed to promote a heterosexual appearance and behaviour, lest their performance infer homosexuality and therefore non-masculinity. In keeping with Nayak and Kehily’s findings and inherent in this female participant’s definition of homophobia, is the notion that it can be linked to an individual’s non-performance of heterosexuality:

[Homophobia is] putting down someone for doing or acting in a way that is not heterosexual.

Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive function highlights the way boys can feel the obligation to adhere to a particular brand of masculinity and in so doing, membership to the desired and dominant social group is confirmed. Inherent in this conceptualisation is that those who do not fit this membership are perceived as inferior and delineated. Yet, in other cases, the current cohort’s definitions of homophobia related to a personal discomfort around gay people which is also in keeping with a defensive definition of homophobia (Herek, 1986, 1987a), as expressed by several male and female participants:

[Homophobia is] if someone is uncomfortable around gays and lesbians.

In another case, one male participant candidly expressed both his discomfort and insight about both his homophobia and the potential reasons behind it, thereby exemplifying his defensive reaction to gay people:

I am homophobic because I get nervous around gay boys.
And as one female participant aptly speculated:

_Saying ‘that’s so gay’ or ‘fag’ can show your own insecurities and phobia_

Herek’s (1987a) defensive function is directly applicable to the kind of homophobia recalled by these participants. As outlined in chapter one, this function relates to the projection onto gay targets (or those suspected of being gay) of personally unacceptable and anxiety-provoking internal conflicts regarding one’s own sexual orientation, or one’s difficulty adhering to strict culturally defined gender-roles. Reflecting Herek’s theory and outlined in earlier chapters, Lewis and White’s (2009) empirical study confirmed the correlation between immature defence mechanisms and homophobia in adolescent males. Specifically the research ascertained that more aggressive forms of homophobia were more strongly associated with the immature defences (projection, devaluation, denial) than either neurotic, or mature defences.

Participants in the current study correctly identified concrete examples of homophobia and homophobic bullying, indicating a high level of retention and understanding at the end of the program. Making the link between homophobia and the physical bullying of someone known to be, or suspected of being gay, this male participant stated:

_[Homophobia is] beating up a gay person_
The prior research continues to attest to the fact that SSAY face ongoing homophobic abuse, much of which occurs at school (Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; Meghan-Burn, 2000; Thurlow, 2001). For example, in the second of Hillier et al.’s large scale Australian studies into the perceptions of SSAY, 80 per cent of males and nearly 50 per cent of females stated that they experienced homophobic bullying on a regular basis during the course of their school lives. Similarly, over 90 per cent of the 887 respondents in Kosciw’s (2004) American research project reported frequently overhearing homophobic slurs such as (‘fag, faggot, dyke, lesbo’) and the expression ‘that’s so gay’ to imply stupidity or inferiority.

Parallel to the regular use of homophobic epithets, prior research also suggests that those who apply these slurs are not always aware of how hurtful they are to fellow same-sex attracted students. For example, in Meghan-Burn’s (2000) study, a significant number of participants claimed that they were not aware that the use of particular slurs such as ‘faggot’ constituted homophobia. *Pride and Prejudice* specifically explores the use of homophobic slurs by asking participants to generate as many of them as they can recall. Participants are then asked to talk about how they might feel if they were same-sex attracted and either heard these slurs in the school ground, or were the victim of verbal abuse that included their use. The data indicate that following participation in the program, most students of both sexes understood that the use of homophobic epithets constituted homophobic bullying when directed at those known to be, or suspected of being gay or lesbian. The following excerpts highlight participants’ comprehension of homophobia and its impact:
[Homophobia is] using derogatory words against gay people, e.g. that’s gay

While one female participant stated:

It was interesting to hear their [actors in the video] different points of views about being gay or lesbian and how it made me think about all the nasty things that people do to someone that they think is different

The data contained under this subtheme reflects one of the main aims of *Pride and Prejudice*, namely to educate teenaged students about what constitutes homophobia, and its impact on SSAY. Inherent in most of the participants’ responses at the end of the program was at least an understanding of the different forms of physical and verbal homophobic bullying, and their potential harm to SSAY. There is also clear evidence that participants engaged thoughtfully with the program. The following subtheme extends what has been articulated so far, because the data exemplifies a greater understanding of the difficulties faced by SSAY and therefore goes beyond merely stating a definition of homophobia, and a superficial understanding of its impact.

7.3.2 Empathy and Understanding

The data that falls under this second subtheme of the second major structure demonstrates a more in-depth reflection and understanding by some participants, of the plight of SSAY as articulated by their responses at the end of the program. In this section, responses are no longer definitional, but instead represent a likely shift in attitudes and potential for behavioural change regarding SSAY, as their struggles become apparent in light of homophobia, ‘It
is a big thing for a gay person to come out’. One male participant’s response sets the scene for this subtheme as he contemplated the difficult and courageous decision faced by a young person who dares to make public his or her sexual orientation in light of a heterosexist school culture. Yet, for another male participant one of the most salient points of the program was the potential for parental acceptance in light of homophobia:

[The DVD] made me realise that gay people can be accepted by their families

In chapter one of this thesis, Cass’s (1979) model of homosexual identity development provided a theoretical understanding of the stages through which a same-sex attracted person would ideally pass, in order to access the more functional stages to self-acceptance. However, crucial to progressing to later stages is the developmental hurdle of coming out. The unique process of coming out is generally only possible when there is a corresponding belief in socio-emotional support (Cass, 1984). In other words, SSAY’s progression to later stages of the model where self-acceptance occurs is impeded by homophobic bullying in the form of peer and parental rejection. Homophobic bullying therefore sends the message that one’s true self is inherently wrong and should not be accepted.

Myer’s (1995) model of Minority Stress presented in chapter one facilitates an understanding of the psychosocial ramifications of perceived stigma and rejection including anxiety, dread, low self-esteem, guilt and suicidal ideation. As Cass articulates, the lack of a positive coming out
experience can lead to identity foreclosure and self-rejection, which mirrors the rejection felt within one’s environment. As previously articulated, in many cases, SSAY feel the need to hide their sexual orientation from others, to protect themselves from perceived homophobic bullying and rejection.

In keeping with the notion of managing one’s sexual orientation, Lasser and Tharinger’s (2003) qualitative study highlighted how self-identified gay and lesbian teenaged participants continually monitored their own and others’ behaviour and speech, before deciding whether it was safe to reveal their sexual orientation during social exchanges. Many SSAY attempt to conceal their sexual orientation from parents and others, due to the potential for real or perceived rejection. As mentioned in chapter two, only half of all respondents in Hillier et al.’s (2005) large scale study of 1749 young people had come out to parents because of perceived parental homophobia. These findings suggest that the coming out process is a complex and stressful one, that must be carefully balanced with an accurate appraisal of one’s environment.

*Pride and Prejudice* is aimed at educating participants about coming out via the DVD sequence explained earlier. In addition to educating participants about homophobia and its impact during the course of the program, all the actors come out in the final session of the DVD, thereby exposing the class to the act of coming out and learning directly about this experience. The struggles that SSAY face when dealing with their sexual orientation in light of homophobia appeared to have some impact on this female participant, ‘I felt sad to see what they [the actors in the video] had to go through when confronting their sexuality’. And yet another female’s response exposes the
unjust nature of homophobia (to her) when considering that one cannot control one’s sexual orientation:

*[The DVD] was weird because they [the actors] think that they are all born that way, and it is hard to understand that they also get bullied for it*

For many the program appears to have made some impact on their perceptions and suggests that this shift has the potential to translate to behavioural change in some students, regarding exposure to incidents of homophobic bullying. In response to how the program had made a difference to him, this male participant’s response albeit brief, is indicative of behaviour change:

*I act differently now*

For another male student, it first appears as though participating in the program had not provoked much change at all, and yet his response suggests that he already knew about homophobia and its impact but perhaps lacked the knowledge to put this into practice:

*I didn’t learn much, but I learnt to be proactive*

Although the program’s primary aim is to educate young people about homophobia, a secondary consequence may be that armed with this newfound knowledge, some students may be less inclined to play a passive role when it comes to witnessing acts of homophobic bullying. During the course of the program, participants are given the option of standing up to an example of
school-based homophobia as part of a practical homework experiment. Although most students did not choose to participate in this activity, those that did got an opportunity to recount their experiences to the class during the next session.

As one previously mentioned study in chapter two elucidated, bullying among young people at school tends to occur within clearly defined roles including (Ringleaders, Followers, Reinforcers, Defenders and Bystanders) (e.g. Salmivalli et al., 1996). It is conceivable that some of the participants in the current study may, as a result of being educated about homophobia and its consequences, consider being more proactive and less passive in their roles when witnessing examples of homophobic bullying at school. For example, this female participant’s response exemplifies her awareness of what was previously unconsidered, and her determination to make amends:

*I think more about what I say and when I say it*

However, for other participants, there was apparently little personal change as a result of participating in the program. Based on participant data, approximately forty five per cent of all female students in the treatment group did not consider they were homophobic or prejudiced towards gay people in the first instance, and therefore could not attest to having experienced any particular change in their original attitudes as a direct result of the program. As summed up by this female participant:
There isn’t any difference [between me now or before the program]. It
didn’t change the way I think because I’m pretty cool with gay people. I
don’t see them as gay, but as people.

This was in contrast to male students, 16 per cent of whom indicated in
their responses that they did not consider themselves to hold negative beliefs
about gay and lesbian people prior to participating in the program. Despite no
objective measurement of behavioural change in this study, it is still possible
that the program has informed students of the direct consequences of
homophobia, homophobic bullying, and importantly, how to intervene and be
proactive when confronted with what they now know to be, examples of
homophobia. As this male participant states:

I didn’t learn all that much except that I learnt how to intervene

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the themes that were derived from the
qualitative data contained in the student evaluations following participation in
the program Pride and Prejudice. These themes have hopefully elucidated the
process that students have taken from the beginning to the end of the program,
as they learnt about homophobia, homophobic bullying, and its impact on
SSAY. The first theme ‘no longer invisible’ encapsulates the notion that unless
gay people are open about their sexual orientation, or readily fit taken-for-
granted stereotypes, they remain invisible. However, this invisibility is
problematic because it prevents other students from knowing more about their
same-sex attracted peers, perpetuates ignorance about gay people as a group,
and prevents SSAY from attaining self acceptance. The data under this theme indicate that overall, prior to participating in the program, students were oblivious to the actual proportion of gay people in the wider society and how this translates to numbers of potential SSAY in the school body. Moreover, it was readily apparent that stereotypes not only guided students’ identification of gay people but were the mechanism through which homophobic bullying is channelled.

Educating students about these concepts provided a vital foundation to the program’s later associations between stereotypes and homophobia. Most students accurately recalled the percentages of gay people as a minority, and how stereotypes are not always an accurate reflection of one’s sexual orientation, given the socially constructed nature of masculinity and femininity. Most participants expressed surprise when the actors in the DVD excerpts all came out in the final session of the program, as this directly challenged their previously held and often erroneous stereotypes about gay people.

Finally, an appreciation of gay people, and their similarities and differences paved the way for the second major structure ‘from ignorance to insight’. Under this theme, responses focused on the construct of homophobia and the impact that it can have on SSAY in the form of homophobic bullying. Participants recalled examples of homophobia, indicating their comprehension of both its verbal and behavioural forms and how stereotypes are used to perpetuate it. Parallel to this, the actors’ personal narratives in the DVD excerpts allowed for a direct insight into the difficulties faced by young gay people, as they navigate their way through often hostile terrain in the form of
homophobic bullying at school. Many students expressed empathy for the unnecessary struggles that homophobia places on SSAY, and some articulated a desire to be more proactive in their defence of gay students and combating homophobia more generally.

However, as previously mentioned, many students and particularly females, voiced their already open attitudes towards gay people and therefore may not have been impacted to the same extent as males, fewer of whom participated in the program. Parallel to this, the data suggest that overall, males found the program content more confronting than females. Nevertheless, the student qualitative evaluations have allowed for a direct glimpse into students’ recollection and learning of most of the key themes of the program. It is apparent from the data that the overwhelming majority of students appreciated *Pride and Prejudice*’s content and learnt more about homophobia and its negative impact on SSAY than before taking part in the program – even if they indicated that they did not consider themselves homophobic at the outset.

It remains to be seen whether students’ newfound knowledge can be considered the first seeds of change in combating homophobic bullying in this secondary school. However, student homophobia must be placed within the school’s own culture and attitudes towards SSAY. The next chapter will therefore present an interpretative discussion of the data from the second study. As introduced in chapter five, Study Two was designed to gather information about teachers’ perceptions of homophobic bullying, its occurrence, how it is currently being tackled, and what further resources they believe are required to systematically interrupt and overcome it.
STUDY TWO

Chapter 8  Homophobic Bullying: A Question Of Training And Priorities

8.1 Chapter Overview

In this study, teachers in the same school in which *Pride and Prejudice* was trialled were given an opportunity to anonymously voice their opinions about homophobia, its prevalence, and importantly, to outline what they considered to be the key remaining constraints to overcoming it. Teachers participating in this study responded to an online questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix O). As outlined in chapter five, thematic analyses reveal that the data has lent itself to one overarching structure and four subthemes. The major structure ‘*What’s the problem and what’s it got to do with me?*’ encompasses responses across various questions and allows insight into these teachers’ understanding of homophobia, its occurrence, whether they perceive it as a problem worthy of consideration and if so, their preparedness to address examples of it systematically in their school. In order to help teachers combat homophobic bullying, it is conceivable that they must first understand and recognise that there is a problem.

In the first subtheme, ‘*does homophobia happen here?*’ teachers were asked to define the term homophobia and then reflect on its occurrence regarding peer to peer homophobic bullying in the school, including classrooms, school ground and library. In subsequent questions, they were asked whether they would feel confident interrupting examples of homophobia if they witnessed its occurrence. The second subtheme ‘*action versus inaction*’
relates to the justifications that these teachers held for not systematically addressing homophobia as it occurred. Data indicates that most of these teachers witness homophobic bullying, but that they either do not believe that intervening would make any difference, or that addressing it may actually worsen the problem. In the third subtheme, ‘out on their own’, teachers are asked to reflect on the difficulties that same-sex attracted students would face if they were to reveal their sexual orientations. This section highlights how teachers’ inaction could exacerbate SSAYs’ feelings of isolation when this source of potential support is missing. Finally, the fourth subtheme, ‘a question of priorities’ highlights the remaining obstacles to fully addressing homophobic bullying. In this section, it is clear that teachers feel under-resourced when it comes to tackling homophobic bullying and require specific training, but parallel to this are also burdened with competing and tasks considered more important.

Although the study was open to all educators in the school and available online to ensure that participants would have easy access to the questionnaire, only six teachers responded, out of a potential pool of approximately 75, representing a response rate of only eight per cent. While this low response rate has perhaps restricted the range of themes that could have been generated from the data, the responses are nevertheless worthy of consideration because they express underlying concerns, and point to potential inconsistencies in both teachers’ education about same-sex issues, and systemic failures to addressing homophobia in this secondary school. This study, albeit restricted by sample size and specific only to these particular teachers, aims to provide a first-hand
gauge of these teachers’ preparedness to tackle homophobia, and whether they perceive it as a problem worthy of consideration. While it remains unknown why this study attracted such a low response rate, it is possible to hypothesise, based on responses, that these teachers either have too many competing demands to participate in research, or that addressing homophobic bullying is not their priority. It is anticipated that this study might strengthen and add to Study One, including both the quantitative study, and the qualitative study interpreted in chapter seven, in which students’ evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice* were brought to light.

Importantly, the present study aimed to uncover the barriers to addressing homophobic bullying when the focus is re-directed away from the students, and placed on their educators. In doing so, a set of questions was developed which have produced some interesting findings. Finally, if teachers are not equipped or prepared to address homophobia, then any attempts to implement an educative program such as *Pride and Prejudice* may be in vain, regardless of the levels of homophobia exhibited by the students. The prior research into addressing homophobic bullying and relevant participant excerpts have been included throughout, to support the interpretation of the data as it has been analysed.

8.2 What’s The Problem and What’s It Got to Do With Me?

It was anticipated that by asking teachers about the issue of homophobic bullying in their school, that they would, by virtue of the questions, be obliged to consider their own involvement in its continuity, the consequences of not
taking action when faced with student to student homophobia, and hopefully their responsibility towards protecting SSAY and educating the perpetrators of bullying about its unacceptability. Their responses have yielded a number of important insights. First, they have demonstrated to what degree they understood the difference between this type of bullying and other types of bullying that are not necessarily based on homophobia. Second, the data has given an indication of the prevalence of homophobic bullying in this school and what kinds of interventions are currently being used to address it. Finally, the questions that these teachers were asked led to the conclusion that homophobia is not necessarily a priority, and that even if it were, there is currently a lack of knowledge about how to best deal with it in any uniform and systematic manner. In the next section, data relating to how teachers define homophobia is considered, together with their accounts of its prevalence.

8.2.1 Does Homophobia Happen Here?

In the online questionnaire that teachers were given the opportunity to complete, it was not assumed that there was a prior understanding of what constitutes homophobia, homophobic bullying, or even whether teachers understood the potential difficulties that SSAY face when dealing with their sexual orientation, in light of a heterosexual majority. Allowing respondents to articulate in their own words, answers to a pre-designed questionnaire, also acted as a gauge of participants’ knowledge and awareness of these issues. Given that any or all teachers were welcome to participate in the study, responses have been procured from educators who do not necessarily teach subjects that are related to social science or sex education, or even touch on
issues associated with homophobia. This had the benefit of casting a wide enough net to potentially capture a range of responses and a diversity of opinions on the topic of homophobia.

However, the data imply that at least among these participants, that when a participant understood, recognised and witnessed examples of homophobia, he or she also later provided information about the remaining barriers to addressing it. For example, one participant stated a working definition of homophobia before confirming its existence in the school, and then giving examples of where it had been witnessed. ‘[Homophobia is] When people are afraid of, or against single-sex attraction and relationships. For sure it occurs! [I’ve witnessed it] in the classroom and on school camps’. And corroborating this appraisal, another participant postulated that homophobia takes place in the majority of schools, after stating a definition and giving an example of its occurrence in this school, ‘[Homophobia is] an avoidance of issues regarding same-sex attraction and I think that it occurs at most schools. Last year, a year eight boy whose speech and manner appeared to others to be “gay”, was the object of criticism from other students’.

Conversely, those participants that had either never witnessed homophobic bullying or denied its existence, were unable to articulate any of the obstacles to overcoming it, or make relevant suggestions to addressing it. For example, one participant tentatively stated a definition of homophobia before denying its occurrence in the school, ‘[Homophobia is] a negative attitude to homosexuality – maybe. No, I have never witnessed any form of homophobia in any area of the school’. Not surprisingly, this same participant
did not see any need to address something that did not exist, including the implementation of a program designed to educate students about homophobia and attempt to change their attitudes. ‘I do not think that we have any obstacles to addressing homophobia in this school...I don’t think that we need this program’. However, as another participant surmised, homophobia is likely to take place whether an individual teacher witnesses it or not, ‘Homophobia is a prejudice against someone who prefers same-sex relationships. I believe students can be cruel and homophobia does happen whether we see it or not...I have witnessed homophobic remarks by students directed towards other students’.

While the previous section has confirmed the fact that the majority of these teachers agree that homophobic bullying occurs in their school, whether they witness regular accounts of it or not, the next subtheme explores data which specifically relates to teachers addressing it as it occurs.

8.2.2 Action Versus Inaction

Despite the acknowledged existence of homophobic bullying, if it is to be tackled effectively, teachers should ideally be given the required resources, including their own specific anti-homophobia training. While four of the six respondents in this study attested to the occurrence of homophobic bullying in their school, because they had witnessed specific examples of it, most of them did not seem confident to address it. Parallel to this was the implication that either the outcome to intervening in examples of homophobia would depend on the reaction of other students, or that any positive result would be short-lived. In response to the question of the potential outcome to interrupting examples of
student homophobia directly, one participant alluded to its difficulty by suggesting that it may worsen the problem and make it even more difficult for SSAY to come out in the school, ‘Interrupting an example of homophobia would be quite difficult. A few students would take it on board but the majority and mostly the loud students would attack it with negative remarks and this would make others not want to come out, or voice their opinion’. This participant acknowledged that homophobia acts as a barrier for those SSAY who wish to be open about their sexual orientation, but also suggested that addressing examples of homophobia could provoke a negative response from others.

However, inherent in this response is a bigger and more problematic issue. Namely, that this teacher does not feel confident in interrupting student homophobia and would therefore rather not address it, lest the interference promote further homophobia, upset the classroom and possibly prevent SSAY from coming out. Results from the student evaluations of Pride and Prejudice attest to the smooth running of the program and learning that took place among students, despite the sensitive content and topic, suggesting that unjustified fears may be part of educators’ reticence to interrupt homophobia as it occurs.

A second participant also suggested that addressing examples of homophobia in an ad hoc fashion does little to tackle the issue in the long term, ‘Interrupting an incident usually has the desired effect of the students ceasing what they are doing/saying in the short term’. This response suggests the futility of intervening, given that it would only address the issue superficially.
Perhaps not surprisingly, teachers’ reticence to respond directly to examples of homophobic bullying has been cited elsewhere in the literature. For example, during the course of their large multi-method study into homophobia within sex education programs in Scottish schools, Buston and Hart (2001) revealed that a desire to remain ‘neutral’ in the teaching of sex education also extended to a resistance to addressing examples of homophobia – to do so was apparently considered imposing one’s values on students. Moreover, most of the teachers interviewed in their study predicted a negative reaction and discomfort from the majority of other students, if same-sex issues were routinely introduced into sex education classes. While it is not clear from the responses in the current study, whether not taking specific action against homophobic incidents in their school is also related to a desire to remain neutral as articulated by the teachers in Buston and Hart’s study, it nevertheless underscores the ambiguous position that teachers find themselves in when confronted by examples of student to student homophobia.

However, if teachers are not addressing homophobic bullying, or are only dealing with it on an ad hoc basis, then it is likely that SSAY and others do not necessarily believe that it is taken seriously. Without the support of teachers in the face of homophobic prejudice, other students are also sent the message that this type of bullying is acceptable. The next subtheme explores data relating to the perceived impact of homophobic bullying on SSAY.

8.2.3 Out On Their Own

In response to the perceived difficulties that an openly gay or lesbian student may have in coming out in this school, three of the six respondents
acknowledged that it would be difficult, and would depend on peer acceptance. For example this participant perceived the attitudes of fellow students as a barrier to coming out, ‘...peers and social groups can be very nasty’. However, a fourth respondent first admitted that bullying was a problem for gay students, but then diminished its importance given the small numbers who are targeted, before suggesting that a student would only attract problems if he or she were ‘too’ visible or could not blend into the background. The implication being that unless a same-sex attracted student can camouflage any perceived differences from the heterosexual student mainstream, then it is possible that he or she may be bullied, ‘Yes, although it would depend on their personality. There are a few openly gay students in the school and only a couple of them are ridiculed as the others are just seen as part of the crowd’. Inherent in this participant’s response are a number of problematic and heterosexist assumptions. First, that it is incumbent on SSAY to blend into the mainstream if they do not want to be targeted for homophobic bullying, and second, that only a small number of SSAY are bullied and this is because they either cannot, or will not hide their sexual orientations successfully.

The need to hide perceived difference has already been explored in chapter two (e.g. Lasser & Tharinger, 2003). Managing one’s appearance, mannerisms, gestures and other behaviours which may be labelled as ‘gay’ and therefore potentially attract ridicule, often propels SSAY to engage in ‘visibility management’, in order to curtail further abuse. As described in chapter one, Cass’ (1979, 1984) model of homosexual identity development offers a theoretical explanation of this process in light of a homophobic
environment. In stage three (identity tolerance) of the model, the individual seeks out social and emotional fulfilment from others, and yet the dilemma of presenting one’s true identity must also be considered given the potential for rejection. In this stage of the model, same-sex attracted individuals often attempt to pass as heterosexual when in the company of other heterosexuals, and only reveal their sexual orientation to other known gay people.

The prior research clearly outlines the difficulties that SSAY face at school, one of which is not feeling supported and safe when a climate of homophobia is perpetuated every time that homophobic bullying is not adequately addressed. As articulated in chapter two, Hillier et al.’s (1998, 2005) two large scale studies highlight the widespread occurrence of homophobia in secondary schools in Australia. Mirroring the comments of some of the participants in the current study, this also included teachers turning a blind eye to examples of homophobic bullying. In their first major study, Hillier et al. (1998) surveyed 750 SSAY across every state and territory of Australia to find the widespread occurrence of homophobic abuse, 70 per cent of which allegedly occurred at school. For example, reflecting the theme of many of their respondents’ narratives in their 1998 study, one teenaged male same-sex attracted respondent noted, ‘In year 12, I was beaten by four guys in my maths class in front of my teacher who said nothing and did nothing to prevent it. I complained and I was taken out of the class and put into another which screwed up my timetable meaning I had to drop classes. Basically my school hid the problem rather than deal with it’ (Wayne, 19 years, p. 40).
In response to the perceived obstacles to addressing homophobia in their school, one participant in the current study indicated that further education was necessary so that heterosexual students’ attitudes towards SSAY could be challenged and altered, ‘Adolescent attitudes, peer influences and just seeing the negative sides...really understanding these students [same-sex attracted] and their needs’. For another, the suggestion was that a systemic approach be taken. This would involve further education for both students and teachers alike and go beyond only discussing same-sex issues in a particular class or context, ‘Education! I think teachers need to take the time to explain why this language [homophobic slurs etc] isn’t acceptable...perhaps a more comprehensive approach to education would be good and would help enforce a whole school approach to how the issue is managed’.

Similarly, Hunt and Jensen’s (2007) large-scale study of the experiences of British SSAY, revealed a lack of consistent teacher intervention in examples of homophobic bullying. Half of the respondents stated that teachers never intervened, while just over 30 per cent of respondents stated that teachers intervened some of the time. Although educating students has been alluded to by a couple of these teachers, and is indeed the goal of anti-homophobia programs such as Pride and Prejudice, the next subtheme examines some of the remaining obstacles to addressing homophobia that go beyond student education.

8.2.4 A Question of Priorities

Tackling homophobia may not only relate to a lack of specific student programs, teacher training and experience in dealing with homophobia, but a
question of priorities. In response to the perceived obstacles to interrupting homophobia in the school, this participant stated, ‘Lack of time, experience and knowledge of how best to deal with homophobia – so many other things on the “must do” list!’ In a later question, this same participant made it clear that tackling homophobia was not a priority compared to other aspects of the curriculum. In response to the question of preparedness about delivering a program specifically aimed at addressing student homophobia, this participant stated, ‘No, to be honest probably not. [The program] is not likely to improve my year 12 results is it?’.

Yet, if SSAY felt safe at school, then it is feasible to assume that their psychological health would improve and that the number of days that they attended school might increase, together with their academic progress. In all of the large-scale research studies outlined in earlier chapters (e.g. Hillier et al., 1995, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010), SSAY consistently cited homophobic bullying as leading them to feel unsafe and thereby to miss days of school or entire classes. This and other research has articulated the psychological consequences of being the victim of homophobic harassment (D’Augelli et al., 2002; Dempsey & Storch, 2008; Dyson et al., 2003; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Espelage et al., 2008; Nansel et al., 2007).

Overall, teachers in the current study supported the idea of an intervention designed to address homophobia in this school. Five of the six teachers agreed that the systematic implementation of a program aimed at addressing student to student homophobia in the school would be a positive step, although there was a strong sense of being overtaxed by an already
burdensome curriculum, and therefore lacking the time to dedicate to such a task. As one participant suggested, time was one concern, prioritising other modes of bullying another, ‘I think it would be a good idea. However, considering how little time schools have to do everything expected of them, including cyberbullying (which is probably of greater concern), I cannot see where we would find the time’.

While cyberbullying (emailing, texting, instant messaging, postings on social network sites and blogs) is also a burgeoning form of homophobic harassment for SSAY, and one that this previous participant seems to regard as almost a separate form of homophobia, recent research suggests that the majority of homophobic abuse continues to occur at school in face to face interactions rather than in cyberspace. In Kosciw et al.’s latest (2010) large scale US study, nearly 53 per cent of those surveyed were harassed via electronic mediums compared to nearly 85 per cent who were verbally threatened while at school. Perhaps more importantly, inherent in some of the responses in the current study is the view that while teachers acknowledge the existence of homophobia, their time is dedicated to dealing with other more pressing issues. This suggests that tackling homophobia will remain the individual choice of teachers, until they have the direction, support, encouragement and obligation from management to make addressing this type of bullying a priority.
8.3 Chapter Summary

The aim of Study Two was to procure a group of teachers’ responses to a series of online questions around the issue of homophobic bullying in their school. While it is clear from most of these participants’ responses that they perceive homophobia to be a concern and a reality of daily school life, there is also the sense that both student and teacher education would be one positive step in attempting to address the issue. Participants in this government secondary school agreed that a program specifically designed to educate students about homophobia would be useful, and most felt that they would be comfortable delivering it. However, this was a function of receiving the appropriate training, highlighting their overall feelings of inadequacy in dealing with homophobic bullying.

Although this study was open to the entire body of educators in the school, only a handful chose to participate in this voluntary research project. This small response rate could conceivably be taken as a potential measure of the (lack of) importance that either the school or its teachers currently place on homophobic bullying. Interestingly, at least half of the respondents voiced a lack of time and other priorities as obstacles to dealing with homophobic bullying, including the implementation of a program such as *Pride and Prejudice*. Although the data only pertain to a very restricted number of the teachers in the school and should not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting other teachers views, what the data allude to is the lack of a whole school approach to dealing with homophobic abuse directly and systematically, every time that it is witnessed. If this is the case, then it reflects previous research in
this area (e.g. Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010) and indicates that little has changed in over a decade in terms of concrete and efficacious solutions to systematically tackling homophobic bullying in secondary schools.

A lack of direction from management and/or the Department of Education means that homophobia is more likely to be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis, and subject to the individual teacher’s degree of comfort and confidence in interrupting it at the time it occurs. Teachers apparently still have the choice to ignore examples of homophobia, while there appears to be a need for the systematic implementation of programs that both educate students and teachers about homophobia, and then train teachers in how to deliver them. Yet, this is unlikely to occur unless teachers are given the time, opportunity and encouragement to participate in training, and homophobic bullying is treated as seriously as other forms of prejudice. For example, although individual schools have a great deal of autonomy, it is generally understood that racial vilification and prejudice is prohibited, and action must be taken by teachers where examples present themselves (Hillier et al., 2005; Thurlow, 2001). In today’s age it seems unlikely that teachers would assume that they should *not* intervene in an example of student to student racial prejudice in the classroom, simply because it might upset the sensibilities of the majority of the student population. However, this is exactly what one participant stated in relation to intervening in examples of homophobia in the classroom in this study.

Finally, what this study highlights is that despite the positive qualitative data obtained from those students who took part in *Pride and Prejudice*, and
the potential for attitude and behavioural amelioration regarding homophobic bullying, any change to the overall climate of school homophobia must occur from all angles including teachers, students, school-management and the Department of Education (Hillier et al., 2005; Ollis et al., 2001). Without this systemic approach, homophobic bullying cannot be considered a priority because addressing it is still considered a choice that teachers can either make or ignore. In short, this study very tentatively alludes to the notion that homophobia will remain unaddressed until teachers have the required training, support and direction to systematically challenge homophobia in their schools, which would build a more inclusive educational environment for all types of students. At the very least, this seems like a basic right that every student should enjoy. Having reviewed the results and interpretations of Studies One and Two, the next and final chapter will bring together a discussion of all of these findings and integrate these with the previously reviewed literature and theories before coming to a conclusion and directions for future research.
Chapter 9  Discussion

Summary of Results of Outcome Measures

9.1 Chapter Summary

This chapter consists of three sections. In section one, all of the hypotheses will be outlined and the findings relative to each measure briefly summarised. In section two, a thorough discussion of all the findings will ensue, with reference to the prior literature and theoretical models outlined in chapters one through three and the two qualitative studies interpreted in chapters seven and eight. Section three of this chapter will first present a conclusion to the thesis before outlining the limitations and strengths of the current research, and suggesting future research directions.

9.1.1 Primary Outcomes

The primary outcome predicted in the study was that when compared to the no-treatment control group, the program would produce statistically significant reductions in homophobia including levels of homophobic aggression, avoidance and negative cognitions as well as homophobic attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. The hypothesis that the program would reduce homophobia relative to the control group was partly supported.

In terms of homophobic aggression, the mean change from baseline to post-assessment was statistically significantly different between the program and control groups. Although the interaction between groups was statistically significant, the majority of change occurred in the control group. The control
group produced a small to moderate and statistically significant increase in homophobic aggression.

In terms of avoidance, effect sizes demonstrate that the program produced a slight improvement, while the control group experienced a slight worsening on this variable, although these variations were not statistically significant. Although there was a slight deterioration for the control group and a slight improvement for the program group in terms of negative cognitions, both groups produced minor and similar degrees of change from baseline to post assessment, and these variations were not statistically significant suggesting that the program was not effective in reducing cognitive or avoidant forms of homophobia.

A statistically significant interaction between groups was found on attitudes towards lesbians. Specifically, there was a moderate and statistically significant level of deterioration in the control group. While a small amount of deterioration in attitudes towards lesbians was also produced by the program group, the mean difference at post-test was not statistically significant. Although there were no statistically significant findings in terms of attitudes towards gay men, examination of effect sizes indicate that the majority of change occurred in the program group which experienced a negligible improvement. The control group experienced a negligible amount of deterioration.
9.1.2 Secondary Outcomes

The secondary outcomes predicted in Study One were that, when compared to the no-treatment control group, the program would produce (i) an improvement in the endorsement of attitude functions of homophobia including social-expressive, defensive and experiential-schematic and (ii) produce a reduction in immature defence styles. The hypothesis pertaining to the secondary outcome measures was partly supported.

According to Herek (1987a), the experiential-schematic function of homophobia serves to exert an influence on one’s attitudes towards gay people, or those suspected of being gay, because it is based on past interactions with known gay people. Normally, those who strongly endorse this function are more likely to demonstrate lower levels of homophobia than those who do not strongly endorse it (Herek, 1987a). However, there were approximately similar and moderate levels of change in endorsement of this function across both the control and program groups, and a similar mean increase in levels of this attitude function from pre to post assessment for both groups was noted. Although this difference did not reach statistical significance in either group, results indicate a tendency towards significance for both groups.

With respect to the social-expressive attitude function, Herek (1987a) asserts that in the context of a heterosexist and homophobic environment, espousing the views of one’s peer group or important others towards gay people may lead to a form of social acceptance, rather than rejection. There was a statistically significant difference in mean scores between the control and program groups at post-test assessment on this measure. From baseline to post
assessment, the control group tended to more strongly endorse the views that they believed were held by their peers or others in relation to gay people, and this variation was moderate and also statistically significant. Yet, program participants’ endorsement of the views of their peers or others regarding gay men and lesbians declined, although this change in attitudes was small and did not reach statistical significance.

Herek’s (1987a) defensive function of homophobia serves to repress unacceptable urges and thoughts about one’s own sexual orientation, and feelings of inadequacy about meeting prescribed heterosexist gender roles. Although there was a tendency towards a small decline in the endorsement of defensive attitude functions for the program group and a small increase in the endorsement of this function for the control group, these variations were not statistically significant.

The second component of the secondary outcomes was the prediction that the program would produce a reduction in the use of immature defence styles compared to the no-treatment control group. Although not statistically significant, there was a tendency towards a statistically significant interaction and main effect of time. While the program did not produce a statistically significant reduction in the use of immature defences from pre to post assessment, the program groups’ use of immature defences has tended to remain the same. Yet, the control group’s immature defences have worsened, and this variation was statistically significant.
9.1.3 Tertiary Outcomes

The third outcome predicted in this study was that participants’ gender and parental levels of education would be associated with the degree of change at post-test assessment after controlling for program type, in both levels of homophobic aggression and the attitude functions social-expressive and experiential-schematic. Results indicate that his hypothesis was partly supported.

Gender and the educational attainment of students’ primary caregivers, appear to have had very little impact on changes in levels of homophobic aggression, explaining almost none of the variation, and this was not statistically significant. However, the addition of program type explained almost an additional six per cent of the variance and this was approaching statistical significance. In fact, program type was the only variable that was approaching statistical significance. This implies that it was being in the program group, and not the influence of primary caregivers’ levels of education or the gender of the student that had the greatest impact on participants’ reductions in levels of homophobic aggression at post-test assessment. Gender and parental educational attainment explained eight per cent of the variation in students’ endorsement of the social-expressive attitude function. A further 11 per cent of the variance on this attitude function was explained by program type and this was statistically significant. Program type was the most important predictor of variation in endorsement of this function followed by parental education and both of these variables made a statistically significant contribution to the model. Gender did not make a statistically significant
contribution. Gender and parental educational attainment explained two per cent of the variation in students’ endorsement of the experiential-schematic attitude function and no further variance was explained by program type.
Discussion of Results of All Studies

9.2 Section Overview

This section of the chapter will include a thorough discussion of all of the results in light of the hypotheses, the prior literature and the relevant theories. It begins by unpacking the primary outcomes and discusses the potential explanations for the findings across the measures of homophobia, before exploring the secondary and tertiary outcomes in light of their respective measures. It is anticipated that this section of the chapter will tie together all the findings across Study One (student data: quantitative and qualitative) and Study Two (teacher data: qualitative), the prior chapters and relevant theoretical models before turning to section three. The final section of the chapter outlines the limitations and strengths of the research, provides a summary of the findings, and suggests directions for future research.

9.2.1 Primary Outcomes

Overall the *Pride and Prejudice* program was able to reduce or contain levels of homophobia but only in selected domains. Specifically, homophobic aggression showed reductions while homophobic avoidance, homophobic negative cognitions and attitudes towards gay men remained relatively unchanged. The majority of change in attitudes towards lesbians occurred in the control group.

These results did not completely align with the predictions and therefore require a broader discussion and integration with the secondary outcomes and the findings related to the previous evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice*, and
similar intervention studies. Integration of the results from the two qualitative studies will also be used to broaden the understanding of the program’s impact, against the backdrop of the school’s constraints to adequately interrupting homophobia.

Inspection of effect sizes highlights that the control group tended to demonstrate an overall worsening of levels of homophobia relative to the program group, which conversely tended to produce slight overall improvements on the primary outcome measures from pre to post assessment. The exception to this pattern was in terms of attitudes towards lesbians, where effect sizes demonstrate that the control group’s statistically significant deterioration in attitudes towards lesbians was much larger, compared to that of the program group.

A number of potential explanations may account for the findings across the primary outcomes. First, the lack of statistical significance across the measures, and especially within the program group from pre to post-assessment, should not necessarily be interpreted as an indication that *Pride and Prejudice* did not have any impact whatsoever on students’ levels of homophobia, or their understanding of homophobic bullying and its detrimental consequences. The qualitative data indicate that the program has made an impact on students’ overall understanding of homophobia and quantitative results indicate that the control group demonstrated an overall worsening of levels of homophobia. Although students in the control group did not participate in the program, their levels of homophobia were not immune to deterioration. This is likely to be because they were exposed to aspects of the
study, and in particular to the topic of homosexuality, by virtue of being invited to participate in the research, including invitation flyers (Appendix D) and plain language statements (Appendices G & H) clearly articulating the aims and topic of the study.

This aspect of the study therefore served as a first step in exposing students to the sensitive topic of homophobia, but without necessarily knowing anything about it, other than its association with homosexuality. Pre-testing served as the second stage of this process and exposed all participants to a battery of questions. These included questions relating to homosexuality (Appendices J-M), many of which could conceivably have elicited particular thoughts which would likely have left students with many conflicting feelings and unanswered questions about gay people, and possibly their own psychosexual development. However, control students’ levels of homophobia were not contained in the same way as those in the program, which provided an educational framework which has at the very least, prevented their existing levels of homophobia from worsening, while demonstrating small tendencies towards improvements and fostering the development of insight into their own thoughts and feelings about homosexuality, and how to recognise and intervene in examples of homophobic bullying.

A contamination effect may well account for the control group’s results on the primary outcome measures, given that both groups participated in the research at the same time, from the same year level and the same school. Contamination effects occur whenever there is an unintended transfer of information from an intervention to the control group (Howe, Keogh-Brown,
Miles, & Bachmann, 2007). Apart from the obvious influence on controls that such a transfer of the content of an intervention between groups may produce, perhaps more problematic is that a contamination effect can decrease the power of a study by reducing the magnitude of effect sizes, and reducing the likelihood that such estimates will be statistically significant (Howe et al., 2007; Kazdin, 2003). This is especially salient when participants closely resemble each other (Howe et al.) such as in the current study, where they were approximately equal in terms of gender, age and levels of education and levels of pre-existing homophobia.

It is impossible to determine how a contamination effect may have influenced the results of previous studies into the effectiveness of Pride and Prejudice because neither Higgins et al. (2001) nor Bridge (2007) made use of a no-treatment control group, as discussed in chapters three and four. Although Higgins et al. did not employ the same measures that were employed in the current study, it is still possible to compare pre to post effects on one of their measures, as it is a test of attitudes towards gay men and lesbians. For example, on their measure of attitudes towards gay men, Higgins et al.’s effect sizes were (Cohen’s $d = .38$) which represents a moderate effect size. This is in contrast to the equivalent effect size on attitudes to towards gay men in the current study which was small (Cohen’s $d = .15$). Yet, the sample size included in the final analyses in Higgins et al.’s study only consisted of fifteen students which is 39.5 per cent less than the number of students in the program group of the current study ($n = 38$). In terms of attitudes towards lesbians, effect sizes in Higgins et al.’s study were moderate (Cohen’s $d = .44$), whereas in the current
study, effect sizes were small and negative (Cohen’s \( d = -0.11 \)). The contamination effect has likely led to the transmission of aspects of the program, reduced its effectiveness and lowered the effects. Had Higgins et al. utilised a control group, it would have been possible to note whether their effect sizes still fell in the moderate range.

In the current study, an increased exposure to the topic of homosexuality as a result of any combination of the research may have also led to an increase in levels of homophobia from pre to post-assessment among control participants, after receiving invitations to participate, and the sensitive nature of the scale items inherent in the pre and post-testing stages. In addition to this exposure, anti-homophobia posters were placed around the school as part of the homework assignments of the program group (Witthaus, 2002). In line with the proposed contamination effect, it is possible that program participants discussed aspects of the program with peers in the control group, but without the educational component of the program to buffer the effects of this information, thereby influencing the manner in which they endorsed items on the questionnaire.

However, another explanation for the findings is that the cohort in the current study was only exhibiting low levels of homophobia at pre-test, thereby producing a ceiling effect curtailing further gains from participation in the program. Although ceiling effects can compromise a scale by decreasing variability, in the current study, statistical assumptions were met, indicating that any ceiling effect was not severe enough to distort the data. In light of the potential for a ceiling effect to further explain the results on the primary
outcome measures, other studies investigating the phenomenon of interest using similar scales are explored.

For example, the Wright et al. (1999) scale was employed in the current study and also in Lewis and White’s (2009) research, which differentiated between low \((M = 47.76, SD = 10.38)\) and high \((M = 75.30, SD = 10.32)\) level homophobia groups on a rural sample of adolescent secondary school males \(n = 86, M\ Age = 17.62, SD = .49)\) via a mean split on the participants’ total score across all the homophobia sub-scales. This between-group difference was also statistically significant \([t(81) = 12.09, p < .001, Cohen’s d = 2.66]\). In the current study, mean homophobia scores across all three subscales of the Wright et al. homophobia scale for a metropolitan sample (homophobic aggression, avoidance and negative cognitions) were \((M = 53.55)\) for control, and \((M = 54.7)\) for program participants. Although the current cohort comprised both males and females, it qualifies as exhibiting levels of homophobia within one standard deviation of what Lewis and White classified as ‘low homophobia’.

The finding that the overall cohort’s levels of homophobia are situated in the lower range, and may have produced a ceiling effect in terms of the potential reductions in homophobia as a result of participating in the program, is supported by the program groups’ qualitative data. In addition to there being a majority of females in the treatment group which may have curtailed further gains, approximately 45 per cent of all female students and 16 per cent of all male students did not consider themselves homophobic prior to participating in the program. However, the qualitative data which was analysed and interpreted in chapter seven, also indicates that the program may have the potential to
impact on these students behaviourally, by informing them of the direct consequences of homophobia, homophobic bullying, and importantly, how to intervene and be proactive when confronted with what they learnt to be, examples of school-based homophobia.

It appears that many of the program participants’ self-reported and objectively measured levels of homophobia were in the low range, and have therefore not improved as much as expected due to participation in the program. Nevertheless, qualitative data indicate that participation in *Pride and Prejudice* may have armed students with the knowledge of homophobia’s impact on SSAY. Although not objectively measured and only based on a handful of qualitative responses, some of the program students may be less inclined to play a passive role when it comes to witnessing acts of homophobic bullying. This may include any combination of name-calling (e.g. ‘faggot’, and using the term ‘that’s so gay’ to imply stupidity or inferiority), and resorting to aggressive and overt forms of homophobia such as physically abusing a known or suspected gay student. In other words, the primary outcome measures employed in the current study may not have captured the subtle and important ways in which students’ knowledge of homophobic bullying may translate into direct behavioural change, including intervening in examples of school-yard homophobia, or educating peers about the detrimental impact of homophobic slurs on SSAY.

Another explanation for the results on the primary outcome measures is that the scales employed did not directly tap into the process by which *Pride and Prejudice* educated students about homophobia, and its link to perceived
differences and stereotypes. For example, scale items did not specifically ask participants for their views on stereotypes, homophobic slurs or potential behavioural changes towards witnessing acts of homophobia. Yet, student qualitative data indicate that learning about the association between stereotypes, perceived difference, homophobia and its different forms, and the impact that homophobic bullying has on SSAY, has actually allowed the majority of these students to come to a better understanding of this type of bullying, how to recognise it, and in some instances how to better intervene and prevent it.

Without the added educational component of the program, which the qualitative evaluations indicate was not only appreciated but also necessary; it is conceivable that participants’ levels of homophobia may have continued to worsen over time in the school in which the research study took place. As mentioned in chapter three, although not an evaluation of *Pride and Prejudice*, Van de Ven’s (1995) study found that boys’ levels of homophobic anger tended to worsen at follow-up and were therefore not impacted by the program to the extent that reductions were sustainable over the short to medium term.

Although not statistically significant, the finding that the program in the current study produced a negligible worsening of attitudes towards lesbians is unexpected. This may be explained in part by the larger number of females (*n* = 23) in the program condition relative to males (*n* = 15). For example, males, and in particular adolescent males, seem to be preoccupied with the manner in which they portray their masculinity, which also implies avoiding others such as gay men or SSAY, who appear to challenge this important aspect of self-
identity (Herek, 1986). Conversely, females may not need to promote their femininity in the way males do their masculinity, because female gender role socialisation is more fluid and far less rigid and prescribed than for males (Basow, 1992). However, this does not imply that females do not harbour homophobic attitudes towards lesbians. Prior research outlined in chapter one suggests that homophobia varies according to the gender of the target.

Specifically, males are more likely to exhibit homophobic attitudes towards gay men than towards lesbians, and research suggests that females’ attitudes are more likely to be homophobic when the target is of the same sex (Polimeni et al., 2000). However, it is difficult to ascertain with any certainty why the current study’s program participants’ attitudes towards lesbians have demonstrated a tendency towards a slight deterioration.

It is noteworthy that not all of the students’ attitudes towards gay men and lesbians in Bridge’s (2007) study of *Pride and Prejudice* improved as a result of their participation. Male students’ attitudes towards lesbians remained the same at post-assessment. Furthermore, a total of seven per cent of students experienced a worsening of attitudes towards lesbians, nine per cent experienced a worsening of attitudes towards both gay men and lesbians, and just over four per cent experienced a worsening of attitudes towards gay men. However, only seven students in Bridge’s final statistical analyses were male, while the remaining 36 were female. Perhaps most noteworthy is the finding that only one of the three schools in Bridge’s study of *Pride and Prejudice*, involving an all girls Catholic school, produced a statistically significant reduction in levels of homophobia at post-assessment, compared to the two
other co-educational state schools in the study. Although, as mentioned in chapter three, Bridge does not report the results of his statistical analyses, his small sample size could explain the lack of statistical significance. Nevertheless, it is also possible that the program may not be as efficacious in decreasing levels of homophobia when the program’s author is also not the facilitator.

For example, in Higgins et al.’s (2001) study, in which an overall decrease in levels of homophobic attitudes was reported, the author of the program was also the facilitator. However, given the lack of a no-treatment control group in both of these studies, it is impossible to confirm with any certainty that the program’s efficacy is impeded when the author is not facilitating the program. Nevertheless, 25 per cent of participating students withdrew from Bridge’s (2007) study prior to its completion, and were therefore not included in the final statistical analyses. Although Bridge cannot adequately account for this finding, it is possible that the facilitators were not trained to comply with the manual or did not provide the safe and nurturing atmosphere that is crucial to the delivery of *Pride and Prejudice*, and without which students may have been disinclined to continue or to participate effectively. Equally as plausible an explanation is that some teachers in Bridge’s study harboured their own homophobic prejudice, and therefore compromised program fidelity.

In fact, Bridge (2007) does not specify whether the author of the program trained the teachers across the three schools in his study, and this finding along with the lack of a control group is also a crucial difference between Bridge’s
study and the current trial. In terms of the current trial, the finding that the control group’s attitudes towards lesbians deteriorated statistically significantly, relative to those of the program group, is possibly due to the buffering effect of the educational component of the program, which contained and prevented any existing negative attitudes towards lesbians from statistically worsening.

9.2.2 Secondary Outcomes

If participation in the research study and contamination effects are in any way responsible for the control groups’ worsening of levels of homophobia, then some of the findings across the secondary outcome measures may explain this process further. For example, there were approximately similar and moderate levels of change in the endorsement of the experiential-schematic function of homophobia (Herek, 1987a) across both the control and program groups. At first glance, this would indicate that attitudes tended to be more firmly based on perceived future or actual interactions with known gay people from pre to post-assessment, which is a surprising outcome for the control group.

It is possible that the experiential-schematic attitudes of those in the program group were shaped by the content of the program precisely because they were exposed to real-world stories of gay people, both from the open discussions and debate with other students, the group facilitators, and the characters in the DVD excerpts. While those in the control group did not have exposure to this content or learning, it is conceivable that the overall exposure to homosexuality that control students experienced as a result of the research
and the contamination effect discussed earlier, led some of them to more strongly endorse items across this attitude function. Parallel to this, scale items may have unintentionally resulted in the stronger endorsement of this function for control group participants. For example, items two ['My opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on my personal experiences with specific gay persons’] and three ['My opinions about gay men and lesbians are based mainly on my judgment of how likely it is that I will interact with gay people in any significant way’] could easily have been strongly endorsed by homophobic control group members precisely because their experiences of gay people have been based on homophobia, and generally only occurred (and will occur) during homophobic interactions.

Although Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic function of homophobia is premised on the notion that the greater one’s exposure to gay people, the less homophobic are one’s attitudes, merely knowing of, or exposure to gay people does not reduce one’s homophobia, especially if it is overshadowed by the endorsement of Herek’s other functions of homophobia. The notion that one can know openly gay people and yet still harbour homophobic attitudes has already been demonstrated in the prior literature. For example, as discussed in chapter one, Schope and Eliason (2000) discovered that although there was an association between knowing a gay or lesbian person and demonstrating less homophobia, it was not sufficient to prevent homophobic behaviour, as many of their participants also admitted to verbally harassing known gay or lesbian students, or laughing at homophobic jokes.
It is possible that the control participants’ endorsement of other functions of homophobia in the current study may have overridden the importance of endorsing the experiential-schematic function. For example, if control participants had strongly endorsed Herek’s (1987a) value-expressive function which serves to justify homophobic attitudes based on moral, religious or conservative grounds (Herek, 1987b), then this may have better explained their worsening across the primary outcome measures of homophobia, despite their strong endorsement of the experiential-schematic function. Although Schope and Eliason (2000) did not employ Herek’s (1987a) value expressive function in their study, they found that the minority of students who admitted to holding strong religious beliefs, also represented half of all those participants that reported having made threats to others believed to be gay or lesbian. Unfortunately, this function was omitted from the current analyses based on unacceptably low reliability levels as outlined in chapter five. Although demographic measures in the current study indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in familial levels of religiosity between the control and program group, this is only one indirect measure of moral conservatism, which the students’ caregivers were asked to give their opinions about – not the students.

In order to better understand more about control participants’ overall worsening of levels of homophobia relative to program participants, it is necessary to examine the way they endorsed the remaining attitude functions and secondary outcome measures. Second, it is also necessary to situate homophobia’s influence on these participants as a feature of the wider society
and the school. Indeed, one of the most salient and interesting findings was with respect to the way participants endorsed the social-expressive attitude function of homophobia (Herek, 1987a).

Herek (1987a) asserts that endorsing the views of one’s peer group functions as a source of social approval and is therefore personally advantageous. However, the items that comprise this attitude function could equally apply to the perceived or known opinions of anyone close to the respondent. There was a statistically significant interaction on this measure, and the control group tended to more strongly and statistically significantly endorse the views that they believed were held by their peers or others whose opinions they value, in relation to gay men and lesbians, relative to those in the program.

For example, homophobic bullying enacted against individuals believed to be gay or lesbian is usually carried out by groups of homophobes rather than individuals, to impress onlookers or gain their acceptance (Franklin, 2000; Tomsen & Mason, 2001; Weissman, 1992). The notion that males in particular, employ homophobic slurs to proclaim their membership of a particular heterosexist brand of masculinity to impress peers has been demonstrated, even when many of these same students do not consider themselves to be homophobic (e.g. Meghan-Burn, 2000). It is therefore equally as plausible even if particular control participants in the current study did not consider themselves to be overtly homophobic, that their opinions about gay men and lesbians and homosexuality in general, are still derived in part from the views of those that they care most about or respect. Apart from the obvious effects of
the wider society’s homophobia on students, including the media, this may include any combination of peers, parents and teachers.

Neither of the prior two evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice* (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001) evaluated teachers’ levels of homophobia, or asked them whether they felt competent to deliver such a program. It is conceivable that if teachers’ own prejudice impedes them from delivering a program whose aim is to address and attenuate homophobia and homophobic bullying, then they may be disinclined to deliver it appropriately according to the manual, and therefore compromise program fidelity. As previously reported in chapter eight, the teachers’ views of homophobia in the current study highlighted that the importance educators place on interrupting examples of homophobia is both a function of whether they believe homophobia exists, subjective decisions about tackling it on an *ad hoc* basis, and the school’s preparedness to address it systematically.

If teachers do not believe that such an anti-homophobia program is necessary, or fail to recognise or systematically intervene in examples of student homophobia, then this may be an indication of the overall climate of homophobia in any given school, and count as structural impediments to overcoming it. For example, Study Two highlights that despite four teachers attesting to the occurrence of homophobia in their school, one teacher had never witnessed homophobia and therefore did not see any need to address something that did not exist, including the implementation of a program designed to educate students about homophobia and homophobic bullying.
Teacher inaction to witnessing examples of homophobia is tantamount to accepting it and sends a powerful message to students, gay and straight alike, that this form of prejudice is still tolerated. For example, one educator in Study Two acknowledged that homophobia prevents SSAY from coming out at school, but also expressed reticence about addressing examples of homophobia due to the likely negative response from other students. Another teacher pointed out the futility of interrupting incidents of homophobia in the short-term because of an overarching belief that it would do little over the long run. Although only a very small sample and not necessarily representative of the overall school body, such attitudes may allude to not only a lack of confidence in addressing homophobia, but perhaps a larger more systemic cultural barrier of the school, which does not prioritise homophobia or homophobic bullying, and therefore the safety of all its students. Indeed, the issue of priorities was a key finding in Study Two.

The majority of the teachers surveyed agreed that the systematic implementation of an anti-homophobia program would be worthwhile, although this would also compete with existing priorities and curricular demands. Perhaps highlighting the need for teacher training that exists in the school in the current research, was one teacher’s perception that homophobic bullying generally only occurs when SSAY cannot adequately camouflage their homosexuality or difference. The implication being that the onus is on SSAY to ‘play it straight’ lest they upset the sensibilities of homophobic students, which suggests the importance of the dominant and majority culture in setting behavioural norms for everyone. Although only one voice among all
potential teachers in the school, it is clear from this teacher’s perception that much work remains to be done in order to achieve protection for all students, especially those who are forced to attempt to hide their differences. Parallel to this, it removes responsibility from educators and the school to ensure SSAY have access to a safe school environment. Expecting SSAY to change their behaviour so as to attract less bullying allows educators to sidestep the issue entirely, while existing levels of prejudice remain, and SSAY continue to face homophobic bullying.

Although it is difficult to ascertain based on the small number of respondents, the program group’s results in the current study may have been undermined by structural homophobia in the form of teacher and administrator ignorance, including ineffective policies on homophobic bullying, which then perpetuate individual educators’ unwillingness to address it, other than in an *ad hoc* and subjective fashion. The prior research outlined in this thesis is replete with examples of teacher inaction to homophobic bullying (e.g. Hillier et al, 1998, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010), despite existing legislation which makes discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal.

For example, as outlined in chapter two, the 1995 Victorian Equal Opportunity Act covers any form of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in both primary and secondary schools, and this includes discrimination between staff and students, as well as among students (Ollis et al., 2001). Yet, as discussed in chapter two, empirical research demonstrates that such Acts have limited impact on the lived realities of many SSAY in
today’s secondary schools (e.g. Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; O’Brien & Hohnke, 2007; Russell et al., 2001; Stover, 1992). The qualitative data obtained from teachers in Study Two of the current research and discussed in greater depth in chapter eight, alludes to a lack of direction, in terms of the importance that individual teachers place on addressing homophobic bullying, and indecision about exactly whether or how to intervene effectively. For example, although the majority of the teachers surveyed agreed that homophobic bullying occurred in their school, whether they witnessed regular accounts of it or not, they also indicated that they did not feel confident to address it. Parallel to this, some participants articulated uncertainty about the impact on students if they intervened, and that any positive outcomes would be short-lived, only tackling the issue superficially, and in some cases, competed with other priorities.

The desire to remain indifferent to examples of homophobia in the classroom has already been cited elsewhere (e.g. Buston & Hart, 2001) because dealing with it was equated with imposing an agenda or a value system on the students, implying the promotion of homosexuality. The implication is that attenuating homophobia is akin to promoting same-sex attraction. The belief that promoting tolerance and respect for non-heterosexual students and their right to an uninterrupted education, was apparently missing from many of Buston and Hart’s participants. In the current research, some teachers made it clear that they felt under-resourced due to competing curricular demands which they regarded as more important than addressing homophobic bullying, and failed to see the association between the negative impact on SSAY, and a compromised academic achievement.
Although many teachers do not feel empowered to tackle homophobia for fear of negative reprisals, student accounts continue to highlight the fact that they do not feel protected at school, and that teachers may continue to overlook examples of homophobic bullying (e.g. Buston & Hart, 2001; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010). If homophobia is tolerated in the school in which the current research took place, then students’ opinions about homophobia may in part be indirectly derived from the inaction that occurs when teachers are faced with this type of bullying, in front of other students, as this sends a strong message that it is not going to be taken seriously. It is therefore equally plausible that even if particular control participants did not consider themselves to be overtly homophobic in the current study, their opinions about gay people and homosexuality in general, are still derived in part from the views of those they care about or respect – including particular teachers.

Parallel to being based on the views of others, Herek’s social-expressive (1987a) function also serves as a boundary setting device and bolsters a sense of belonging to a particular brand of masculinity in adolescent males. Yet, the opposite was true for program participants in the current study whose endorsement of the social-expressive attitude function scale declined, albeit not statistically significantly, indicating that they had a tendency to rely less on the perceived views of others they cared about regarding gay people, and had perhaps begun to develop their own independent views on the subject. It seems that the finding that program participants developed a tendency to be less reliant on the perceived opinions of peers or others in their entourage, may
reflect the impact of the learning that took place as a result of being a part of *Pride and Prejudice*.

In chapter seven of this thesis, the post-program qualitative data suggests that despite the majority of students’ low levels of *self-assessed* homophobia, they were largely unaware of both the prevalence of SSAY in society and the school body, the forms of homophobia that can occur, and the impact of homophobic bullying on the wellbeing of SSAY. Inherent in the majority of the program students’ responses in evaluating the program was an understanding of what constitutes homophobia, homophobic bullying and importantly the potential harm that it can have on SSAY. Based on the student qualitative data, the program appears to have made an impact on some of the students’ homophobic attitudes and suggests real behavioural change is possible regarding their likely intervention to witnessing incidents of homophobic bullying. This type of data cannot be reliably compared with the previous two evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice* (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001) because neither of these studies discuss in any depth, the views and impact that the program had on participants post-assessment.

While it remains unknown whether the views of the control group’s peers were either homophobic or tolerant, it is more likely that the perceived attitudes of control group participants’ peers (or others they respect) were perceived as homophobic, based on an overall tendency to worsen on the primary outcome measures, relative to the program group. The influence of peers (or important others) on any type of school-bullying has already been
cited in the literature and can be explained in part, with reference to social
learning theory (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura’s (1977) theory places emphasis on the way individuals acquire
their knowledge of how to behave in particular situations by modelling others,
and then having that behaviour reinforced. If homophobic bullying is to a
certain extent ‘acceptable’, because the perpetrators’ behaviour is reinforced by
peer approval and over-looked or tolerated by teachers, then this could set up a
perpetual cycle of reinforcement. In keeping with the impact of the
environment in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), the strongest predictors
of being a victim in Cook et al.’s study (2010) included popularity, social
competence and peer status, and to a lesser yet still important extent, the school
climate including perceived safety and respect from teachers.

The impact of homophobic bullying and the lack of a safe-school
environment on the psychosocial wellbeing of SSAY has already been noted in
large scale studies on homophobic bullying, and articulated in earlier chapters
(e.g. Hillier et al., 1998, 2005; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010). SSAY who
were also victims of homophobic abuse, were more likely to report a sexually
transmissible infection (STI), engage in self-harming behaviours and use
alcohol and illicit drugs, than SSAY who were not bullied. Perhaps more
disturbingly, 35 per cent of respondents had either contemplated or completed
self-harm as a means of emotionally self-regulating in the face of homophobic
abuse. Among those SSAY that had self-harmed, 64 per cent of male and 23
per cent of females reported either considering suicide or actually attempted it
in response to ongoing homophobic bullying.
Importantly, over 60 per cent of the SSAY in Hillier et al.’s (2005) study stated that they chose not to report abuse to teachers based on a perception that it could worsen their situation, or fall on deaf ears. In fact, over 33 per cent of the students that decided to report their incidents of homophobic abuse to school staff claimed that no follow-up action was taken. In other related research, Buston and Hart’s (2001) observational data of teachers engaged in the teaching of sex-education classes revealed examples of overt homophobia among both teachers and students alike. Some teachers were observed being complicit in students’ homophobia when homophobic bullying went unchallenged, but also when they modelled the acceptability of homophobia by engaging with students in the ostracising of another student about his perceived or actual homosexuality. A heterosexist school culture perpetuates the negative appraisals of many SSAY– that the school is not necessarily a safe place, and that homophobia is often accepted and unchallenged by educators. Allowing examples of homophobia to go unchallenged is therefore unlikely to minimise the occurrence of homophobic bullying.

If teachers and students alike act as reinforcers to homophobia, then this would presumably do little to challenge or alter students’ levels of homophobic bullying. The teacher data in Study Two of the current research suggest that according to these teachers, homophobic bullying exists in the school in which *Pride and Prejudice* was conducted, and that the handful of teachers who took part in the study, do not necessarily understand how to best tackle homophobia when it occurs, and a quarter of them tended to dismiss its importance in favour of competing duties and issues. Perhaps a more telling gauge of the
importance that addressing homophobic bullying holds for these teachers was the extraordinarily low response rate. As mentioned in chapter eight, only six teachers chose to participate out of a potential total of approximately 75, representing a response rate of only eight per cent. Although it is not known why such a low number of teachers chose to participate, it is possible that any combination of apathy, disinterest, lack of time, competing priorities, or homophobia may be responsible.

If SSAY are to progress to the later and more fulfilling stages of Cass’ (1979) model of homosexual identity development articulated in detail in chapter one, then they must not only tolerate their own sexual identities but accept them, because there has been encouragement and support in the immediate environment. Yet this hinges on self-acceptance and a readiness to reveal one’s sexual orientation to others, which is far more likely to occur within a climate of acceptance and support. SSAY continue to perceive as barriers to acceptance, school environments that are hostile to perceived difference, do not provide information to students about same-sex attraction, do not encourage SSAY to come out and express their true identities, and a lack of support from educators when confronted with examples of homophobic abuse (Buston & Hart, 2001; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005).

In addition to the importance that young people place on modelling peers and teachers and reflecting social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), it is equally likely that parents’ attitudes could explain the manner in which the control group endorsed Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive attitude function in the current study. Many SSAY attempt to conceal their sexual orientation from
parents, due to the potential for real or perceived rejection. As mentioned in chapter two, only half of all respondents in Hillier et al.’s (2005) large scale study of 1749 young people had come out to parents at the time of the research, because of perceived parental homophobia. It is difficult to assess the potential impact of parental homophobia on the outcomes of the current study. However, what is known is that the return rate of parental consent forms was (61.7%) for control and (73.3%) for program participants indicating that these parents may not have wanted their child to participate in a study of homophobic bullying and an intervention designed to attenuate levels of homophobia due to their own ignorance and prejudice.

Despite the potential influence of the parents and teachers’ on students’ opinions of gay men and lesbians in the current study, Cook et al.’s (2010) meta-analysis of 153 studies revealed that the strongest contextual predictor of school-bullying was the perceived influence of one’s peers. Given that control participants were not directly exposed to the staged learning content of the program, there is no reason to believe that their endorsement of the opinions of their peers should have declined, and this is confirmed by the current results. While Cook et al.’s meta-analysis does not explicate the exact nature of the content of the bullying in the studies under review, it is worth keeping in mind that homophobic bullying is quite particular, and may be equally explained by psychodynamic theory and the use of particular defence styles (Herak, 1987a), rather than relying solely on social learning theory and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977).
Herek (1987a) explains this with reference to his defensive attitude function of homophobia which serves to repress unacceptable intra-psychic urges and feelings of inadequacy about not only one’s sexual orientation, but also about a perceived inability to live up to the prescribed gender roles that are expected in a heterosexist society. Given the intra-psychic processes that occur during the psycho-sexual development of the adolescent (Erikson, 1968), homophobic bullying may also be explained with reference to psychodynamic theory and in particular, the use of immature defence styles. For example, if a particular brand of masculinity is important to adolescent boys’ self-concept in a school culture which promotes sameness and the superiority of heterosexist values (Falomir-Pichastor, & Mugny, 2009), then defence styles may be one of the means by which some boys distance themselves from the anxiety and fear that SSAY, or those suspected of being gay provoke.

An example of this is the use of the immature defence style of projection. Projection takes place whenever attributing to others, the disowned or negative parts of oneself (McWilliams, 1994). In terms of homophobia, boys that are perceived to be SSAY become targets because they may provoke negative feelings which are defended against by engaging in homophobic bullying (Herek, 1986, 1987b). Although Pride and Prejudice does not teach students about defence mechanisms directly, it may inadvertently achieve a reduction in the use of immature defences by exposing students to the concept of homosexuality, unpacking conflicting views and opinions in a safe and non-judgemental atmosphere and then offering a range of alternative opinions on the subject that students are free to take up and explore.
During the course of the program, students are exposed to a range of non-sexual images depicting same-sex intimacy including footballers embracing on the football field, and two same-sex couples (male and female) showing affection towards each other. The goal of this exercise is to expose students to forms of same-sex intimacy that are generally regarded as both acceptable and non-acceptable in a heterosexist culture, with the aim being to allow them to realise that this acceptance is a function of culturally constructed gender roles, and that achieving this is ultimately founded on acknowledging particular feelings that may never have previously been explored in this way.

There were no statistically significant differences from pre to post-assessment in terms of the endorsement of Herek’s (1987a) defensive attitude function, although effect sizes indicate that there was a small decline in the endorsement of defensive attitude functions for the program group, and a small increase in the endorsement of this function for the control group. However, this is in contrast to part two of the remaining secondary outcomes, which were a direct measure of all twelve immature defences including passive-aggression, projection, devaluation, acting out, isolation, autistic fantasy, displacement, denial, dissociation, splitting, somatisation and rationalisation. It is possible that the measure used to detect variations in immature defence styles was more sensitive than Herek’s defensive attitude function which contains only two items. In the current study, there was a tendency towards a statistically significant interaction effect, and the use of immature defences remained the same for the program group. However, the control group experienced a small
to moderate worsening in their immature defences from pre to post-assessment, and this was statistically significant.

One explanation for this finding is that apart from being maladaptive, the use of immature defence styles is directly relevant to homophobia. Aggressive forms of homophobia have already been shown to correlate positively and statistically significantly with the use of immature defence styles \( r = 0.43, p < .001 \) in adolescent males (e.g. Lewis & White, 2009). In the current study, the correlation was lower than this \( r = .25 \), but remained statistically significant. Particular immature defences (e.g. projection, displacement, splitting, devaluation and acting out), and intentions to commit aggressive acts of homophobia, can together involve acting on a SSAY target (or someone suspected of being gay). In their study, Lewis and White discovered that the immature defence styles which accounted for most of the variance between the adolescent males, denoted high or low in homophobia were; denial (17.64%), devaluation (13.10%), and somatisation (11.35%). While considered a neurotic defence style, idealisation accounted for 18.31 per cent of the variance.

Knowing that aggressive forms of homophobia and these types of defences are positively related, may then place SSAY into a position of high risk of homophobic attack by those homophobic students who also resort to these types of defence mechanisms. It is therefore worth considering the impact that the use of these types of defences may provoke. Importantly, the routine use of immature defences to ward off anxiety, discomfort or other negative affect that SSAY trigger in homophobic adolescents may result in their using acts of homophobic aggression to alleviate the accompanying intra-psychic
personal distress (Lewis & White, 2009). Based on these results and the primary outcome measures, it is therefore possible that control participants’ levels of homophobic aggression could not only worsen over time if not buffered by the effects of an anti-homophobia program, but they may form a formidable force in perpetuating homophobic bullying and represent an obstacle to reducing overall levels of homophobia in the school environment.

As mentioned in chapters three and four, the current research aimed to make up for limitations in the prior two evaluations of *Pride and Prejudice*. Unlike the prior two studies (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001), the current study made use of a no-treatment control condition which is in keeping with research conventions for trialling program evaluation studies (Kazdin, 2003). However, when trialling programs around sensitive issues such as homophobia, there is also the possibility that conducting research within the same environment will actually lead to further instances of the very construct that the intervention aims to reduce in the control condition. However, in their study of contamination effects, Howe et al. (2007) note that geographically separating control from program participants can lead to other undesirable biases such as the comparison of dissimilar subgroups.

Containment of any attitude change as a result of educational programs is obviously an important component to their success. If control participants experienced a tendency to worsen across the primary and secondary outcomes then it is also possible that some program participants’ levels may worsen over time. This was apparent in Van de Ven’s (1995) trial investigating the effects of a manualised anti-homophobia program as discussed in chapter three. The
program produced a worsening of levels of cognitive forms of homophobia and levels of homophobic anger in males. This highlights the need for systemic approaches to tackling homophobia even after anti-homophobia programs have ended, especially with boys, where homophobia intersects with cultured notions of masculinity (Herek, 1986). Unfortunately, and in keeping with Higgins et al.’s (2001) and Bridge’s (2007) studies, it was not possible to conduct any follow-up assessment in the current study, other than the post-testing following program participation. This was due to the school’s time constraints and a desire not to disrupt students’ classes any further, as articulated by the secondary-school in which both Studies One and Two took place.
9.2.3 Tertiary Outcomes

The third area of investigation was whether participants’ gender and attained levels of parental education was associated with the degree of change on the attitude functions (social-expressive and experiential-schematic) and levels of homophobic aggression, after controlling for program type. The results of these tertiary outcomes are only partially supported as the results have produced some unexpected findings.

The first predictor variable, gender, was chosen because of its association with stereotypical gender roles, masculinity and homophobia as outlined in chapter one. If adolescent males are the primary perpetrators of aggressive forms of homophobia, then gender should logically predict changes in this type of homophobia. Similarly, and as already outlined in previous chapters and in discussing the results of the secondary outcomes, Herek’s (1987a) social-expressive attitude function of homophobia is premised on the notion that homophobia serves an approval-seeking function, from peers or important others, who are perceived to share a similar outlook regarding gay people. Importantly, this attitude function serves to reinforce a brand of heterosexist masculinity – only those who espouse homophobic views are considered part of the in-group.

Gender was also believed to predict changes in Herek’s (1987a) experiential-schematic attitude function. Both theory and prior research suggests that males tend to be overtly homophobic (e.g. Lewis & White, 2009) and therefore inclined to attempt to distance themselves from known gay people or those suspected of being gay, as opposed to females who may
befriend or attempt to know same-sex attracted people. However, gender was not a statistically significant determinant of change of any of these criteria variables, and therefore both males and females were equally amenable to change in the current study.

The second criterion variable, parental education was chosen because of the negative correlation between levels of formal education and homophobic attitudes (e.g. Weissman, 1992; Wright et al. 1999). The finding that parental education was a determinant of change in the endorsement of the social-expressive attitude function (Herek, 1987a) partly supports the hypothesis and can be explained with reference to the secondary outcomes. If parental education predicts changes in the importance that students place on the perceived attitudes of peers or important others regarding homosexuality, then that also implies that even those children whose primary caregivers were not highly educated, also demonstrated a slight tendency to become more independent thinkers about gay people as a result of participation in the program.
Conclusion

9.3 Section Overview

This section will begin with a conclusion to the discussion, a brief review of the limitations and strengths that have been identified in this research, followed by a brief outline of potential future directions, in light of the key findings and the main limitations.

9.4 Summary and Conclusion

As outlined in the introductory chapters, the majority of adolescent SSAY are subject to homophobic bullying while at school, which can lead to serious negative psycho-social outcomes including depression, self-harm, suicide attempts and absenteeism (Dyson et al., 2003; Hillier et al., 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2010; McNamee, 2006). Parallel to this, there appears to be an often taken-for-granted assumption that all students are expected to be, or at least pretend to be heterosexual. This is generally promoted by schools, parents, teachers and the wider society as the preferred sexual orientation for all (Mishna et al., 2007). Consequently, this pressure to conform to a heterosexist ideal, results in SSAY experiencing a lack of support as they suffer in silence with their psychosexual development (Cass, 1979; Hillier et al., 2005; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Smith, 1998).

Based on this isolation, reporting incidents of homophobic abuse may be perceived as particularly difficult for SSAY, as it may feel like a form of premature disclosure or coming out (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). However, as discussed in chapter one, coming out is unlikely to occur if the young person is
still uncertain of his or her sexual orientation, or lacks the appropriate social support from any combination of peers, family and teachers. While homosexuality continues to be viewed negatively and schools do not approach homophobic bullying in a uniform manner, it is likely that SSAY will continue to be subject to bullying and isolation, and the corresponding potential for negative psychosocial effects including depression and suicide (Dyson et al., 2003).

The Pride and Prejudice program is the only formally evaluated, existing and targeted anti-homophobia intervention whose aim is to attenuate levels of homophobia in light of many of the previously presented theories and related social variables. These include seeking peer approval and pressure to conform to an idealised and heterosexist self-presentation, positive reinforcement from onlookers, the development of less adaptive defence mechanisms, a means by which some youth enhance their social status, aggressiveness, and finally, an awareness that homophobic bullying is not necessarily going to attract the same negative consequences or attention as other kinds of bullying (Bandura, 1977; Cass, 1984; Herek, 1984a, 1987a; Hillier et al., 2005; Kosciw et al., 2010; Lewis & White, 2009; Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

While Pride and Prejudice remains the only available manualised anti-homophobia program designed specifically for use in secondary schools, its prior evaluations contained too many methodological flaws, which prevented it meeting evidence-based criteria as an effective intervention for interrupting homophobic attitudes in adolescents. In light of the limitations of the two previous published evaluations (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001), and
the need for manualised, existing and easy-to-implement anti-homophobia programs that target youth in secondary schools, this thesis aimed to make an original contribution by running the first controlled trial of *Pride and Prejudice* employing a mixed-methods approach.

The aim of Study One was to conduct a pre-post test, randomised controlled study with cluster randomisation to evaluate the intervention’s strength as a sustainable solution to the ubiquitous and detrimental psycho-social effects of homophobic bullying in secondary schools.

While a lack of statistical significance was noted across the quantitative measures and especially within the program group from pre to post assessment, this should not necessarily be interpreted as an indication that *Pride and Prejudice* has not otherwise impacted students’ levels of homophobia, and their understanding of homophobic bullying and its detrimental consequences to SSAY. In addition to the favourable qualitative data explored in chapter seven, overall, the program produced a tendency towards small levels of improvement and may have prevented a worsening of homophobia relative to the control group, which experienced an overall deterioration on most of the outcome measures, especially homophobic aggression. The exception to this trend was on attitudes towards lesbians, whereby both control and program participants experienced a slight worsening, although this was greater for the control group. Attitudes towards lesbians may not have been as amenable to change, due to the higher numbers of females in the program group, or because the program does not adequately focus on homophobia in females.
Yet, as discussed in depth in section two of this chapter, while students in the control group did not participate in the program, their attitudes appear to have been nevertheless impacted by the research. It is possible that a contamination effect is responsible for many of the changes in outcomes for the control group, given that both groups were sourced from the same school and year level. The research project as a whole has exposed these students to the topic of homosexuality, but without the educational framework and learning that took place in the program group. For example, in addition to the primary outcomes, the impact of this contamination effect was evident in the way in which control students more strongly endorsed the experiential-schematic attitude function. Parallel to this, control students’ levels of immature defences worsened from pre to post-assessment, which coupled with their worsening on levels of homophobic aggression, suggests that without the containment of *Pride and Prejudice*, there is the potential for an increase in aggressive acts of homophobic bullying in similar aged secondary-school adolescents, and especially among males.

The results demonstrate that the program participants’ low levels of both subjective and objectively measured levels of homophobia at pre-test, has possibly acted as a form of ceiling effect, curtailing further reductions in levels of homophobia as a result of the program. Nevertheless, the measure of social-expressive attitude functions suggests that control participants tended to more strongly derive their opinions about gay and lesbian people from their peers or important others at post-assessment. Despite the lack of statistical significance, the qualitative data certainly attest to the learning that transpired and
strengthened program participants’ appreciation of the plight of SSAY, in light of homophobia and homophobic bullying.

However, as previously mentioned, almost half of the female program participants stated that their attitudes towards gay people were already tolerant, and therefore may not have been impacted to the same extent as those of males. Indeed, the qualitative data suggests that males found the program content more confronting than females. A larger sample would have allowed predictions to be made based on gender to determine if *Pride and Prejudice* is in fact making any measurable impact on females’ levels of homophobia. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the overwhelming majority of students appreciated *Pride and Prejudice*’s content and learnt more about homophobia and its negative impact on SSAY than before taking part in the program. Even those students who indicated their already open attitudes voiced that they had learnt how to be more proactive in interfering in examples of homophobia and homophobic bullying as a result of participation in the program.

Despite the promising results of this research, homophobia is a systemic prejudice and schools operate as subsystems within a wider heterosexist society (Ollis et al., 2001). If homophobia in schools is to be attenuated, then it is logical that in addition to educating students, teachers will also require adequate and relevant anti-homophobia training. In fact the teachers’ study (Study Two) highlights the manner in which the school climate acts as a structure to sustaining homophobia, given their overall feelings of inadequacy in dealing with homophobic bullying. While the study only involved a handful of participants which limits interpretations to only those involved, the majority
of responses indicate that homophobia is a concern, and that an anti-
homophobia program for students would be useful. However, its effective
delivery would be a function of receiving the appropriate teacher training.

Based on the prior research and to a certain extent, the results of Study
Two, it seems that homophobic bullying is still dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis
by many teachers, which is obviously a function of their ability to recognise its
occurrence and importance, the detrimental effects it has on SSAY, their own
prejudice and whether they feel confident to interrupt it each and every time
that it occurs. To do otherwise is akin to reinforcing homophobia’s
acceptability. Teachers apparently still have the choice to ignore examples of
homophobia, meaning that if anti-homophobia programs are going to make an
impact on students’ levels of homophobia, then there must be clear indications
from teachers and school management alike, that homophobia will no longer be
tolerated. SSAY have already articulated their views on tackling homophobia.

Some of these suggestions include acknowledging the problem,
developing relevant policies that clearly identify the nature of homophobic
bullying, promoting intervening in examples of homophobic bulling, training
school staff in how to recognise and respond appropriately, identifying and
providing role models in the school including gay and lesbian educators and
students, providing resources to students, integrating gay and lesbian issues
into the general curriculur, and making use of support services in the
community (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Finally the celebration of any progress
towards eradicating homophobia in the school is perceived as a positive step
(Hunt & Jensen).
Based on the results of this research, and the prior literature and theories reviewed thus far, it seems reasonable to conclude that unfortunately, without a systematic approach to homophobic bullying, such as that articulated in Hunt and Jensen’s (2007) report, it is unlikely that anti-homophobia programs such as *Pride and Prejudice* will have any sustainable impact on student-to-student homophobia. However, these types of programs may be an important ingredient towards interrupting this insidious form of prejudice, and could feasibly be included into a suite of approaches by all schools.

9.5 Limitations

A number of limitations have been identified in this research which may have compromised the results and limited more conclusive outcomes. These design and methodological limitations should therefore be carefully considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample was smaller than had been initially anticipated due to the large number of parental consent forms that were not returned prior to the commencement of the study. Indeed, the lack of statistical significance in the current study limits the degree of certainty about any of the conclusions that have been made about the efficacy of *Pride and Prejudice*. However, in keeping with the requirements of the Deakin University Ethics Committee, it was not possible for a child to participate in the study unless prior parental consent had been obtained. Similarly, although psychometrically valid, there are currently limited measures available for the study of homophobia in adolescents, and the ones employed in the current study may no longer be sensitive to attitudinal change, or inadequately target
the salient areas of change that are expected to occur as a result of participating in anti-homophobia programs like *Pride and Prejudice*.

As described throughout this chapter, sampling both the control and program group from within the same school has likely resulted in a contamination effect. In order to control for this, it would have been necessary to employ at least two separate schools that were equally matched in terms of socio-economic variables, gender, scholastic ability and geographical location. As mentioned, contamination effects can decrease the power of a study by reducing the magnitude of effect sizes, which in turn reduce the likelihood of finding statistically significant estimates (Kazdin, 2003). This is more likely to occur when participants are closely matched, as in the current study, across gender, age, levels of education and socio-economic status. Although employing multiple testing sites would certainly have increased the robustness of the study and reduced the possibility of a contamination effect, this would also have required a larger research team and substantially greater resources, both of which were beyond the scope of the current research, and the deadlines in which the results had to be collected.

As previously mentioned in chapter five, although a number of schools were contacted for participation in this study, only one government co-educational school chose to allow the student researcher to conduct the research, and to co-facilitate the program. The result is that data pertaining to the efficacy of a trial of *Pride and Prejudice* in an all male secondary school where levels of homophobia are likely to be higher (e.g. Lewis and White, 2009) remains to be seen, as the previous studies on the program took place in
either all-girls or co-educational settings (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001). Possibly also impeding more statistically significant findings across the outcomes, the low levels of homophobia that existed in the current sample at pre-test have possibly produced a ceiling effect. This may have prevented any further gains as a result of participation in the program.

Further limitations of the study design include a systematic lack of measurement of the number of sessions attended by program participants and corresponding changes in levels of the dependent variables. Although the majority of students attended every session according to teacher and facilitator observations, a specific measure of this association was not conducted. Despite the use of the FDR method (Benjamin & Hochberg, 1995), the use of multiple testing in this study would have better suited multivariate analyses, which in turn would have controlled for the family-wise error rate.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, there was no follow-up study (in addition to the post-testing) conducted on participants due to the school’s time constraints and therefore it is impossible to ascertain whether any educative gains of *Pride and Prejudice* can be maintained beyond the final session. This limitation, together with the lack of follow-up studies in the two previous evaluations obviously leaves the question of the program’s medium to long-term impact on homophobic bullying unanswered.

Parallel to this, post-testing took place only one week after the final session of *Pride and Prejudice*, which may have been too soon for students to completely process the learning that took place during the course of the
program. A related limitation was the delivery of sessions five and six within the same week, which was unavoidable due to the school’s timetable, but also severely compromised program fidelity. The program sessions are designed to be delivered with one week intervals as per the manual, to allow students the time to integrate what has been learnt in the previous session. It is therefore possible that this deviation from the manual has also compromised outcomes.

The low response-rate of teachers may be an indication of the lack of interest in homophobic bullying, and the limited number of respondents has compromised learning more about the structural impediments to attenuating homophobia in this school, and the resources necessary to implement a whole-school approach to homophobic bullying. This final point raises the question of how useful programs like *Pride and Prejudice* can actually be, when implemented into schools that are yet to overhaul their existing response to homophobia, including teacher training in how to deal effectively with homophobic bullying, and the systematic interruption of manifestations of student homophobia.

9.6 **Strengths**

Although this research has its limitations, a number of existing strengths are worthy of consideration. First, and perhaps most importantly, Study One represents the first controlled trial of *Pride and Prejudice* in a setting in which the author of the program was not the facilitator. The previous two published studies (e.g. Bridge, 2007; Higgins et al., 2001) do not include a control condition, and one of them was delivered by the program’s author. Both of
these limitations severely compromise the validity of their results on the basis of ecological validity and researcher bias. *Pride and Prejudice* is designed to be implemented in real-world settings by educators who do not necessarily have direct experience of homophobia, or even the delivery of programs that encourage students to voice and debate opinions openly without redress. The current study’s key strengths are therefore that it employed a control group which was approximately matched across scholastic achievement, gender, age and socio-economic background, and utilised an existing member of staff as the primary facilitator of the program. The required facilitator training was also conducted by the author of the program, in order to assist both the student researcher and school chaplain in maintaining program fidelity.

The second most important strength is the extrapolation of the students’ views of the program which were subjected to a qualitative analysis yielding rich and useful findings, which have greatly enhanced understanding the quantitative results of Study One. This study is the first to utilise the students’ opinions of their participation in *Pride and Prejudice* in this way. Parallel to this is Study Two, which aimed to procure the teachers’ views of homophobia and structural impediments to reducing homophobic bullying in this school. This type of study was not conducted by either Bridge (2007) or Higgins et al. (2001). Finally, the measures used in the current study have never been used in previous studies of *Pride and Prejudice* and have yielded interesting, and clinically useful information regarding immature defence mechanisms and homophobia. Effect sizes of both the control and program group demonstrated
that the program has the potential to either improve levels of the primary and secondary outcomes, or at least mitigate their deterioration across time.

9.7 Directions for Future Research

Due to the small sample size, results need to be replicated with a larger sample. There were a number of results that reached statistical significance and tendencies towards statistical significance in others. It is feasible that a larger sample size may produce an increase in statistically significant results across the outcome measures. As mentioned in the limitations, a contamination effect seems to have curtailed any further impact of the program on participants’ improvements across the outcome measures. Addressing this issue would require at the very least, that testing took place in one school, while the other served as a no-treatment control group. However, this would require that the schools were approximately matched in terms of demographic, socio-economic variables, and that the adolescents were approximately equal in terms of age, gender, grades and other abilities including baseline levels of homophobia.

While this study was the first of its kind to assess the efficacy of Pride and Prejudice in a repeated measures controlled study with cluster randomisation, the issue of how the program performs in single-sex schools remains to be assessed. Given that males are more likely to exhibit outward and aggressive forms of homophobic bullying than females, it would be advantageous to conduct a re-trial of the program in an all-boys school, utilising a similar cohort as the control condition. The issue of the outcome measures failing to pick up the subtle ways in which participants may have
learnt about homophobic bullying and their own roles in perpetuating its occurrence, as evident from the student qualitative data, suggests new measures which parallel more closely the content of the program may need to be developed and trialled.

Any future trial of the program should ideally include a follow-up study to ascertain whether any gains in reducing levels of homophobia are sustainable and over what term. The issue of teacher preparedness to systematically tackle homophobic bullying should be measured in any re-trial of the program. As discussed in chapter eight, the implementation of a program like *Pride and Prejudice* could be a vital first step to combating homophobic bullying, but may be impeded by teacher inaction when witnessing examples of it, which continue to reinforce its acceptability.
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