Breaking down barriers: An analysis of pre-service health and physical education teachers’ beliefs and preparation for working with LGBTQ students

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Abstract

In this research, I investigate the values, beliefs and preconceived notions teachers of health & physical education (H&PE) possess as they educate LGBTQ students. H&PE teachers hold a significant responsibility to create safe spaces for LGBTQ students, as PE and sport are contexts in which LGBTQ students feel especially vulnerable, due to the pervasive cultures of hyper-masculinity and conservatism (Linghede & Larsson, 2017). Yet, little is known about how these teachers are prepared to work with LGBTQ students. In response, my research provides an opportunity for pre-service H&PE teachers to describe their feelings of preparedness and their values, beliefs and preconceived notions to working with this population. Information gathering and analysis was accomplished through a qualitative methodology. Four pre-service H&PE teachers where recruited to partake in three semi-structured interviews utilizing a past, present and future structure. Through this process, three main findings were generated. First, this group of pre-service H&PE teachers possessed varying beliefs in working with LGBTQ students. Secondly, many of the participants articulated a commitment to inclusionary practices. Third, the participants believe that their formal university experiences have not prepared them to teach issues relating to gender and sexuality. As such, participants have taken it upon themselves to learn effective strategies through their own research and personal experiences. Implications for school H&PE, teacher development and future avenues of research are discussed in light of these findings.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

‘Did you see that... he didn’t make one shot, he is such a fag’.

‘Honestly, I don’t even know what he’s doing here...Let him play the flute or something, I’m sure he’d like that’.

The whole change room bursts out in laughter.

‘Okay gents, let’s get going!’ yells our teacher.

[Thank god, I need to get out of here.]

This kind of conversation was typical in the change room before (and after) every Health and Physical Education (H&PE) class. I had grown used to a H&PE experience that was rife with homophobic bullying from my peers, and apathy and ignorance from my teacher. I still enjoyed the content of H&PE, but the context was not a safe or happy place for me. For one brief moment, I thought my experience would improve…

For the last couple of weeks, I’d been feeling really weird. There was a guy in class who had transferred in from another school, and I hadn’t stopped thinking about him. He was tall, blonde hair, blue eyes, athletic, the whole package. [I shouldn’t be thinking like this, especially about another guy, I’m seeing a girl]. By a stroke of luck (from my perspective), Owen and I had been placed on the same team for a couple of days.

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1 The terms Physical Education (PE) and Health & Physical Education (H&PE) are purposefully used and are clarified in the Definition of Terms section for explicit differentiation.

2 The name utilized in this vignette (Owen) is a pseudonym.
‘Hey Owen, you play rep volleyball, don’t you?’

‘Yeah, I did, how did you know?’ he responds.

[Oh my god! He’s actually talking to me… what do I say now?!] ‘Well that’s sick! Next time I see you at tournament, I’ll make sure to kick your butt’ [Kick your butt? Who the hell says that?].

Fortunately, our conversations became a little less awkward as we got to know each other. However, as we got closer, my thoughts about him became even more distracting.

‘Hi Owen, do you mind if I talk to you about something?’

‘Sure, what’s up?’ he responds, looking confused.

‘Well, it’s going to be kind of awkward, but I feel I need to say it’.

‘Okay…’, he says, his eyes focused on me, cutting through me like a knife.

‘Well, here’s the thing, ever since you came into class, I haven’t been able to stop thinking about you. I think I’m gay’.

He stares at me for it feels like forever. He looks away and then turns back.

‘You know, that’s an abomination. If you are, you’re going to hell’.

The narrative above describes some of my most salient experiences of homophobia within my H&PE classes. They were frequent, vicious, and hurt me emotionally. They also did not need to happen, as my teacher(s) did little to prevent them or stop them during or after they occurred.

Not only do the vignettes above provide the reader with an idea of some of my H&PE experiences as a student, it also illustrates my connection to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ) community. Given the negativity, hurt, and marginalization I experienced
in the vignettes above (and at many other times), it may be interpreted as unusual to choose to become a certified H&PE teacher in Ontario. Why would I choose to spend more time in such a context given my experiences? It is because I believe in being an agent of change, an advocate/activist for others in similar situations, and someone who sees value in H&PE. These positions situate me in this thesis research.

Setting the Ground

As one group who has experienced long-term marginalization, LGBTQ youth often find themselves in communities that possess heteronormative beliefs, where homophobic bullying is a salient feature of their lives (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016; Farrelly, Norman & O’Leary, 2017; Landi, 2018). As a result of this victimization, LGBTQ students are far more likely to demonstrate low academic performance in comparison to their peers and become susceptible to major risk factors for mental health including hopelessness, depression, and an increase in suicidal thoughts and/or attempts (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016). H&PE and sport are contexts where LGBTQ youth feel especially vulnerable, due to a pervasive culture of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ and conservatism (Landi, 2018; Linghede & Larsson, 2017). Despite H&PE often being a place where LGBTQ students do not feel protected, the subject may also be seen as one context where normative views of sexuality can be challenged as H&PE is a primary place in schools where students can learn about issues of gender and sexuality. Indeed, the revised H&PE curriculum in Ontario is the only official document to include content about gender and sexuality as a specific outcome for students, meaning that teachers of H&PE are ethically and legally obliged to discuss these topics in their classes (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

Most individuals who are not familiar with H&PE contexts assume that these topics are taught in the health component of the course that is typically removed from the standard confines
of the gymnasium, the curriculum positions H&PE as an integrated subject area, where health topics can and should be discussed within movement topics (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). While it may be viewed as reassuring by some to learn that topics of gender and sexuality are required as part of a young person’s education in Ontario, the recently elected provincial government has executed plans to repeal parts of the Ontario 2015 H&PE curriculum that deal with these topics, under the guise of a lack of consultation in creating the 2015 curriculum, as well as ensuring representation of all family values, including those that are overwhelmingly heteronormative (Bialystok, 2019; Lum, 2018). Similarly, the United Conservative Party (UCP) in Alberta recently ran on a platform of ‘outing’ students to parents if they decide to join gay-straight alliances in their secondary schools, demonstrating how young LGBTQ people (as well as allies) in Canada are facing unsettling and threatening environments to grow up in and be educated in (Bellefontaine, 2019). This repeal of the 2015 H&PE curriculum in Ontario has been met with scrutiny from multiple health-based stakeholders, who suggest that this repeal is a human rights violation as it discriminates against people who identify as diverse genders and sexualities (Bialystok, 2019; Mitsui, 2018). Additionally, many stakeholders feel that replacing this curriculum will lead to a lack of understanding and acceptance, leading to potentially higher risk of mental health issues for marginalized groups (Bialystok, 2019; Johnstone, 2018).

Despite taking several steps back with the repeal of the revised curriculum in Ontario, some progress had been made up to that point through the inclusion of topics of gender and sexuality in school curricula both in Ontario and beyond. However, there were and are teachers who still refuse to discuss these topics regardless of their inclusion in curriculum and policy documents. Some simply feel uncomfortable or lack confidence to facilitate discussions of issues that might be deemed sensitive or controversial, while others claim religious freedom or
dissonance with the subject matter (Bailey, Vasey, Diamond, Breedlove, Vilain & Epprecht, 2016). Furthermore, some teachers argue that explicit LGBTQ supportive actions, such as standing up for LGBTQ rights is actually discriminatory against other students (Shelton, Barnes & Flint, 2019). It has been shown that teachers’ decisions to address or not address such issues and the ways in which they are addressed can directly influence their students’ perceptions of the LGBTQ community, and potentially further ostracize marginalized students who reside in their classrooms (Boyland, Swensson, Ellis, Coleman & Boyland, 2015; Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017). With the inclusion of topics of gender and sexuality in H&PE curriculum documents, H&PE teachers hold a significant responsibility to create safe spaces in schools for LGBTQ students that foster engagement in their learning without fear of humiliation or harassment from their peers or teachers (Morrow & Gill, 2003). Even with the significant role H&PE teachers take in creating safe spaces in schools for LGBTQ students, little is known about how H&PE teachers of the future are prepared to work with LGBTQ students.

Addressing the Literature Gap

The current literature showcases a growing appreciation for broad inclusive practices for LGBTQ youth in schools. For instance, Bill 13: The Accepting Schools Act, which came into effect in November 2012, enacted a much-needed paradigm shift towards inclusion for LGBTQ students in Ontario schools (Brard & Nicolaides, 2014). As Brard and Nicolaides (2014) emphasize “The Act allows publicly funded schools in Ontario to include acceptance of LGBTQTIQ$^3$ students and allows teachers to speak of this [phenomena] openly, without negative repercussions” (p. 29). Additionally, this legislation produced new legal obligations for school

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$^3$ The expanded acronym that encompasses all representations of this vast community is LGBTQQQIP2SAA. Refer to the Definition of Terms section for explicit differentiation.
districts to address homophobic bullying, execute accepting school dynamics for marginalized students, and implement equity and inclusive based pedagogies (Brard & Nicolaides, 2014).

Furthermore, the ideas of Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) and Social Justice Leadership (SJL) have gained notoriety within school administrative circles in response to the growing diversity found within schools today, both in Ontario and beyond (Lopez, 2015; Shields, 2010; Vasallo, 2015). CRL provides school administrators with a framework to respond to the expansive rise in diversity by bringing awareness to the experiences of people from oppressed or marginalized cultures, which thus begins the deconstruction of marginalization faced by students within the traditional schooling contexts (Lopez, 2015).

In order to enact these initiatives and policies, new teachers are being introduced to inclusive practices in their teacher education, including being introduced to ways to implement gender inclusive language or by participating in ongoing professional development geared specifically to thinking about ways to work with LGBTQ students in schools. While these initiatives have potential in informing teachers’ practice in a general sense, some have suggested they fall short of deconstructing the heteronormative norms that pervade the schooling system (Block, 2014; Boyland et al., 2015; Kearns, Mitton-Kukner & Tompkins, 2014). For example, research by Kearns et al. (2014) describes how “Homophobia and transphobia, locally and globally, contribute to LGBTQ students experiencing high levels of feeling and being unsafe at school” with “three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgendered students [feeling] unsafe in school” (p.5).

In a study where pre-service teachers were educated about the impact of critical curricula and social justice education within their teacher education contexts, the research of Kearns et al. (2014) demonstrated disruption of heteronormativity and homophobia in classrooms of those
pre-service teachers. Similarly, in their research of teacher candidate perceptions of LGBTQ issues in schooling, Kitchen and Bellini (2012) found that through participation in a LGBTQ inclusion workshop, pre-service teachers felt more prepared to work with LGBTQ issues. Although there is some promise from these findings, there was a distinct lack of insight into H&PE classrooms and the ways in which these positive trends continued (or not) within this environment (Kearns et al., 2014). These findings suggest that there is promise if similar initiatives were applied in H&PE contexts; however, this claim is only speculation at this point.

**LGBTQ Issues in H&PE**

While much of the literature concerning the inclusion of LGBTQ youth in schools is situated in the broader educational literature, there is a small body of research on LGBTQ issues in H&PE that provide some important insights specific to that context (Landi, Flory, Safron & Marttinen, 2019). For example, Sykes (2004) discusses teacher responses to homophobic language in H&PE classrooms, which is a pertinent concern in modern education settings. Sykes (2004) provided significant insight into how H&PE teachers respond to derogatory language; specifically, how teachers make choices about how to respond to homophobic language through recollection of their own life experiences with homophobic events, which can be directed toward themselves or someone they knew. Still, there is a schism between inaction and action in countering homophobic language in H&PE. Some teachers are willing to risk others challenging their sexual orientation for the betterment of all students, whereas other teachers have faced such terrible physical and psychological bullying that countering this language brings about a sense of dread, and therefore hesitation (Sykes, 2004).

In similar fashion, Block (2014) examined the needs of LGBTQ students in H&PE through the development of self-realization and acceptance of self by marginalized students.
Block (2014) stated: “Schools should be a place where identity formation is supported, and teachers should nurture and facilitate self-awareness and acceptance. However, schools are not doing a particularly good job helping young people develop authentic identities” (p.18). Block (2014) goes further to state that if one does not ‘obey’ the established gender-specific movements set out in a heteronormative H&PE culture, students face discrimination and ridicule from their peers. This claim is especially pertinent to students in H&PE, as certain students may lack the physical literacy that other students possess, therefore putting themselves in further risk of humiliation and bullying, while possibly facing the judgement affiliated with their sexuality (Block, 2014; Carless, 2012). As a whole, though situations in H&PE enable opportunities to interrogate heteronormative values, there often remain deep-seated conservative values and norms in the context of the subject that need to be challenged and deconstructed for this goal to materialise (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).

**Pre-Service Teacher Response to LGBTQ Issues**

Although there are small-scale studies that have introduced the importance of considering the experiences of LGBTQ students in H&PE, there is a lack of insight into the experiences of new H&PE teachers that could potentially increase their confidence and preparedness to provide safe and positive learning environments for LGBTQ students (Landi et al., 2019). This said, Sykes and Goldstein’s (2004) study utilizing “performed ethnography” (similar to ethnodrama) to represent the lived experiences of gay, lesbian and queer physical education teachers. Sykes and Goldstein’s (2004) play involved a montage of short stories relating to homophobic attitudes these educators within schooling contexts (and beyond), while asking students to make meaning of how they would integrate anti-homophobic strategies into their classroom. Sykes and Goldstein (2004) found that the approach helped pre-service students understand how and why to
integrate anti-homophobia principles into their pedagogy. The narratives provided in their study allowed pre-service teachers to question the heteronormative and homophobic beliefs found within H&PE contexts, but also take ownership for how they can personally counteract these beliefs in the classroom (Sykes & Goldstein, 2004).

Research by Devis-Devis, Pereira-Garcia, Fuentes-Miguel, Lopez-Canada & Perez-Samaniego (2018) aimed to identify ways that subvert gender normalcy in H&PE contexts by presenting case-studies to pre-service teachers that were grounded in queer-inclusive pedagogy. The results of this study demonstrated that several participants legitimized gender binaries and heteronormativity, therefore showing an aversion to transgender students (Devis-Devis et al., 2018, p.623). Though other participants demonstrated more accepting beliefs, they still lacked awareness of how to be “truly accepting” (Devis-Devis et al., 2018, p.623). This lack of awareness is a concerning trend, as H&PE teachers may be far more capable of positively or negatively affecting the well-being of marginalized students in their class, as they are legally obligated to teach topics pertaining to gender and sexuality in Ontario (Bramham, 2003; Brenyo, 2016). Despite the work of Sykes and Goldstein (2004) and Devis-Devis, et al. (2018), there remains little empirical examination of LGBTQ issues in pre-service H&PE settings. As such, in this research I will attend to this literature gap, seeking to provide deeper insight into how beginning H&PE teachers are prepared to develop inclusive beliefs and practices that are engaging and safe for all students.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to explore and interpret the beliefs and experiences of pre-service H&PE teachers in relation to their preparation for working with LGBTQ students. My primary research questions are:
(1) What are pre-service H&PE teachers’ beliefs and experiences about working with LGBTQ students in schools?

(2) What commitments do these pre-service H&PE teachers have toward inclusive practices, particularly for working with LGBTQ students?

(3) What pedagogical strategies can these pre-service H&PE teachers articulate about working with LGBTQ students? How have they developed and learned these strategies?

**Definition of Terms**

In this section, I define several terms that are used throughout this thesis. This is important due to the potential for ‘slippage’, taken for granted assumptions about terms, and the possibility for misunderstanding and inaccurate interpretation of terms and phrases used frequently throughout the thesis.

**LGBTQ:** Within the context of this thesis, LGBTQ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer persons. Although I am conscious and supportive of the growing awareness surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, for the simplicity and focus of this research, the LGBTQ acronym will be utilized throughout. Therefore, I use the term LGBTQ not in a limiting way but in a way that is inclusive of all students who identify in ways that digress from heteronormative categorizations of gender and sexuality. Studies in the education field have also used this approach, therefore providing a precedent for this decision (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016; Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017; Mitton- Kukner et al., 2016).

**Health and Physical Education (H&PE):** In Ontario, the Ministry of Education uses the term for the subject area that incorporates aspects of healthy active lifestyles H&PE, while in some other contexts a more common description is physical education. The Ontario curriculum couples the teaching of health topics and physical education topics under the subject area H&PE,
while some other provinces and countries teach health and physical education as two separate subject areas. Although I recognize that much of what has been written and researched previously has focused primarily on teachers of physical education rather than H&PE per se, this tends to be for simplicity rather than specificity. I believe the inclusion of health education is of vital importance, as this portion of the curriculum specifically encompasses teachings pertaining to gender and sexuality (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). When referring to the teachers’ experiences in this thesis, I refer to the subject area specifically as H&PE. When referring to research conducted by others, I use the term those researchers used.

**Teacher Education:** The teacher education program that the participants of this study were part of is a university-based program where individuals learn to become teachers of H&PE, and upon completion of the program, gain the qualifications set out by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to teach in the province of Ontario. In the context of this study, the teacher education program includes a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program involving coursework, practicum and internship experience.

**Teachers of Health and Physical Education:** This title was selected to reflect the varying qualifications of participants in this study possess. Although some participants are not considered ‘specialists,’ where H&PE is a first teachable and university major, all participants will be teaching H&PE in schools, but in different educational contexts. These contexts are dependent on the qualifications that are formally set out by the OCT, as well as classes taken within the participants’ teacher education program. This language allows for clarification between specialist and non-specialist H&PE teachers, while still acknowledging the teaching qualifications that these participants either possess or are working towards.
Pre-Service Teachers: The decision to utilize pre-service teachers within this thesis is due to the congruency with the definition of teacher education described previously. For one, the term aligns with the formal language set out by the OCT, and additionally, ties together the language found within the teacher education program that the participants will be recruited from. Furthermore, this terminology allows me to distinguish from other teacher education programs such as in-service or continuing education, therefore allowing for specificity within the study, and less chance of confusion of terms.

Significance and Rationale

This research comes amidst ongoing challenges to the human rights of people from marginalized communities, such as those in the LGBTQ community; challenges that have implications for their educational experience, as well as to their overall health and well-being, sense of identity, and feelings of belonging in society at large. The research also comes at a time when there are calls to renew a social justice agenda in H&PE research (Robinson & Randall, 2016; Walton-Fisette & Sutherland, 2018) in order to better meet the diverse needs of all learners in contemporary schools.

This research is founded upon four main principles. For one, with the continued prevalence of homophobic bullying in schools, teachers need to be well prepared to provide inclusive learning environments for all students (Mitton-Kukner, Kearns & Tompkins, 2016). My work sheds light on experiences that have helped to inform how well-prepared tomorrow’s H&PE teachers feel to achieve this. Second, it is vital for teacher education programs to assist in deconstructing prejudices in a collective effort to construct new learning paradigms for their teacher candidates (Vasallo, 2015). Professionals working in these programs will benefit from identifying ways that they can provide enhanced education for future teachers in this regard.
Third, my research permits a critical analysis of the schooling system and how this system reproduces dominant social structures. Finally, this research will address a large gap in the H&PE literature, as there is little knowledge of how future teachers are prepared to work with LGBTQ students. This applies to the Ontario and Canadian school contexts, as well as other contexts around the world.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five chapters. This introductory chapter provides the background, purpose, definition of terms and rationale that pertain to the research study. In Chapter Two I review the pertinent literature relating to the theoretical underpinnings of the study, specifically teacher beliefs and feminist theory. In Chapter Three I examine the methodology and methods of this thesis, which is qualitative research. In Chapter Four I present the qualitative findings of the research, and in Chapter Five I provide conclusions and discussions based on the findings of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

The research questions of this thesis research have led me to identify two appropriate and complimentary theoretical frameworks, these being: (1) teachers’ beliefs and (2) feminist theory. In the first section of the chapter I outline teachers’ beliefs, while in the second I discuss feminist theory and its relationship with critical theory. Overall, these theories and the relevant educational and H&PE literature associated with each provide the theoretical underpinnings to help guide the methodology and methods for this thesis research.

Teacher Beliefs

As Ni Chroinin and O’Sullivan (2016) explain, teacher beliefs play an integral role in shaping teachers’ approaches to teaching, as well as forming teachers’ assumptions and values they bring into their classrooms. Beliefs are defined as “psychologically held understandings about the world that are felt to be true by the individual to the extent that they are relied upon as a guide to personal thought and action” (Ni Chroinin & O’Sullivan, 2016, p. 97). With the power of teacher beliefs in mind, prospective teachers bring long-established opinions and assumptions to their teacher education programs, which can directly influence their development as a teacher (Ni Chroinin & O’Sullivan, 2016; Richardson, 1996). Philpot and Smith (2011) echo the strong and sustained influence of beliefs on pre-service teachers’ development, stating: “students enter teacher education with strong beliefs about teaching that are difficult to change” (p. 34). Pajares (1992) contends that beliefs are so strong that they have a direct influence on teachers’ knowledge to the extent that beliefs and knowledge are intertwined. Pajares (1992) goes on to state that the affective, evaluative and episodic nature of beliefs become a filter in which teachers view their reality.
Beliefs provide a type of support for pre-service teachers as they begin to search for pedagogies that represent their own assumptions, rather than ones that disrupt those assumptions or that have been shown to be effective and provide powerful or transformative learning experiences for their students. Loughran (2006) has referred to this process as “hunting and gathering”, as pre-service teachers selectively identify tips and tricks for teaching that they have themselves experienced, and feel meet their needs based on their years of experience as school students. Ni Chroinin and O’Sullivan (2016) support this view, describing how some pre-service teachers studying H&PE “select or disregard program experiences based on their current beliefs about PE” (p. 97). In other words, pre-service teachers will make pedagogical decisions based on the ways that specific teaching approaches align with their beliefs, which have been developed throughout their educational experiences since they were young children. Overall, the teaching beliefs that pre-service teachers hold can have a strong influence on how (and what) they will teach in the future.

**The Influence of Teacher Beliefs on Practice**

Pajares (1992) asserts:

> that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom, or that understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices. (p. 307)

This statement provides a clear explanation of the effect of teachers’ beliefs upon the development of a teacher’s pedagogy. In turn, a teacher’s pedagogy can have profound influences on the experiences of the students with whom they work. For example, Philpot and Smith (2011) demonstrated that pre-service H&PE teachers believe that science-based subjects...
are more important and are treated more seriously than those based in the social sciences. This is curious when considering how many H&PE curricula possess both bioscience and social science components (Australian Curriculum: Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Yet, perhaps based on implicit and explicit messages conveyed throughout their university programs, many pre-service H&PE teachers give more respect to the biophysical elements such as biomechanics or anatomy (Philpot & Smith, 2011). Consequently, if H&PE teachers reproduce the idea of bioscience sitting atop a disciplinary hierarchy, this can influence students to the point that students develop their own assumptions and beliefs, which may include devaluing teaching content grounded in the social sciences; topics that address inclusion, social justice, accessibility, history, politics, and so on.

Research by Doolittle, Li, Rukavina, Manson and Beale (2016) provides insight into how teacher beliefs’ influence their interactions with students from particular populations. They focused specifically on teachers’ beliefs and interactions with overweight students. Doolittle et al. (2016) found that H&PE teachers they studied were willing to make pedagogical changes to incorporate the overweight students, based on beliefs that overweight students are a ‘responsibility and challenge’ to the teacher. Additionally, it was found that the H&PE teachers “were adamant that OWS [overweight students] should be treated the same as other students and deliberately integrated regardless of potential difficulties they may experience” (p.135). These decisions made were founded on the H&PE teachers’ beliefs that overweight students deserve equal and inclusionary practices and experiences (Doolittle, 2016). However, it is important to note that teachers’ beliefs shift based on their personal experiences (Philpot & Smith, 2011; Richardson, 1996). For example, a student’s size and weight may not be as contentious as their gender or sexuality for an H&PE teacher if those teachers have come into regular contact with
overweight people in their lives outside of school. For instance, a teacher’s religious beliefs will likely not influence their thoughts about body weight in the same way it will influence their thoughts about sexuality.

**Teacher Beliefs About Gender, Sexuality and LGBTQ Students**

It has been found that teachers’ beliefs play an important role in how teachers address LGBTQ issues within their classrooms (Bishop & McClellan, 2016). Schneider and Dimito (2008) assert that all teachers play an important role in producing an inclusive and nurturing environment for their students, especially when working with LGBTQ students who face a wide array of discrimination. With this said, many teachers believe that they “will be in jeopardy if they address LGBTQ issues openly” (Schneider & Dimito, 2008, p.50) within the classroom environment. In particular, many teachers fear they could lose their job or status depending on how they handle situations with LGBTQ students in their classrooms. This fear of negative repercussion can cause teachers to remain silent on issues they need to address, which can reproduce the cycle of neglect and harassment faced by LGBTQ students. This is highlighted in the findings of Schneider and Dimito (2008), who establish that 79% of teachers surveyed were aware of LGBTQ students being harassed due to their designation, yet teachers tended not to intervene to halt or discuss the harassment with the students involved. A fear of losing one’s job is a significant deterrent to not intervening. However; due to the political and legal progress that has been made in Canada and Ontario (Brard, & Nicolaides, 2014; Schneider & Dimito, 2008), teacher beliefs regarding risking their jobs now seem to be unfounded. This may lead to teachers’ beliefs shifting away from fear and towards increased understanding and emancipatory practices.

Taylor, Meyer, Peter, Ristock, Short and Campbell (2016) also delve into teacher beliefs, perceptions and practices concerning LGBTQ inclusion. A significant component of their study
was to consider the gaps often seen between what teachers believe LGBTQ inclusive practices are and what they actually apply within their own classroom (Taylor et al., 2016). For example, a Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) report from 2005 suggested that most teachers felt duty bound to provide safe spaces for LGBTQ students, yet only 25% of over 1000 teachers surveyed openly discussed issues concerning gender and sexuality with students in their classrooms (Taylor et al., 2016, p.113). Further, it was found that “teachers mostly ignored or prevented discussion surrounding sexual diversity in the classroom, noting that teachers had difficulty saying words such as gay and lesbian throughout…” (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 114).

While some of these discoveries can be attested to a lack of education on the subject of LGBTQ inclusion in teacher education programs, one cannot overlook the fact that some teachers possess homophobic and heterosexist beliefs (Brenyo, 2016; Bailey et al., 2016). This said, developing strategies to disrupt these discriminatory beliefs is key. Critical theory – and by extension feminist theory – provides an appropriate theoretical lens to help better understand and unpack beliefs and practices regarding hegemonic views of gender and sexuality in classrooms.

**Concepts of Critical and Feminist Theories**

Critical theory is often used by researchers who wish to challenge social structures within society, as well as confront taken for granted assumptions (Fegulla, 2015; Kellner, 1989). For example, a researcher whose analysis is guided by critical theory may examine class oppression or hegemonic relationships within and between groups of people. Furthermore, users of critical theory assume that reality is shaped by social forces that have been reified or crystallized over time (Morrow, 1991). In other words, critical theorists believe that our lives have been shaped by socially constructed norms that have become deep-seated in history. Critical theory is used to emphasize the importance of using a critical perspective to view socially constructed issues,
because it is believed that without challenging normalized thought, discrimination and harassment will become ever more prevalent (Fegulla, 2015; Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014; Kellner, 1989).

Bonner (2011) states: “Critical theory was conceived in the intellectual crucible of Marxism” (p.2), while targeting the analysis of the “superstructure” residing within society. This superstructure is formed by the normative ideals that society follow. An example of this is gender binaries, where some believe there can only be males and females, with no fluidity of gender (Bonner, 2011). Although Marxism was founded upon a critique of the economic principles and class structures within society, its critical perspective, commitment to resisting the deformation of individuals and concern with social alienation provide the necessary underpinning for critical consciousness to arise (Bonner, 2011). As a whole, through its historical roots, critical theory provides researchers with the conceptual tools to question the hidden assumptions and purposes of competing theories, while responding to new social problems with new liberation techniques (Bonner, 2011; Felluga, 2015).

Within the vast amount of literature utilizing critical theory as an analytic tool, Paulo Friere’s (2000) seminal text Pedagogy of the Oppressed stands out as significantly impacting the field of education, demonstrating how critical theory can be utilized to invoke change in schools and classrooms. When establishing the hidden oppression that resides within society, Freire (2000) asserts that society’s “ignorance and lethargy were the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social and political domination…” (p.30). This statement becomes quite significant when reflecting on Freire’s belief that schools are institutions that reproduce social norms; thus, these inequalities seen in society will inevitably be reproduced within the classroom and beyond unless directly confronted by teachers through using radical and activist approaches.
(Freire, 2000). Freire (2000) utilized critical thought to theorize how the education system prioritizes and privileges those who fall within the top social hierarchies, while marginalizing those who do not. When considering the traditional landscape of education in the 1970s in Brazil, Freire’s findings initiated a revolution that brought a voice to the oppressed, and moreover, began a paradigm shift in education that is still influencing teaching and schools all over the world today.

**Studying Gender and Sexuality through Critical Theory**

Although critical theory itself can be considered a theoretical framework (Morrow & Brown, 1994), it also serves as an umbrella term under which other theories reside. That is, critical theory can be considered a term that contains multiple frameworks including feminist theory, critical race theory (CRT) and queer theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Jones et al., 2014).

**What is Feminist Theory?**

While acknowledging the role of critical theory in feminist thought, feminist theory is the main theory to be applied in this research. For the purposes of this study, feminist theory is viewed as a theory that is complementary to critical theory, rather than being in competition with it. Additionally, feminist theory and critical theory overlap in several of their main assumptions, principles, and beliefs. For example, much like critical theory, feminist theorists seek to deconstruct the inequalities that reside within society, especially in relation to gender and sexuality (hooks, 1984). Laquer (1990) emphasizes a fundamental connection between feminist and other critical theories, stating: “The sexism, racism and classism that exist…resemble systems of domination globally, but they are forms of oppression which have been primarily informed by Western Philosophy” (p.35). Taken together, feminist and critical theories are
helpful to understand and interpret oppression, marginalization and power with varying degrees of emphasis or focus.

Feminist theory is based upon what hooks (1984) explains as “a struggle to end sexist oppression… it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination … as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence” (p.24). hooks (1984) further explains instrumental actions of early feminist thinkers, stating: “feminist movements were interested in reform as an end in itself, not as a stage in the progression towards revolutionary transformation” (p.19). This is an important distinction, as feminist theory should not be viewed as a simple stepping stone towards greater change, as the theory itself is founded upon the tenets of significant and radical reform.

Movements to better critique and challenge the hegemonic gender structures in society are rooted in the suffragist movements at the beginning of the 20th century. This reform reached a peak with Betty Friedan’s publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, which is heralded as the spark of contemporary feminist movements (hooks, 1984). This text brought well-hidden inequalities to the forefront of feminist conversations, thus leading to protests where groups advocated for equal rights, and greater respect within society (hooks, 1984). Influenced greatly by Friedan’s (1963) messages of personal fulfilment outside traditional female roles, challenges of institutional structures and the confrontation of the normalized image of domestic womanhood, bell hooks (1984) introduced the idea that feminist theory permeates the social world and explains how the primary principles of this theory demonstrate sexist oppression being crystalized throughout history. hooks (1984) states: “Defining feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression is crucial for the development of theory because it is a starting point indicating the direction of exploration and analysis” (p.31). This direction is essential to feminist theory, as
it provides guidance for past and future theorists to analyze and deconstruct the hierarchy that has presided throughout all past, present and future societies (hooks, 1984). Though hooks’ analysis of oppression predominantly draws upon examples that place the oppression of women as the central focus, the underlying message resounds as such: “feminism is working for the eradication of domination and elitism in all human relationships” (p. 19. My emphasis). hooks’ assertion has a profound impact on how individuals view feminist reform, as the statement provides clarity to the primary objective of this theory, while not simplifying feminist beliefs.

**Feminist Theory and Masculinity**

In a way that might seem ironic to readers in their first exposure to masculinity theory, the approach is strongly influenced by feminist thought. In particular, masculinity theory is used to critique gender structures and hierarchies. While discussing the diversity of gender dynamics, Connell (1992) states: “The gender order itself is the site of relations of dominance and subordination, struggles for hegemony, and practices of resistance” (p. 735). Through Connell’s (1992) claim, it becomes clear that the analysis of gender and masculinity falls under the umbrella of critical theory, while containing components that draw from and align with feminist theory. One of the main purposes of masculinity analysis is to critique gender hierarchies and understand how these imbalances lead to oppression (Fegulla, 2015; hooks, 1984). This analysis provides valuable insight into how normative beliefs play an integral role in marginalizing individuals with varying genders and sexualities.

Considering the influence of normative structures within our western culture, the trend of males and females constructing a ‘conventional’ persona to fit within these prescribed social norms becomes ever clearer (Connell, 1992). For one, in the wake of modern feminism, the position of men within sexual politics has shifted greatly, with the ‘male role’ becoming less
clear as women become more empowered and take on more positions of authority (Connell, 1992). As a result, the gender dynamic facing males becomes ever more complicated, as Connell (1992) suggests: “The possibilities of historical change in gender order are reflected in divisions among men as well as in the practices of women” (p. 736). For some, the idea of women being seen as equals is not frightening, and is welcomed, but on the other hand; there are males who refuse to forfeit their patriarchal privileges, thus leading to a bifurcation of beliefs, as well as what can be defined the ‘male role.’

The role of hegemonic masculinity plays an important role in how masculine roles are characterised and practiced in providing dominance to certain types of men (i.e., those who fit the dominant type of masculinity) while relegating other types of men and women to less status. Connell (2005) asserts that hegemonic masculinity “embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (p.832). As such, hegemonic masculinity reproduces the notion that men must act in a certain way to be accepted, while ensuring that they do not surrender their position of privilege. The concept of hegemonic masculinity has had immense impact on the development of gender studies, as well as understanding the underpinnings of masculinity and marginalization that is faced by individuals who do not conform to the notion of masculinity (Connell, 2005).

Though founded with the aim of ending sexist oppression, hooks (1984) and Connell (1992) clarify that feminism is used by people who are working towards the removal of hierarchical and normative challenges faced by members of all marginalized groups. This clarification of feminist thinking is of great importance, as the marginalization faced by LGBTQ students in schooling is predominately founded upon societal norms that place ‘non-normative’
sexual identities – that is, heterosexual identities - on the lower rungs of the hierarchy of sexuality in society (Clarke, 2002). This idea provides a strong rationale for using feminist theory as the primary framework throughout this research. Thus, both feminist and masculinity studies provide the vital means (or lens) through which the hegemonic structures that pervade pre-service teachers’ assumptions about gender and sexuality can be deconstructed. It can also help to explain the influence of social norms on this process and the ways these inform pre-service teachers’ preparation to teach young people who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

**Application of Feminist Theory in Educational Research**

Although feminist theory does not provide a conceptual ‘road map’ for the analysis of research data, there is a wide body of literature that provides insight into how feminist theory can be used to inform analysis of relevant research questions in education and H&PE. For example, Crabtree and Sapp (2003) explore the varying dynamics of feminist classrooms. In their discussion of the tenets of a feminist pedagogy, the authors state: “Feminist Pedagogy argues for engaged education that promotes the learning of theory as an essential part of the process of self-actualization, leading to the practice of freedom” (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p.132). The value of emancipation cannot be understated, especially in the context of feminist pedagogy. When students are given the opportunity to see themselves in their work, the cycle of marginalization can be broken, as realizing their own potential can lead to greater self-confidence and the ability to be resilient to challenging events. With this said, there are foundational barriers that affect the enactment of feminist pedagogies, particularly conservative mindsets (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). For example, much like members of society in a broad sense, teachers who oppose feminist ideas likely see it as a threat to their social influence, which in the past provided them with opportunity.
and success (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). Interestingly, to manipulate the system back towards their favour, conservative teachers use the guise of teacher incompetence, specifically the interpretation that “classes involving small-group discussion and peer critiquing sessions as a sign of instructor incompetence or lack of rigor” (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003, p.133). These manipulative actions undermine the effect that this teaching practice can have, and importantly, reinforces the notion that predetermined social norms is the only appropriate action within the field of education.

Similarly, the belief that feminist pedagogies promote the teaching of ‘radical content’ rather than prescribed knowledge makes execution of this practice far more difficult (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). For one, with this negative perception of feminist teaching, it becomes far more difficult for teachers to facilitate meaningful change within their classrooms. For example, school administration may implement a policy that minimizes discussion of social issues in an attempt to minimize the backlash from parents and other stakeholders (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). This echoes literature previously reviewed where some teachers feel that addressing issues or implementing certain practices may place their jobs in jeopardy. Secondly, some dismiss the idea of feminist pedagogy due to the perception that the teaching is politically motivated, rather than objective and ‘factual’ (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). Clearly, if feminist teaching is effective, it initiates the use of fact, while allowing for the respectful challenge of taken for granted assumptions. However, due to the pervasive, yet uninformed belief that feminists ‘hate men,’ feminist teachings are undermined by uneducated assumptions that include the conviction that feminists only look to implement revolutionary change, as well as the assertion that feminist thought only caters to women’s empowerment (hooks, 1984; Crabtree & Sapp, 2003). With this said, changes to the education system in hopes of providing more inclusive environments have
increased at exponential rates, especially when analyzing the inclusive practice literature (Dykes & Delport, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

In considering the need for inclusive classroom environments, Maher and Thompson Tetreault (2001) discuss the construction of and practices within a classroom based on the tenets of feminist theory set out by hooks and other feminist scholars including Belenky, Davis and Lather. Maher and Thompson Tetreault (2001) assert: “Feminist pedagogies aim to encourage the students - particularly women, working-class students and members of underrepresented groups - to gain education that would be relevant to them” (p.4). More explicitly, feminist pedagogies require teachers to be aware of the oppression faced by women, and therefore develop methods that pay particular attention to marginalized groups to develop social change (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003; Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001). For instance, a teacher can link the study of biology with social and ethical issues (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001). In this example, the teacher might challenge the dominant ideal of science being about ‘just’ the pursuit of knowledge, which historically, has privileged men rather than women. With this choice, the teacher can aid marginalized students in feeling represented and welcomed within the learning environment. This may help to provide marginalized individuals with the opportunities for empowerment and representation through pedagogy. Teachers within these contexts demonstrate their devotion to equitable and positive climates within the school system.

Maher and Thompson Tetreault (2001) describe the importance of integrating all student voices into the learning process, which provides the opportunity to reconstruct traditional academic knowledge. A particular event that demonstrates the reconstruction of academic knowledge is the authors’ reflection on a seminar that focused on “there [being] a greater stigma attached to male homosexuality than lesbianism” (Clarke, 2002; Maher & Thompson Tetreault,
Interestingly, the researchers noted that the vast majority of the class answered questions relating homosexuality with detached generalizations (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001). For example, a student responded with the statement: “In our society, men have to be macho, and if you’re not macho that’s bad; women have a freer range of emotions they show” (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001, p.61). It is vitally important that ‘difficult’ conversations that might follow such comments occur, as the conversations can begin to break down the assumptions and norms that are implicated within the perceived awkwardness of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, discussions provide a voice for members of these marginalized groups, which begins the process of mastering the ideals that align with feminist ways of thinking (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 2001).

The Application of Feminist Theory in H&PE and Sport Research

It is important to note that initial research using feminist approaches occurred in sport-based scenarios, with H&PE scholars drawing from that work to apply specifically to the H&PE context. Feminist theory also has deeps roots in H&PE and sport, with a prime example being the work of Helen Lenskyj. In her book, Out of Bounds, Lenskyj (1986) identifies ways that males demand control in/of sport and physical education, and how these actions are employed through the implementation of formal rules and restrictions on women, while concealing their beliefs through the guise of ‘protection’ of the female body. Parker (1996) adds that “sport [is fundamentally] a gender structured institution, representing a bastion of male domination” (p. 141). Simply put, at the core of these marginalizing actions are a male’s search for control of the female sexuality and reproductive function (Lenskyj, 1986). For example, an excerpt from a male physician in 1936 reads:
feminine muscular development interferes with motherhood. What women needs -and has- is a good system of involuntary muscles…. She has plenty of muscle and oxygen-carrying power for simple household tasks which take plenty of oxygen… But men should keep her away from heavier tasks, both out of chivalry and good sense. (Lenskyj, 1986, p. 38)

Though dated, this assertion provides valuable insight into how females are influenced and controlled by males who embody or reproduce hegemonic forms of masculinity. The argument is made, even in today’s context, that strenuous activity would have a negative effect on a women’s capability to reproduce. Furthermore, with males actively encouraged to partake in the ‘heavier tasks’ that require power and performance, this action normalizes the idea that men are viewed as physically ‘stronger’ to women. Amusingly, if women did try to participate in rigorous activity, they would be labelled “mannish” and therefore defy the bounds of femininity and heterosexuality that should be followed, which is often a no-win situation (Lenskyj, 1986; Connell, 2013). As a whole, Lenskyj (1986) provides a solid theoretical groundwork upon which feminist theory has been situated by several scholars in the field of physical education and sport, whereby scholars are able to critically analyze the structural norms of masculinity and femininity in sport, while still remaining aligned to the ideas of hooks and other predominant feminist theorists.

A further representation of Lesnkyj’s application of feminist theory in physical education and sport was in her examination of the patriarchal norms that encompass sporting environments (Lenskyj, 1994). For one, the declaration that “gender identity is an actively mediated subject position, not simply one that is imposed by external social forces” demonstrates the complexity in which gender identity is formed, and more importantly, showcases the ‘need’ for society to
control these identities by creating normative boundaries (Lenskyj, 1994, p.358). Furthermore, sporting environments have created a certain image in which women should remain. For example, “a male coach of a university-women’s volleyball team… required all players to wear in a ponytail, tied up with ribbons” (Lenskyj, 1994, p.359). This decision reinforces the stereotypically feminine nature and appearance that are demanded of female athletes (often by men), as well as the sport of volleyball. An additional example found in the sport of beach volleyball is that female players are required to wear bikinis, whereas males wear long shorts and singlets. When choices like these are made, either explicitly or implicitly, the reproduction of dominant ideals become further rooted into what society assumes. It is through the critical analysis of these ideals that physical education and sport can be truly equitable.

Griffin (1992) showcased the interconnection of homophobia and sexism within women’s sport through a feminist perspective. Griffin (1992) “analyzes the function of socially constructed gender roles and sexual identities in maintaining male dominance in North American society” (p. 252) while critiquing the status quo thinking that relates to lesbianism. By utilizing a perspective from feminist theory to challenge these gender roles, Griffin (1992) was better able to understand the social stigma attached to homosexuality in sport, as well as begin to counter the sexist, heterosexist, and homophobic status quo. Griffin (1992) found that with sport being “perhaps, the last arena in which men can hope to differentiate themselves from women,” (p. 268) multiple manifestations of heterosexism including denial, silence and promotion of heterosexuality have been employed to stigmatize and lessen lesbians and gay men’s position within the sporting world.

Feminist theory has also been used by researchers to investigate the potential effect of mass media on influencing ‘gender-appropriate’ behaviour in sport (Koivula, 1999). More
explicitly, Koivula (1999) “explores current values and power structures regarding men and women [in sport]” (p. 589) and how these values further reproduce what appears to be appropriate behaviour for these genders. Koivula (1999) writes; “The role of media, especially the portrayal of men and women with regard to how sport is presented as a socially constructed reality in the ongoing construction of gender” (p. 590). Specifically, it was found that with the use of ‘gender nouns,’ male athletes were never referred to as boys, but women athletes were referred to as girls (Koivula, 1999). Additionally, women were most often referred to as ladies, young ladies, or girls, whereas men were commonly referred to as men (Koivula, 1999). With sport media outlets utilizing these normative ‘gender nouns,’ it subliminally spreads the stereotype that female athletes are inferior to their male counterparts, while continuing to maintain hegemonic power structures in sport. With the use of these feminist tenants, the analysis has the necessary framework to question the socially constructed view of femininity and masculinity in media, while also deconstructing the ideal of ‘gender-appropriate behaviour.’

Anderson (2011) utilizes feminist analysis in his work, particularly focusing on the social stratification of masculinity and the ways it applies to male homosexuality. For instance, in articulating a theory first developed by Connell, Anderson (2011) states: “one hegemonic archetype of masculinity is esteemed above all others, so that boys and men who most closely embody this standard are accorded the most social capital” (p. 567). For instance, ‘manly men’ are thought to display characteristics that include muscular physiques, strong and unwavering personalities and no outward expression of emotions (Anderson, 2011; Parker, 1996). This declaration consists of feminist thought, as it assumes that masculinity resides within a hierarchy while also reproducing its own hierarchy, thus creating higher and lower rungs. As a consequence, many males feel the need to meet these hegemonic expectations to climb the rungs,
much like the social structures faced by females in numerous contexts as they strive to live ‘in a man’s world’. As a whole, feminist theory provided Anderson (2011) with the ability to analyze the social pressures that influence masculinity formation, as well as deconstruct the intricate workings of gay male masculinity formation for gay males.

Recently, the work of Oliver and Kirk (2017) has demonstrated how feminist frameworks can be utilized to provoke advocacy and empowerment of females in H&PE. For example, in their description of an activist approach to girls and H&PE, Oliver and Kirk (2017) articulate that teachers should embrace the ‘feminist ethic of risk,’ and moreover take “this risk as a willingness to take small steps towards transforming oppressive practices even though complete change seems or is improbable” (p. 315). An important distinction here is that Oliver and Kirk (2017) are not trying to formulate a grand narrative to overthrow those in power: they are using feminist theory to promote inclusive practices, as well as form support mechanisms for marginalized groups.

The work of Parker (1996) also sheds valuable light on the processes of adolescent males constructing their ‘masculine’ identities in physical education contexts. Within the article, the assertion is made that “young people enter schools as sexual and gendered objects, having already experienced the formal and informal learning networks…” (Parker, 1996, p. 143). This is important to distinguish, as it provides the rationale to why students act in ways that either confirm or deny their sexuality, as they realize the socially constructed networks they need to satisfy to remain accepted in the eyes of their peer. Parker (1996) depicts how aggressive behaviour and sport proficiency in physical education is often key to founding a stereotypically masculine identity, while demonstrating polar opposite traits are considered feminine and lower on the social ladder. For example, in an analysis of adolescent boys’ reaction to peers who were
identified as ‘sporty’ or physically literate, Parker (1996) found that “[there] is a widespread intolerance amongst young people of behaviours ‘perceived to be outside the boundaries of traditional gender role expectations” (p.149). This discriminating behaviour is quite similar to the sexist issues being faced by females in physical education. For example, if female students showcase too many masculine characteristics, the social norms that pervade H&PE will categorize her as ‘butch’ or possibly homosexual (Clarke, 2002; Clarke, 2006). As such, it is important to employ feminist ways of thinking to mitigate these inequitable actions, and thus develop more inclusive PE environments for marginalized groups.

Through these passages, it becomes clear that the use of feminist theory provides researchers with the conceptual tools to challenge taken for granted assumptions that reside within many social structures. For the purposes of my research, feminist theory provides the structure for the exploration of how teacher candidates feel in working with and giving voice to LGBTQ students, while providing a foundation to empower these students throughout their educational careers.

**Inclusion of Marginalized Students in Sport and Physical Education**

With the current drive towards inclusivity within the classroom, H&PE teachers have begun to see the potential for a transformation to a more holistic set of inclusive practices within the locker room, gymnasium and classroom. That is, there has been greater advocacy for and strategies developed to better meet the needs and interests of students according to gender, race, and social class. Inclusion of students who identify as LGBTQ within H&PE contexts continues to be a concern, even with legal and administrative policies supporting this community (Brard & Nicolaides, 2014; Brenyo, 2016). This concern is highlighted by the work of Landi (2018), who asserts: “that schools normalise knowledges, curricula, pedagogies, and structures that are
influenced by heterosexual and gendered ideologies” (p. 2). Through the teaching strategies that have been used within H&PE contexts, heterosexist ideals remain the norm, with students who fall outside these norms feeling ostracized and unwelcomed. Interestingly, even teachers who identify within the LGBTQ spectrum have instinctual fear of the sexuality, as there is “a cultural stigma that conflated homosexuality with mental illness, pedophilia and promiscuity” (Landi, 2018, p. 2). Overall, the work of Landi (2018) demonstrates not only the inequality faced by LGBTQ students and teachers, but how feminist constructs can be used to critique the use of certain pedagogies to advance teaching practice.

Gerdin and Larsson (2017) also provide a unique perspective on the marginalization of students through the relation of power and pleasure. Explicitly, the researchers “explore how a group of boys derive pleasures from their involvement in PE, but also how these power-induced pleasures are integral to gender normalisation processes” (p. 66). One of the key findings that underpinned the results of this study is the idea of a ‘muscular Christianity,’ in which men should play sports well, while demonstrating little weakness, therefore demonstrating their devoutness to their faith (Gerdin & Larsson, 2017, p. 71). Accordingly, students who demonstrated competence in sport developed “privileged/desirable masculinities that are experienced as pleasurable if the boy manages to live up to the masculine expectations” (p.74). On the other hand, boys who did not fall within this expectation were disrespected by their peers, and sometimes, even their own teachers (Gerdin & Larsson, 2017). The concept of physical competence associating with privilege puts a variety of students at risk. Therefore, it is vital for physical education teachers to confront the belief that physically literate students are ‘better,’ and provide opportunities for all students to feel welcomed into the physical education environment.
Furthermore, the work of Carless (2012) is enlightening to the challenges surrounding sexual orientation and identity in the context of school sport. Through his own auto-ethnographic representation, Carless (2012) notes “that gay males are ‘an absent other in the world of PE in particular and sport in” (p. 608). To further cement this assertion, there is a substantial belief that homosexuality is the private sexuality that should not be discussed, while heterosexuality is the sexuality that should be publicized and welcomed (Carless, 2012). This is a frightening discovery, as these heterosexist principles are detrimental to same-sex attracted youth, especially in their search for an authentic identity (Carless, 2012). As such, having the opportunity to analyze these actions through feminist theory commences the much-needed confrontation of heterosexist values commonly present in physical education.

Finally, research by Larsson, Quennerstedt and Ohman (2014) demonstrates how teachers could employ strategies that are inclusive of LGBTQ students. For example, in analysis of a H&PE teachers’ lesson focusing on teaching the steps to a traditional Swedish dance known as the ‘schottishe,’ Larsson et al. (2014) describe a scenario in which students challenge the teacher’s instruction, more explicitly, a student asking the teacher “can you answer me and explain why girls and boys have to dance together?” (p. 14). At first, the teacher employs a “because I say so” strategy to react to the student’s inquiry; however, the student, undeterred, asks “Perhaps I’m a lesbian?” (Larsson et al., 2014, p.16). Although the question takes the teacher aback, it is significant in shifting the teacher’s thinking and enacted practice. After that conversation, the teacher employed an arrangement that has students dancing with same and different gender couples, rather than the traditional male-female pairing. As well, the teacher reflects on the fact that “one does have to dance boy and girl... It’s my heterosexual norm that haunts me here” (Larsson et al., 2014, p. 16). Critical incidents such as this can have an immense
impact on how teachers decide to be (or not to be) inclusive of LGBTQ students, as well as motivate teachers to continually improve their teaching practice. While valid in theory, it is important to consider how we prepare teachers to be inclusive and enable them to implement strategies that empower the LGBTQ. All said and done, it is time to speak out about these ‘silenced issues,’ and provide students, regardless of gender or sexuality, the opportunity to be themselves, which is demonstrated in the work of Sykes and Goldstein (2004) and Devis-Devis et al., (2018) as presented in Chapter One (Careless, 2012, p. 622).

**Application of Theory and Gap in Literature**

Throughout this chapter, I have provided context to the theoretical underpinnings of this research. Critical theory, and more specifically feminist theory, provide the framework for a much-needed critique of the social structures that reside within the education system and the deconstruction of the heteronormative values that marginalize LGBTQ students in H&PE. Moreover, as stated previously, “feminism is working for the eradication of domination and elitism in all human relationships” (hooks, 1984, p. 19). Utilizing a feminist framework for this project is a logical decision, as my primary goal is to bring awareness to the beliefs, assumptions and preparation of pre-service teachers, as well as understand the concerns facing LGBTQ students in H&PE contexts. Thus, I will utilize the feminist models I have examined in this chapter to establish my research through sound theory, while integrating these principles into my methodology. However, it is important to note that there is a significant gap within the academic literature. Specifically, there is little research which examines pre-service teachers’ preparation and assumptions in working with LGBTQ students in H&PE, which is a vital process in ensuring all students needs are met in their educational experience, particularly those from marginalized populations.
Interestingly, strategies that have been implemented to end oppression typically result in only quantitative change, for example, “increasing women’s rights, privileges and social spaces that have historically been held by men” (Nilges, 2006, p.80). For significant, long-standing reform to occur, the use of personal experiences, anti-oppression theory and quantitative measures in equal parts is essential (hooks, 1984; Nilges, 2006). As stated by hooks (1984): “suffering cannot be measured and compared quantitatively” (p.4). This assertion provides an appropriate transition to the following chapter, in which I discuss the qualitative methodology that was utilized for this research.
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and methods that underpin this research. The chapter is divided into several sections, with an introduction and overall impact of qualitative research being discussed initially. Following this, I describe the research context and participants, including determining research locations for the interview process. Data collection and analysis techniques are explained, while trustworthiness strategies and ethical considerations conclude the chapter.

Methodology Overview: Introduction to Qualitative Research

Through the research process I generated qualitative data as I pursued an understanding and interpretation of the beliefs and experiences of pre-service H&PE teachers in relation to their preparation for working with LGBTQ students. Qualitative research is founded upon constructivist and interpretivist paradigms, where the researcher privileges the narrative that originates from the participant (constructivist), while also being tasked with the interpretation and reconstruction of the participants’ experiences (interpretivist) (Papathomas, 2007). Therefore, the ontological framework of qualitative research aligned well with the purpose of this research, as the findings and conclusions were drawn from/based on the life experiences and beliefs of H&PE teachers.

Qualitative research can be used as a powerful tool to embrace people’s lived experiences and give voice to the people who have lived these experiences (Punch, 2009). This methodology provides the salient capacity to help researchers develop an understanding of “the relationship(s) between people’s life stories and the quality of their life experiences” (Jones et al., 2014, p.83). In this research that focuses on how life experiences form beliefs, assumptions and perceived professional preparation, there is value in being able to describe and understand the tension that
pre-service teachers face in either implementing inclusive practices or following traditional forms of and approaches to pedagogy. With the research purpose in mind, it was imperative that the participants voiced their opinions freely and without fear of judgment or recrimination, as these insights shed light on what is being done and what can be done to prepare H&PE teachers to work with marginalized students.

The Impact of Qualitative Research

As Van Maanen (1979) articulates, qualitative research enables in-depth study of naturally occurring phenomena that occur within the social world. Comprehensive analysis of human experience in the social world allows for the experiences of the participants to be privileged and plays an impactful role in unpacking the assumptions and preparation that teachers have in regard to working with LGBTQ students (Liampittong, 2009; Patton, 1990; Van Maanen, 1979).

Patton (1990) asserts: “the purpose of [qualitative research] is to inform action, enhance decision making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal issues” (p. 12). Furthermore, it is recognized that qualitative research produces a wealth of detailed information about a smaller number of people, thus increasing understandings and situations that these individuals participate in (Patton, 1990). The primary reason for the selection of this methodology is the influence the participants’ experiences have on understanding the socially and naturally constructed world in which we live. Additionally, the thematic analysis process that was adopted for this research plays an integral role in the conceptualization of these teachers’ experiences with LGBTQ students in H&PE settings. For example, the themes that are developed from the participants’ stories provide a new perspective of the attitudes and preparation that are reflected in the lives of prospective H&PE teachers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These teachers’ narratives are
vital to beginning to understand the complex nature of pre-service teachers’ preparation and assumptions. Furthermore, there is a lack of academic literature that pertains to either the attitudes or preparation of H&PE teachers and working with marginalized students including the LGBTQ community.

**Description of Context and Participant Recruitment**

The context in which the majority of this research took place is Briarwood University⁴, which is located in southeastern Ontario, Canada. The Faculty of Education is known for providing reputable programs at this university, which include concurrent and consecutive education. The concurrent education program is a six-year program in which students complete an undergraduate degree in a specific teachable subject, while also completing their Bachelor of Education (BEd.) simultaneously. For the context of this research, two of the participants were registered in the concurrent physical education stream, in which they take kinesiology and physical education-based courses, while taking theory and practice-based education courses as well. The other two participants were registered in or are considering pursuing the consecutive education route. The consecutive education program has students complete their undergraduate program (in varying fields), and then apply to their teacher education years, which is in contrast to the concurrent program, where the student is guaranteed acceptance into teacher education their first year of university. It is important to distinguish these differences in programs as these avenues provide different experiences for the participants who are involved in the varying processes. Providing this framework allows for an understanding what the program requirements are to become an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT), while also providing context to why I utilized the recruitment strategies I did, which are discussed in the following sections.

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⁴ The university name utilized in this document (Briarwood) is a pseudonym.
Two primary recruitment strategies were used to select the participants. First, I utilized ‘purposeful’ sampling to help in the recruitment and retaining of participants in this research (Glesne, 2016; Patton, 1990). This sampling technique was utilized because the project required the participation of a specific cohort of H&PE teachers who are in specific programs at Briarwood University, including physical education and concurrent education. The reasoning for this selection is to ensure that the participants provided in-depth data, in the sense that participants provide narratives that fall within the boundaries of my research questions- therefore ensuring the selection of those who meet the criteria of being a ‘pre-service teacher’ or ‘teacher of physical education’ (see definition as per Chapter One). To gain access to this population, I contacted instructors of the H&PE courses at Briarwood University via a prepared email script (see Appendix A) to inquire about attending their class for recruitment purposes (Jones et al., 2014).

When these gatekeepers allowed access into their class(es), I asked the students to fill out brief surveys (see Appendix B) as well as review a letter of invitation (see Appendix C) at the conclusion of lesson(s) that were chosen by the instructor(s) and me. The results of these surveys and letter of invitation(s) provided me an awareness of the general interest of the teachers in the focus of the research study, as well as provided initial clarity on some of the assumptions and beliefs that students in the H&PE cohort(s) held regarding working with LGBTQ students. Examples of the types of questions on the preliminary recruitment survey included: “In your opinion, how prepared do you feel in implementing an inclusive classroom/ environment for LGBTQ students in Health & Physical Education?”

Once I analyzed the preliminary data from the surveys, I contacted five pre-service teachers via email who: (a) noted interest in the study, and (b) evaluated themselves as high
(very important) on the spectrum evaluation (see Appendix B). I acknowledge that there were complications that arose during the recruitment process. For one, of the five pre-service teachers who were first approached, only one confirmed further interest in participating in the research. This lack of interested participants led to me to expanding my recruitment area to include teachers of H&PE, not only pre-service H&PE teachers. Shortly after my recruitment range expanded, Cole, Christian, Drake and Katie confirmed their interest, and one did not return my invitation to participate. Afterwards, I sent, via selected method of contact (email, text message) an informed consent form (see Appendix D) that provided an overview of the study, as well as the rights that these participants held throughout the research process.

**Participant Profiles**

Of the four participants, three identified as male, and one identified as female. No participant self-identified as a part of the LGBTQ community. To deliver much needed context to their backgrounds and life experiences, in this section I provide a profile to these participants.

**Cole:**

Cole is a fourth-year concurrent education student at Briarwood University with qualifications in the Junior/Intermediate (J/I) stream. His teachable subject is H&PE. Cole’s experiences provided variety to the data, particularly through his beliefs concerning the LGBTQ community. Cole’s schooling experiences were largely positive, especially in H&PE contexts, where he participated throughout high school, and is now wanting to teach this subject in elementary school. He is an avid volleyball player but enjoys participating in a variety of sporting contexts including soccer and badminton. Through the interview process, Cole seemed to be the most ‘reserved’ of my participants, as I felt he was often more hesitant to discuss matters relating to gender and sexuality. For example, in response to my asking about his
feelings about curriculum (and lessons) that talk explicitly about gender and sexuality, he answered in one word or one sentence responses. This said, he articulated a desire to implement inclusion-based practices into his pedagogy but is torn by memory of his past experiences of H&PE, and the stringent expectations placed on teachers today.

Christian:

Christian is a fourth-year concurrent education student at Briarwood University, with qualifications in the Intermediate/Senior (I/S) stream with teachable subjects in H&PE and general science. He is also graduate of a college program concentrating in fitness and health promotion. He provided important data due to his schooling experiences being within the Catholic school system which he felt limited his exposure to information he felt was necessary to learn. Like others, Christian thoroughly enjoys H&PE and enrolled in these courses throughout his elementary and secondary years and is now hoping to teach this subject in secondary school environments. Moreover, Christian exudes a passion for inclusion, as he feels that the media and his own religion treats marginalized communities unfairly. He hopes that education can be the way to finally break the stigma facing these communities.

Drake:

Drake is a fourth-year physical education student at Briarwood University with aspirations of attending a Faculty of Education after completing his undergraduate program. Drake is unique to the rest of the participants as he is in a program that does not include a teacher education element. This said, he does want to teach, and like the others, truly enjoyed his H&PE experiences. Further, Drake conveys a passion for wanting to understand the core elements of H&PE, while likely becoming a researcher in the process. Drake mentioned that most of his secondary school experiences were steeped in scientific awareness, which came across in his
narratives, particularly in defining gender and sexuality. His science-based approach has softened since entering university, and he now appreciates a balance of socio-cultural perspectives and the sciences.

*Katie:*

Katie is a sixth-year, consecutive education student at Briarwood University, with qualifications in the J/I stream. Unlike the rest of the participants, Katie’s teachable subject is in Dramatic Arts, not H&PE. She does not have a H&PE designation, however, due to her J/I qualifications, she will likely be expected to teach H&PE in elementary school settings. Katie is also a previous graduate of Briarwood, with a degree in dramatic arts. In her undergraduate degree, she specialized in teaching dramatic arts in school environments, indicating a passion towards education, even though she was not a part of the concurrent education program. Interestingly, Katie was the first participant to agree to participate in the study and provided several insightful narratives into the data. She also has a personal connection to the subject matter of this study, as both of her friend’s siblings identify as a part of the LGBTQ community. Katie was also very open to discussing matters pertaining to gender and sexuality, while also taking it upon herself to express the importance of health education due to growing awareness surrounding the LGBTQ community.

**Determining Research Locations**

After completing the participant recruitment process, I emailed the four participants to request a pre-interview discussion. The purpose of this discussion was to set locations in which the interviews would take place. In consideration of appropriate interview protocol, the area selected was somewhere the participant felt comfortable and stress-free, while also confirming the audio recording device could record the participant with little background noise (Glesne,
2016; Punch, 2009). Moreover, when taking the ethical considerations of the study into account, the area selected permitted confidentiality of the participant(s) at all times (Glesne, 2016; Jones et al., 2014). Additionally, with an elevated probability of sensitive material being discussed during the interviews, the area permitted a certain amount of privacy, and moreover, a possibility to exit at any point of the interview process (Glesne, 2016; Jones et al., 2014). Taking these matters into account, the location(s) for the interviews were a private research lab, as well as small seminar room(s) at two campuses of Briarwood University.

It is important to note that due to the past, present and future data collection design that was adopted for this study, interview locations changed due to the availability of space and the participant. As such, after the preliminary interview, a conversation between the researcher and the participant occurred, which determined forthcoming locations and meeting times. Flexibility on my behalf was demonstrated, as these logistical changes occurred multiple times during the data collection process, and in congruence with qualitative research, it is vitally important to ensure the narratives of the participants are heard to the fullest extent (Liamputtong, 2009; Patton, 1990).

**Data Collection**

In maintaining congruence with the qualitative research methodology that was established for this study, the data collection process involved two primary data sources, the first being participants taking part in three semi-structured, in-depth interviews that lasted approximately one hour each (Glesne, 2016; Jones et al., 2014). The second was a document analysis of course syllabi. Both will be discussed further in the following sections.

Within the semi-structured interviews, I employed a past, present and future model to generate data about how past and present experiences inform the participants’ thinking about
their own future teaching practice. Furthermore, throughout the duration of these three interviews, I worked with the participants to construct their experiences through an iterative process of interviewing, transcribing, and member checking. Specifically, I ‘member checked’ through the interview process. This was done by emailing the participants with a typed-transcript of each interview, while asking if any changes needed to be made, or if anything would like to be added thus ensuring that the narratives represent what the participant(s) said, and allow the participant(s) to build upon the experiences and develop deeper narratives (Glesne, 2016; Jones et al., 2014). These narratives provided invaluable insight into understanding the phenomena of H&PE teachers’ preparation and preparedness in working with LGBTQ youth.

Through the interview process, rapport building was a fundamental aspect of this project (Jones et al., 2014). I recognize that as the researcher, I discussed potentially sensitive subject matter, especially when examining participants’ experiences with homophobic bullying in H&PE contexts. As such, promoting a sense of trust through active listening and non-judgmental questioning was vitally important, which provided more in-depth narratives from participants in response to the implementation of these strategies (Jones et al., 2014). Key actions of active listening and non-judgmental questioning were implemented as follows:

- Reiterating what was said by the participant to ensure understanding of the narrative (active listening)

- Maintaining eye contact throughout the interview, or articulating that I am listening, although I may not be making direct eye contact due to the note taking process (active listening)

- Avoided asking questions that promote stereotypes or generalizations about LGBTQ and teaching communities (non-judgmental questioning)
- Ensure that non-invasive or leading questions were avoided throughout the interview process (non-judgmental questioning)

Furthermore, interview transcripts were developed throughout the data collection process, which aided in shaping the narratives that come from the aforementioned process (Glesne, 2016). Appendix E provides representation of the interview guides that establish the preliminary guidelines of the interviews, as well as the relative flow of the conversations.

In reference to Appendix E, in the first interview I concentrated on the participant’s past experiences of H&PE classes, with a primary focus on how their experiences have informed their beliefs about working with LGBTQ youth. As aligned with qualitative research, this initial interview provided the framework upon which co-constructing subsequent interviews will be based. For example, a question from the first interview that demonstrates this foundation building was; “In terms of the curriculum that was covered in your high school H&PE classes, to what extent was there discussions surrounding gender and sexuality? What, if anything, can you recall from those discussions?”

In the second interview, I explored the extent to which participants believe or think that their university education to date has prepared them to handle issues of gender and sexuality in physical education. For example, a question from interview two was: “Can you tell me about your university preparation to work with LGBTQ students?” The context of the second interview was set primarily in the recent past and present, therefore providing the participants with an opportunity to deeply reflect on their educational experiences and reveal how this part of their formal education has prepared or not prepared them to work with issues of gender and sexuality (Kim, 2016).
The third and final interview focused on the pre-service teachers’ future pedagogy. Specifically, in the interview I asked participants to imagine specific strategies they could use to be inclusive to all students in H&PE classes based on concepts they have been exposed to in their university classes. An explicit instance of this future pedagogy construction comes from interview three was; “Reflecting back, what do you feel you have learned from this [interview] process that could influence your pedagogy?” Ultimately, this interview provided the culmination of the data collection process by allowing the participants to apply their past and present experiences to their forthcoming pedagogy.

In reference to the in-depth document analysis of course syllabi, I analyzed twenty (20) course syllabi, with these documents being selected because the syllabus represents the course(s) (and learning) that my participants have or will be taking throughout their university career. Of these twenty (20) syllabi, eleven (11) courses were kinesiology based, which include sociology of sport, teaching games and foundation of movement studies, six (6) were teacher education specific, which include the H&PE teachable class and diversity in education and four (4) were general education, which involves courses like introduction to education and and assessment and evaluation protocols.

**Data Analysis**

Once the participants had completed their interviews and member checks, the data analysis process began. Specifically, the thematic analysis followed a modified version of Braun and Clark’s (2012) six-phase approach. An outline of the entire six phase approach is: (1) Familiarizing Yourself with the Data, (2) Generating Initial Codes, (3) Searching for Themes, (4) Reviewing Potential Themes, (5) Defining and Naming Themes and (6) Producing the Report.
(Braun & Clark, 2012). The reasoning to why I modified this approach is discussed in the following sections.

The first phase utilized in my data analysis required the transcribing of all interviews. The second stage was reading and rereading of the transcriptions and coding key phrases or sections that were significant. The final phase was executed through thematic analysis of the transcripts developed in the data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Punch, 2009). In partaking in the transcription and re-reading processes, it eliminated the need to follow the analysis process set out by Braun and Clarke (2012) exactly, so I decided to implement phases that would best develop the data, while not being redundant to the processes already completed.

As such, I applied phase three, phase five and phase six of the six-phase approach to analyze my participants’ experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Phase three was ‘Searching for Themes,’ where I examined my codes (within the transcripts) to distinguish interconnections within the data, while also separating themes that became distinct from of others (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63). Once this procedure was completed, I moved on to ‘Defining and Naming Themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 66). This phase enabled me to clearly state what was unique and specific about each theme, while recognizing what connections can be found within the names and definitions of each theme that was developed from the previous phase. The process also allowed for the themes to be classified into the two main categories that are found within Chapter Four. The ‘writing of the report’ was done to reflect the uniqueness of my participants’ experiences, while providing answers to the research questions that underpin this study (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Finally, I conducted an in-depth syllabi analysis that provide quantitative substantiation to assertions made by my participants. The analysis was completed by using keywords searches, utilizing terms such as LGBTQ, inclusion, and sexuality that would be
searched for through the entirety of the selected documents. The results of this process will be discussed in the upcoming chapter entitled ‘Data Analysis and Interpretation’.

**Representing the Findings**

In this portion of the research, it is of primary importance to represent the narratives of the participants as well as my experiences as a researcher. In respect to ensuring the voice of all participants, as well as the methodological underpinnings of this study, I will only input my own viewpoints when I note the ways the participants’ stories may not appropriately represent the marginalized community, which in this study is LGBTQ students (Jones et al., 2014). This decision has been considered because there is a distinct likelihood that some or all participants I select could identify as ‘straight,’ or heterosexual. As someone who identifies as ‘gay,’ my own experience and narratives can provide a different perspective from the participants’ own narratives (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). In formatting the findings of the study, I have an excerpt or quotation, which is then occasionally followed by my own interpretation and analysis. This has been formatted as such to provide additional depth (when needed) to the topic being discussed, while ensuring representation of both the participant and myself as a researcher. For example, I have an excerpt from a participant describing instances of homophobic bullying within H&PE class, followed by an elaboration or differing perspective that voices my own experience, while remaining within a similar context. I acknowledge that this representation technique does not come without risk. For one, this representation technique may appear to take away from my participants’ narratives to allow for my own. However, in contrast, my input is there to reinforce the assertion of the participant or allow for varying perspectives to be heard. In all, this format, in congruence with qualitative research, allows for the narrative to represent the focus on the
individual and the individual’s life interaction within the larger social context (Patton, 1990, Punch, 2009).

**Trustworthiness Strategies**

The ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘credibility’ of this research lies in the methods that were used, as well as the strategies that were implemented in collaboration with these methods. In attempting to create trustworthiness for this research, ‘rich and thick’ descriptions are a primary player (Glesne, 2016). More explicitly, these descriptions make use of interview transcripts to write descriptively and allow readers to understand the setting in which I am writing from (Glesne, 2016, p. 53). In the context of this study, ‘rich and thick’ descriptions are found throughout the data analysis and data representation sections. Overall, having the chance to provide clarity for my interpretations is profoundly important to me, so I tried to make this research findings accessible to teacher educators, as well as the general public.

I utilized ‘member checking’ with my participants. In essence, member checking refers to the “sharing [of] interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants and obtaining their feedback and interpretations” (Glesne, 2016, p.53). For the purpose of this study, member checking was done somewhat differently to the ways it has tended to be done elsewhere, as I wanted to ensure participant input throughout the research process. I provided the research participants with the essential themes that were produced by the thematic analysis technique and ask if these themes made sense, and more importantly, represent what they said during the interview process. This conversation allowed me to truly privilege the viewpoints of the participants and give proof of the co-construction technique that was utilized throughout the data collection and analysis phases. Additionally, as a graduate of Briarwood University, I bring a perspective that can corroborate those of my participants and further, as
someone who identifies as LGBTQ, I can bring a sensitivity to how these topics are addressed in pre-service contexts that non-LGBTQ people might not bring.

**Ethical Considerations**

Considering the ethical implications that come with implementing this research, in this section I provide an overview of the considerations taken to ensure an ethical and safe research process. First, with this project’s primary goal taken into account, data collection involves discussions of gender and sexual identity. For example, in the narrative process, interviewees disclosed their own gender identity, or the identity of someone that they know. It was vital to be considerate and sensitive of these matters, and as such, I ensured participants’ rights to self-identification (particularly withholding their identity) were upheld. Further, assumptions that pervade these identities were not be considered and non-invasive interview strategies were implemented. In sum, my emphasis is on the participants’ experiences, not my own.

As well, with consideration of my data analysis, assumptions and pre-conceived notions were not made regarding the participants’ biological identities, as again, the foci of this research are on gender considerations and emancipation. Participants will be asked to sign and submit a letter of informed consent (Appendix D), where issues related to confidentiality and anonymity will be outlined. To protect participants’ identities and information, pseudonyms are used throughout the study to refer to individuals, cohorts from the teacher education program, and institutions. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time and without penalty. Finally, a list of support services (see Appendix F) were provided in every interview to every participant in the case of possible psychological distress during the interview process.

**Researcher Positionality**
Throughout this chapter, there has been an acknowledgment of my tensions and hesitations towards utilizing various methods in forming my data for this research project. With this said, I believe being forthcoming with my assumptions and beliefs brings strength to my research, as I can deconstruct these values and become more appreciative of the perspectives that I heard throughout the research process (Jones et al., 2016: Punch, 2009). In congruence with my personal beliefs, in this passage I acknowledge my overall positionality within this research project, as well as discuss the role that intersectionality plays within this research.

First of all, my ontological and epistemological backings fall mainly within constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, however, I admit that there are instances where I fall within critical paradigms, such as critical theory (Glesne, 2016). Critical theory assumes that reality is shaped by social forces that have been reified or crystallized over time (Morrow, 1991). Although this paradigm is not an underlying factor in this research, this is still important to acknowledge. I also understand that this project’s methodological foundation aligns with the majority of my own theoretical backings (constructivism and interpretivism).

In regard to acknowledging my own assumptions, I recognize that first, as a member of the LGBTQ community (who has dealt with exclusive actions in the past), this worldview can skew my perspective, and lead to unflattering assumptions of non-LGBTQ persons. To counteract the development of these assumptions, I was constantly reflexive in the research process, while utilizing member checks to ensure the narratives demonstrate what was being articulated by my participants. Second, as an individual who is acquainted with the education system, there are certain assumptions that I could bring into the methods, for example, holding preconceived ideas of the inclusion policy enacted by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. Much like the previous assumption I reviewed (i.e., Member of the LGBTQ community),
reflexive practices such as member checking were instituted to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings (Glesne, 2016).

In consideration of the complex social tensions seen within my positionality, Crenshaw’s (1990) concept of intersectionality becomes an appropriate model to utilize within this research. With intersectionality being “a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics…” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 786; Crenshaw, 1990), this interpretation provides the basis to analyze my participants’ (as well as my own) varying backgrounds and beliefs, while understanding how these dynamics effect their role in educating LGBTQ students.
CHAPTER FOUR: Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter, I analyze and interpret the qualitative data gathered during the data collection process described in Chapter Three. By conducting an inductive thematic analysis, I generated themes from interviewees’ accounts of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes are then organized into two main categories: (1) influence of prior experiences leading to university, and (2) influence of formal university experiences. Within certain themes, subthemes are identified and described to better capture the range of pre-service teachers’ experiences and beliefs referenced in the interview process. For example, the influence of personal experiences (i.e., those that occurred outside of formal contexts of learning, such as in schools and universities) is a major sub-theme that is interwoven into the forthcoming analyses. Given my own experiences in relation to LGBTQ and H&PE teaching (as described in Ch. 1), my own personal anecdotes are incorporated though the analytic process to provide greater depth and insight into several issues. This will also add to the trustworthiness of the participants’ accounts as it helps illustrate ways in which participants’ stories ‘ring true’ or provide alternative perspectives that are worthy of consideration in relation to the research questions.

Influence of Prior Schooling Experience(s) on Participants’ Beliefs

One of the initial categories established through my analysis was the influence of participants’ elementary and secondary H&PE programs had upon their beliefs about teaching. Social constructivist theories of learning suggest that personal experiences of learning and teaching inform how teachers learn about, view, and approach their roles as teachers (Richardson, 2005). For example, negative experiences can lead to teachers not wanting to assume aspects of the role that may be required in their early years of teaching, therefore impeding the processes of learning proper teaching practices (Richardson, 2005). Alternatively,
positive prior experiences can lead pre-service teachers to believe that good teaching simply requires them to teach in ways that they were taught as pupils (Oleson & Hora, 2014; Richardson, 2005). Thus, these experiences of teaching and learning as school pupils greatly influence pre-service teachers’ emerging pedagogies, particularly in developing inclusive teaching strategies, as well as forming appropriate beliefs regarding marginalized communities.

In the following section of the chapter I partially address my first two research questions: (1) what are pre-service H&PE teachers’ beliefs and experiences about working with LGBTQ students in schools and (2) what commitments do these pre-service H&PE teachers have toward inclusive practices? This is accomplished through exploration of my participants’ H&PE experiences prior to entering university, while examining how these experiences begin to shape their beliefs and commitments to working with LGBTQ students.

**Perpetuating Social Stereotypes through School H&PE Contexts**

This theme is divided into two sub-themes: (1) influence of hypermasculinity in H&PE and (2) stereotypical gender expectations. These sub-themes are discussed in the following sections.

**Influence of Hypermasculinity in H&PE**

Most participants described not experiencing teaching and learning in school H&PE in ways that disrupt traditional assumptions about gender. For example, few claimed their teachers attempted to disrupt power relations in the class (or in society more broadly), such as offering alternative activities that did not contain hypermasculine qualities of power and performance that tend to dominate school H&PE programs (Finnessy, 2016; Nash & Browne, 2015). Further, several participants suggested that many teachers seemingly reproduced normalized assumptions about how certain subjects suit one specific gender. For example, assumptions were reinforced
(rather than disrupted) about the arts being seen as feminine in nature, whereas H&PE was considered masculine. As such, all participants noted how their elementary and secondary H&PE experiences reproduced traditional social norms relating to gender and sexuality, including hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity and gender norms.

Christian’s comments capture some of the ways in which traditional notions of gender were reinforced in his experiences of school H&PE:

*It just seemed like [H&PE class] was almost a natural environment for the boys, which is not okay obviously, but back then I don't think PE was really taken seriously at all by the teacher* (Int. 1)

In discussing his past H&PE classes, Christian explains how males tended to dominate the experience. His reference to H&PE being a “natural environment for the boys” suggests that not only male but also masculine dominance was taken for granted by both students and teachers. It can also be inferred that his teachers did little to disrupt the traditional ways in which H&PE was presented to favour the interests and abilities of athletic males in the classroom. This aligns with Connell’s (2008) findings that sport, and physical education settings reproduces the types and forms of masculinity embodied by those who are in power. In other words, sport and H&PE privileges those students who are masculine in nature, display violence and undermine others (Connell, 2008; Light & Kirk, 2000). Furthermore, Christian’s teacher’s decision to not take the subject seriously suggests that the teacher did not view H&PE as a space where authentic learning could occur, either in physical, social or cognitive senses and the ‘traditional’ spaces of H&PE questioned or challenged by all participants in the class.

In contrast to Christian’s experiences of H&PE that perpetuated dominant gender narratives, Katie describes how her teachers offered H&PE in a sex-segregated format:
When I was in just female H&PE classes, I felt that was a more positive experience for me. I think I'm a little bit more comfortable with my peers that aren't as competitive, not that women aren't as competitive, but I feel more comfortable with some of my friends and I think at that age as well...you don't really want to play with the boys, when you're playing baseball and you might not know what you're doing and you might not want to play all those team sports together because you don't want to look silly in front of the opposite gender, right? (Int. 1)

Katie’s experience illustrates how coeducational H&PE classes can be uncomfortable environments for learning, especially for students who fall outside of the hypermasculine culture that pervades this subject (Linghede & Larsson, 2017). From this quote it might be assumed that the sex-segregated format would remove some of the gender dynamics in the class that favoured traditional forms of masculinity. For example, Katie suggests that forms and characteristics of masculinity, such as competitiveness, can be displayed by some females as well. However, Katie’s statement that she ‘didn’t want to look silly’ reinforces the idea of subservient roles women are made to play (or the way they feel) around men, particularly when men display hypermasculine characteristics. Katie goes on to comment how her experiences of coeducational H&PE class dynamics were typically influenced more by masculine actions - particularly performed by males - thus making it more difficult for many females to want to participate in the coeducational environment:

The dynamic [of H&PE] would have a lot more boys than girls in the class. So that was also a thing where none of the girls wanted to participate because we had so many strong male personalities going on, so it was just like a lot (Int. 1)
Katie’s narrative illustrates how H&PE can be uncomfortable classes for participants in both coeducational and sex-segregated formats, as some students considered physical education as a place for competition, as well as a way to demonstrate masculinity through boisterous behaviour and dominate others in physical, social, and emotional ways.

Drake’s experiences also demonstrate how hypermasculinity affected his physical education experience. Here, he reflects on his grade ten fitness class, in which he found the competitive elements of fitness testing challenging:

*I didn't enjoy... I'd say the hyper-masculinity, it was kind of a competition... especially the weeks of fitness testing... I knew I was good at the long-distance running, so that kind of gave me confidence, but then when it came to more like flexed arm hang, max bench press, you know, it was my first year of ever doing real weight lifting and two months into the program...having me do my max rep lift of hundred sixty pounds was intimidating* (Int. 1)

Even when participating in a class where course outcomes are explicitly focused on developing fitness proficiency (which is a personal activity), Drake articulates how these hypermasculine elements of competition prevented him from fully enjoying the class experience. Further, having classmates who were presumably more proficient led Drake to feel intimidated, and less inclined to participate, or make an effort to improve his performance. This narrative also establishes how certain types of fitness, such as strength, are given privilege over others including flexibility and endurance, further reinforcing traditional masculine characteristics that privilege power and performance.

*Stereotypical Gender Expectations*
The majority of participants also reported how issues relating to stereotypical gender expectations were typical in their school H&PE experiences. For one, Cole reflects on how bullying relating to gender occurred almost every day in his H&PE classes: *Definitely the gender equity* [bullying terms], *you throw like a girl... That happens a lot. I probably even said that a few times to myself* (Int. 1). In the same interview, Cole adds: *A lot of time in the classroom* [bullying would occur] *actually, usually would be when someone throws badly, someone calls out like; ‘What a girl throw or whatever and the teacher would usually let it slide* (Int. 1). As seen in Cole’s account, teachers who choose to leave these gender-based insults unchecked seemingly normalize the statements or suggest they are acceptable in the classroom, leaving students at greater risk of physical and emotional bullying. Although Cole doesn’t mention homophobic slurs, it does not take much to imagine that these types of comments may also have been left unchallenged given the pupils’ and teacher’s attitudes and actions he describes. Further, prospective teachers who see this passive intervention can be led to believe that this is good or at least acceptable teaching practice, thus leaving a major gap in their pedagogy.

The stereotypical female figure is often propagated in H&PE contexts, especially when considering how male and female fitness classes are structured so differently. Drake noticed these differences, and reflects on how female H&PE classes were typically run to follow socially constructed ideals of femininity:

*The girl’s physical education classes were [forced] more towards squats and doing those aerobic exercises... where males were powerlifting, deadlifts, max bench... those sorts of things. Why are we pushing towards a softer approach for one gender and pushing harder effect on another gender and shaming people who didn’t fit that category?* (Int. 1)
Though this department’s decision to separate male and female fitness classes may have been inadvertent, it further reinforces gender norms in society, such as females having to be thin and males needing to be muscular. The premise is often promoted in H&PE contexts. Drake’s insightful reflection also demonstrates how he is not taking all his experiences as ‘best practice.’ This means that just because a pre-service teacher experienced something in their schooling does not mean that these strategies are appropriate, indicating these prospective teachers’ abilities to be or become critical thinkers.

Drake also voices a narrative in which dietary choices can lead to assumptions being made about one’s gender and sexuality:

> We were talking about how vegetarianism and veganism is so soft, or so tailored to girls… if you are a vegan and a guy you were just so soft, so gay or you know, men need protein (Int. 1)

Drake’s multilayered narrative first examines how women are more likely to be vegetarian to remain within a feminine ideal, however, he also ruminates about stereotypes concerning perceptions of what happens to males who participate in feminized constructs. In this instance, males who are vegetarian (which is typically perceived as feminine) are seen as weak, or possibly homosexual. With hegemonic masculinity carrying immense social capital, any slight deviation from this ideal can lead to marginalization and scrutiny amongst peers (Block, 2014), particularly in the H&PE classroom, where such ideals are placed in the spotlight.

Katie delivers a thought-provoking perspective on how these social norms pervaded her school experiences, particularly how students’ academic interests led to them being socially classified. She states:
I think a lot of [marginalization] comes from people classifying different subjects... you know, if you are into the arts like you must be like gender fluid and you must be like bisexual or I think a lot of people put this kind of feminine emphasis on the arts, right? So, if you're in dramatic arts or music or visual arts and you're a male, you're automatically just kind of like hyper feminized which is interesting to me (Int. 1)

Although interest in the arts does not define one’s sexuality or gender, social norms can produce a guise in which someone may be categorized to fit certain stereotypes. For instance, Katie refers to a stereotype that a male interested in the arts ‘must’ not be heterosexual because of feminine foundations in the arts. In similar fashion, females who perform well in sport (and particularly in certain types of sport) are seen as less feminine than those who do not, as sport is typically a masculine arena. When considering Richardson’s (2005) assertion that negative prior experiences can lead to new teacher hesitation within their career path, it is imperative for these pre-service teachers to critically reflect on their experiences and recognize the vast learning opportunities that come from such experiences. This skill is best exhibited by Drake, as he is able to employ a feminist lens to his thinking, which allows him to question the stereotypes faced by both male and female H&PE classes, and begin to generate ideas to help eliminate these stereotypes. Pre-service teachers should also consider how they can begin to eradicate social norms in their classrooms, as these norms play substantial roles in the marginalization of students.

The Professional is Personal: A Tactic of Avoidance

As a whole, this topic expresses my participants’ insight into why they felt their past teachers decided to discuss (or not discuss) matters relating to gender and sexuality, and demonstrates how having LGBTQ students in the classroom can significantly shift school
dynamics and pedagogical choices. This theme represents how the teaching profession can become innately personal, and how subjective decisions can have significant ramifications on the students taught within the classroom. The theme is presented using two sub-themes: (1) teacher comfort and abuse of professional judgement and (2) LGBTQ students in school: the ramifications.

**Teacher Comfort = Abuse of Professional Judgement?**

The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario [ETFO] (2016) defines professional judgement as “judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning” (p. 3). In other words, teachers have the right to decide what is taught in the classroom that is in the best interest of student success, which is also known as professional judgement. Though this statement from ETFO suggests a degree of autonomy teachers have and infers ways teachers can adopt a progressive stance on human rights, it also offers teachers the chance to remove aspects they deem unimportant or for which have personal trepidations about. Considering this, all participants noted how many of their teachers avoided teaching the human development and sexual health unit in depth and replaced this time with other health units they felt comfortable teaching. In listing the units that were taught in his high school H&PE classes, Cole showcases how teacher comfort plays an integral role in what was taught within his school experience:

*Every year drugs. A little bit of sex ed depending on the teacher and how comfortable they were teaching [a subject] ...and not to a huge extent though, but usually is mainly drugs sort of, like healthy nutrition as well* (Int. 1).
In the same interview, Cole mentions how his health education classes were completed with a lack of depth and focus on health subjects he felt needed to be emphasized more:

So back then no they didn't cover sex ed enough, even the other health topics...they covered it but like I think it could have been emphasized a lot more... but I feel like we didn't really learn the expectations that we were meant to (Int. 1)

Although the human development and sexual health unit is a mandatory strand within the H&PE curriculum, Cole indicates that many of his teachers would avoid in-depth lessons concerning gender and sexuality, in light of other strands that the teachers felt more comfortable to teach. (Finnessy, 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

Katie discusses a similar experience, in which her elementary classroom teacher elected to have a health professional (such as a community nurse or health promotion official) teach a unit entitled ‘choices and change,’ which focused on sexual health. When asked why the teacher might have made this choice, Katie states:

I think it just comes from comfortability. I think maybe that might be a possibility and why our choices and change was covered by one person... potentially, it could be for whatever reason... maybe my H&PE teacher wasn't super comfortable with covering those topics with students of that age and maybe that's why we had another teacher in there doing it...I think you really have to let a lot of that [information] go, but I think that a lot of the things that were covered in depth were things that teachers felt comfortable with (Int. 1)

Interestingly, this is a trend I encountered in my own schooling experiences, as well as in the beginning stage of my teaching career. For example, I observed co-workers play out of date videos discussing gender and sexuality, then have students complete work sheets based on the
content of the video. Though this technique covers the curriculum objectives, it does so in a superficial way, not providing the necessary depth to provide a contemporary understanding of such complex content, while subliminally suggesting that this content does not require thoughtful pedagogical decision-making. For example, work sheets of this type might amount to busy work that can be ‘checked off’ as being addressed; however, students aren’t asked if they have questions or want to share/discuss experiences of gender based bullying, or how there are varying genders and or sexualities that embody what some students may feel represent them. Such content might require innovative pedagogical approaches, such as implementing interactive drama into H&PE classrooms (Robinson & Meyer, 2012). In their findings, Robinson and Meyer (2012) establish that teachers utilizing interactive drama techniques were better able to make ‘real life’ connections to situations faced by adolescent students, therefore opening the door for communication about more complex issues in health education, such as LGBTQ discrimination.

Katie also alludes to the impact of parents upon teacher’s decisions on what to communicate within the classroom. For example, she considers that teachers are more apprehensive in dealing with sensitive subject matter, like LGBTQ issues, due to the assumed backlash that could come from parents as a result of discussing these subjects:

*I think that [lack of LGBTQ education] comes a lot from people who are afraid of what the parents are going to say... You don't want the backlash. So people would just rather negate it and not talk about it* (Int. 3)

Students’ parents are one of the most important stakeholders in education, therefore keeping them satisfied is a primary goal for teachers and administration alike. In keeping these stakeholders ‘happy’, sacrifices have been made, particularly when sensitive subjects are discussed in the classroom. For example, in accommodation of certain religious beliefs, students
can be excused from lessons concentrating on sex education, growth and development and sexuality (Benn, Dagkas & Jawad, 2011; Brenyo, 2016). It is widely assumed that this decision was made to appease parents who vocally opposed these curriculum objectives, thus demonstrating how teachers are obliged to accommodate parents, while subliminally telling teachers to not disagree with parents to avoid any vocal criticism.

**LGBTQ Students in Schools: The Ramifications**

The second sub-theme concentrates on a perceived lack of inclusionary practices for LGBTQ students that were experienced by participants that they felt reflected their teachers’ assumptions that there are no LGBTQ students in their classes.

For example, Katie believes that one of the reasons teachers don’t focus lessons on LGBTQ issues is due to a lack of visibility of these students in their classrooms:

*I just think it's a visibility issue a lot of the time, a lot of the time in high school a lot of teachers might not think that they have students that are part of the LGBTQ community* (Int.1)

If teachers rationalize their decisions this way, it can perpetuate the idea of compulsory heterosexuality and heterosexism in H&PE contexts (Landi, 2018; Rich, 1980). Landi (2018) describes this phenomenon as women and men being “innately sexually oriented” towards the opposite sex, however, once same-sex attraction occurs, many of these people become ostracized. Thus, in implicitly assuming there may be no LGBTQ pupils in their classes, H&PE teachers may continue to offer only traditional means of instruction relating to gender and sexuality. Being open to alternative interpretations and assuming *there are* LGBTQ pupils in their classes could reduce the ostracism these students face and begin to make the LGBTQ community visible within schooling contexts. One’s “social location” also plays an integral role
in analyzing this lack of perceived visibility of LGBTQ students in H&PE (Shields, 2008). As a cisgender, white-settler female, Katie’s intersecting profile allows her to critically examine the genders and sexualities presumed ‘not to be’ within the realm of H&PE, and bring light to those individual’s experiences. On the other hand, if Katie’s teachers were mostly white-settler, cisgender males, there is a higher likelihood of these teachers following status quo protocols, therefore leading to less awareness of varying genders and sexualities (Shields, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Having attended a Catholic school, Christian notes that his H&PE classes were taught from a Catholic perspective on gender and sexuality, which led him to consider how the doctrine of the Catholic religion (and thus Catholic schools) may have affected what was taught within the classroom: [My H&PE teachers] didn’t really touch on mental health or much of the sexual unit... possibly because of being a Christian or Catholic School (Int. 1). Although Catholic/Christian schools do have religious freedom(s) that allow teachers to select how specific units are taught within the classroom (Nash & Browne, 2015), it is important to note that growth and development units in the Ontario H&PE curriculum provide important information to the well-being of all students, not just a select few. Nonetheless, Nash and Brown (2015) articulate how many teachers in Catholic contexts are apprehensive to teach subjects pertaining to the LGBTQ issues because they force a reframing of traditional and heteronormative beliefs that underpin the Catholic system. This dynamic is particularly relevant for pre-service teachers who are trying to “fly under the radar” and not stand out as challenging the status quo (or pleasing the principal), it can be especially difficult for them to enact inclusive teaching practices in these contexts. This conservative teaching practice also perpetuates a perception that these units are
secondary to the others, although they are equal in terms of the weighting and structure of the Ontario curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

A personal anecdote from Katie captures her feelings about the negative impact that teachers’ decisions to not teach about LGBTQ issues can have on the comfort and feelings of belongingness of all students, especially those who identify or know students who identify with this community:

_I have a personal story about my best friend’s siblings. Her two siblings, are both transgender... her sister came out as gay and then went through transition a little bit later, after high school, but when we were going into high school, her older sibling who made the transition to trans man was a lesbian in high school, and I think [a unit focusing on the LGBTQ community] would have really comforted my friend, but also me because me you know, I was there with my best friend at these times like having all these questions about her sibling right, going like what is that, what does that mean? And what is happening? (Int. 1)_

Katie’s narrative paints a clear picture of why teachers should teach lessons focusing on gender and sexuality. First, this demonstrates that LGBTQ students do exist within schooling contexts, and moreover, if teachers teach lessons focusing on issues facing the LGBTQ community, such as transgender awareness or the fact that LGBTQ students’ attraction is ‘normal,’ comfort can be found in knowing that what their peers are going through was normal. Further, these classes have the capability to provide much needed resources, so students don’t feel confused and unprepared to work with LGBTQ peers.

Second Tier Subject or Second Tier Pedagogy?
The perception of H&PE being a second-tier subject versus other academic classes was another point raised by all participants. This is highly troublesome when considering that H&PE is the only subject that has specific learning expectations relating to gender and sexuality (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Yet from my participants’ perspectives, it seems many H&PE teachers are implementing passive and ineffective pedagogical choices and strategies. For example, Cole believes that the expectations set out by the Ontario curriculum were not met by his H&PE teachers. He asserts:

I feel like we didn’t really learn the expectations that we were meant to. I felt it was more just like play games because it's fun and because it's gym class. Yeah, but we didn't really learn like any of the objectives. So no, I don't think [the curriculum expectations] are covered that well (Int. 1)

Cole participated in H&PE classes throughout his schooling, however, given his current knowledge of the curriculum, Cole was not able to recall many specific instances of how his teachers might have been addressing a wide spectrum of expectations. Likewise, Drake references how he wanted his health education to be more holistic, and provide the information students needed to understand the relevant social issues:

I think, we should have been much more well-rounded and just talked about everybody... but also in talking about LGBTQ community and gender as a spectrum, we never ever did and then you know transgender folks, we never covered that topic and I think that would be something that is monumental to cover... like much earlier than high school as well...so I feel like we could have got a lot more in depth with those topics (Int. 1)

It is highly troublesome that Drake’s teacher never taught lessons relating to gender and sexuality, especially when these are outcomes are policy documents set in the Ontario H&PE
Drake also believes that H&PE took a ‘back seat’ in his prior schooling. He states:

_In elementary I kind of thought of health and physical education... as always, a secondary subject term... it always kind of took a backseat and especially in my elementary school, it was kind of... did we have time for PE today or do we have the right teacher here?_ (Int. 1)

During this interview, Drake also spoke to how his elementary Math teacher would also teach his H&PE classes, although from what he understood, this educator had no formal training in this subject. This example is one way that H&PE can be placed on the ‘backburner,’ where teachers who are specialized in core subjects such as math, language, and others are prioritized in hiring decisions over other academic subjects such as H&PE. Decisions like these can lead teachers to become lackadaisical, as they feel that their subject area is not valued. This is reinforced by Cole’s recollection of passive H&PE teaching in his own classes: _I found that the PE teachers would slack off, have weak instruction, that sort of thing, just be like ‘oh whatever, let them play ‘and I didn’t like that [pedagogy]’_” (Int. 1). No matter their expertise, teachers are bound by law to ensure that the safety and well-being of students are always considered, however; events like these recounted by several participants seem to paint a far different picture.

Christian voiced similar experiences of weak overall teaching his H&PE classes, which also translated to what he suggests were weak interventions around issues of gender and sexuality in the H&PE classroom. In the following example, he notes how teachers would
passively intervene when hearing homophobic remarks, therefore normalizing derogatory comments that typically led to worse behaviour further into the semester:

_They intervened the way like, more brush things under the rug, like ‘guys, come on, don't say that’ or you know, I feel like they also kind of have times may have ignored so it until it got to a point where it might escalate_ (Int. 1).

Christian’s quote can be understood through Bailey et al.’s (2016) findings in which teachers become hesitant in their classroom management when dealing with scenarios that cause personal dissonance. In this narrative, the teacher recognizes that an issue exists, however, they go on to implement a passive or non-existent intervention that demonstrates no consequence to the student’s action, therefore allowing for the cycle of marginalization to continue. It can be inferred that the teacher is uncomfortable handling the scenario at hand, consequently leading to a lackluster response. Ultimately, Drake suggests that ‘ease’ is a rationale for why teachers taught the way they did in H&PE, which I believe is a transferable rationale to the experiences discussed:

_I think [deciding what to teach] is kind of based off what's easiest for me. What's the easiest information to get across without kind of delving too deep into those difficult conversations? I think maybe they focused on that because they were fact driven... so if a teacher who may be uncertain, they at least know there's certain facts that they can they can provide that their education allows them to be sure, that their education allows them to understand... so if they understand a more science-based approach... that's what they're going to produce right_ (Int. 1)

Drake’s reflection provides major insight into why teachers decide to use passive pedagogy versus more active roles. Simply, teachers are more inclined to teach subjects they
know, rather than ones that they do not for the sake of simplicity (Brownell, 2017; Oleson & Hora, 2014). Thus, this decision develops a sense of comfort in the material and process being taught, which can lead to complacency, as described in Drake’s narrative. Evidently, teachers should shift away from passive teaching, and engage in a growth mindset, which allows them to continually improve their pedagogy for the wide array of learners that they will come across within the classroom (Dweck, 2015).

Past Experiences Shaping Today’s Beliefs

It becomes evident through the descriptions discussed thus far that my participants did not receive what many would feel are well-developed education pertaining to the LGBTQ in their elementary and secondary schools. Interestingly, my participants’ accounts describe either initiative, in the form of taking it upon oneself to learn (or to critique their experiences), or complacency, where one continues to maintain stereotypes about the LGBTQ community. On one side of the spectrum, Katie mentions on how she learned about the LGBTQ community through personal experience, rather than in the classroom, as this subject was never taught to her in schools:

*I had this kind of like street knowledge about what was happening in the gay community... but none of that was covered in class, so I can really only like put myself in the shoes of my best friends’ siblings and think ‘wow’, like what were they going through at that time?* (Int. 1)

As Katie articulates, not having information about the LGBTQ from a trustworthy source led her to find information through whatever means where available. Moreover, this process made her realize how difficult societal dynamics must have been for her friend’s siblings, as they identify as a part of the LGBTQ community, yet had not received any information, from school,
that could aid in their transition. Seeing these struggles in real life influenced Katie to not only help her friend’s siblings, but also recognize the importance of integrating a LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. On the other hand, Cole articulates his displeasure with how members of the LGBTQ community are classified, particularly given the diverse ways sexuality is conceptualized nowadays:

*I think [the LGBTQ community] is going a little overboard with all the different sexualities and stuff... I forget how many there are now but there's like a hundred I think different sexualities. It's like can we maybe categorize these like a little more like broadly* (Int. 1)

Cole’s comment is not prejudicial; however, it demonstrates ignorance to the growing acceptance of multiple sexualities and the LGBTQ community as a whole. Intriguingly, Cole is one of the participants who noted that throughout his elementary and secondary school experiences that he did not receive much information about the LGBTQ. This assertion also aligns with Cole’s intersecting profile as a white-settler, cisgender male who identifies as heterosexual. This said, it can be fair to assume that Cole’s comments are not made out of hate, but rather a lack of understanding concerning issues faced in the LGBTQ community. Cole’s assertion also illustrates how a lack of education can distort one’s beliefs about certain issues, even when one is open-minded and willing to discuss matters relating to gender and sexuality.

**Influence of Prior Experiences Review**

The interview data analyzed to this point suggests that prior H&PE experiences have a strong impact on forming teachers’ beliefs. For instance, by considering the data from a feminist lens, all participants revealed that their H&PE classes propagated deeply embedded stereotypes and social norms, thus making it difficult to believe that they alone can break this cycle of
marginalization. Further, multiple instances of passive teaching were discussed, seemingly normalizing and promoting this sort of pedagogy to these pre-service teachers. Additionally, with participants noting a lack of inclusion-based pedagogy in their past classrooms, it has made it challenging for participants to commit to sound inclusionary pedagogy themselves. This said, some participants have taken it upon themselves to learn more about the LGBTQ community, as they have a personal connection to this community. In the following section, I discuss the influence of my participants’ formal university preparation, and how these experiences have shaped their pedagogy.

**Influence of Formal University Experiences**

This theme reflects the chronological order that occurs within ‘regular’ schooling; beginning with elementary, followed by secondary and finally, formal, post-secondary schooling, such as university and college. In the context of this study, university studies—specifically undergraduate and teacher education are analyzed— as these experiences allow for greater understanding of the internal struggle that occurs among teachers upholding their own beliefs, and information being taught that challenges or reaffirms these beliefs (Ni Chroinin & O’Sullivan, 2016; Philpot & Smith, 2011). In this thesis, the focus is on pre-service teachers’ beliefs about working with LGBTQ students. In all, this analysis allows me to partially answer three of my research questions, these being: (1) What are pre-service H&PE teachers’ beliefs and experiences about working with LGBTQ students in schools, (2) What commitments do pre-service H&PE teachers have toward inclusive practices, and (3) What strategies can pre-service H&PE teachers articulate about working with LGBTQ students? How have they developed these strategies? Specifically, this is done by exploring aspects of my participants’ present and future H&PE experiences, while interpreting how these narratives represent (or not) a commitment to
LGBTQ inclusive pedagogy. It is important to note that the final research question cannot be answered fully, as participants were not able to articulate in-depth strategies of inclusion. This phenomenon is discussed further in this chapter.

The Battle for Tolerance

A thought-provoking concept brought to light by many participants centres around the idea that certain marginalized groups (LGBTQ, First Nation, Metis and Inuit [FNMI] Peoples, racialized people, immigrant newcomers, etc.) are given preferential treatment over others due to the political landscape in Ontario and Canada. To further delve into this concept, three sub-themes have been developed: (1) effect of political landscape on the participants’ teaching and learning, (2) the ‘personal’ of pre-service participants and (3) moving past biases and norms. First, I explore how decisions made by governments in power significantly impact the quality the education my participants received in university. Following this, I analyze how media, stereotypes and teachings based on cultural diversity have formed my participants’ current beliefs and commitments to working with LGBTQ students. Lastly, I review and interpret how the participants believe LGBTQ inclusive pedagogy can be implemented.

Effect of the Political Landscape on Teaching and Learning

In analysis of how government has affected his formal education, Cole mentions his opposition to the Ontario government’s decision in 2018 to repeal the 2015 H&PE curriculum, as he believes this decision will lead to a gap in knowledge of both students and teachers, as well as biased beliefs:

*With what the government's doing now... taking [the updated H&PE curriculum] away... I disagree with that completely. I just find from a young age that stuff needs to be talked about or else it's not going to be addressed, and people are going to go on, like the [next]*
generation and be so biased towards [gender and sexuality] because they had no education on it (Int. 3)

Cole’s statement echoes the backlash the Ontario government has faced, especially from those who believe in the promising and progressive change that came with the implementation of the 2015 H&PE curriculum (OPHEA, 2018; Teotonio, 2018). Nonetheless, at the time of writing the government had just finalized the revocation of the H&PE curriculum, thus complicating the teaching practice of beginning and expert teachers alike. This issue is further complicated by (at the time of writing) the government’s decision to leave education-based stakeholders with unclear instructions on what is to be taught during the transition to the ‘new’ H&PE curriculum that includes an older version of the growth and development strand. Cole’s assertion also suggests that a lack of education pertaining to gender and sexuality in school leads to a gap in what he believes is necessary knowledge for teachers and pupils, which subsequently forms ill-informed beliefs in students.

Likewise, Katie believes the recent change in the H&PE curriculum is highly problematic, while in this case, proposes that this change is fueled by political allegiances and personal ignorance:

*I do think that it [change in H&PE curriculum] is like a big step back and that just comes from a place of you know, I think... ignorance, where that's concerned, where [the Premier] doesn't think that this is a top priority to deal with... especially in accordance with education* (Int. 2)

Katie’s allegation cannot be supported with the latest academic literature. What can be supported is the idea that the Ontario government’s decision to remove and review topics addressing diversity in gender and sexuality and replacing these with out of date, conservative beliefs is a
clear sign of political allegiance to certain conservative policies and values (Lum, 2018; OPHEA, 2018; Teotonio, 2018). It should be noted that little to no change has been signalled to occur to the sections of the curriculum that deal specifically with physical education and active living, suggesting that the government is focused on making changes to portions of the health topics in the curriculum they feel don’t suit their political agenda (i.e., those related to gender and sexual diversity). In all, these politically-based decisions are leaving teachers (including the participants of this research) confused, frustrated and feeling they lack the necessary tools to teach H&PE classes; at least in ways that are inclusive of LGBTQ students.

Shifting gears slightly, Kate reviews the impact government policies can have on education, as she states that LGBTQ-based education is lacking in Ontario’s teacher education providers (i.e., university Faculties of Education) because of a lack of time, and underlying government policies forcing teacher education departments to focus on issues that keep the department viable in the eyes of the current provincial government:

*I think [lack of focus on LGBTQ education] comes from a place of there’s not enough time to go over everything in teacher’s college and I think you know what we go over at large is what we are told to go over from a governmental perspective* (Int. 2)

This is thought-provoking, as Katie’s comment moves past the taken for granted belief that what is taught in teacher education “is the way it is,”; she moves to unpack how time, as well as political influence effect what is taught with teacher education programs. The political underpinnings of this statement of are particular interest, as Katie notes that whatever political agenda is ‘front of mind’ of the government is what is taught in the classroom, while subjects that are not of government interest are less likely to receive classroom focus. It can also be expected that these decisions have been made so teacher education programs can retain funding.
from the government, therefore keeping the program running smoothly (Blatchford, 2019). Katie also notes that in teacher education program, FMNI-based strategies are taught far more than strategies that focus on including LGBTQ students:

*We haven't really had the time to go over [LGBTQ] in specifics, which is too bad because we do talk about you know, FNMI [based learning] for weeks on end* (Int. 2)

With the release of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s* report in 2015, there has been a renewed attention to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples across Canada from the Federal Government, (and I believe until recently, the Ontario provincial government) (Blatchford, 2019; Fletcher, Lorusso & Halas, 2018). As such, Katie suggests FMNI-based approaches are likely to be integrated into the classroom to reflect this movement towards inclusion for this community, which provides logic for why FNMI issues have been taught “for weeks on end” in education-based settings (Blatchford, 2019; Fletcher, Lorusso & Halas, 2018). LGBTQ issues have begun to see more governmental focus, however, due to a lack of media representation, these concerns have not been discussed in-depth, thus leaving this community sidelined and lacking in teacher preparation focus. To be sure, this is not to discount or critique the need for a renewed emphasis on FNMI issues but highlights ways in which issues affecting some marginalized groups are at times emphasized over others, at least from the perspective of the research participants.

In the same interview, Katie dives deeper into her examination of her teacher education experience, particularly how governmental priorities and instructor comfort plays an integral role on what is promoted in teacher education classrooms:

*I feel that we aren’t yet in the place of teaching LGBTQ rights and opening up that conversation more because we’re not in a place of dealing with that at the governmental*
level, where we can open that up into our classrooms or where we in teacher education or getting that background to open up that conversation, so I think it comes from a place of... we're not like necessarily comfortable with it because our instructors are uncomfortable with it...because the higher up in the system isn't comfortable with it yet. (Int. 2)

This trickle-down effect described by Katie establishes the government’s known influence, where the Ministry of Education (in Ontario) sets curriculum objectives that form the academic content of the classroom. This effect also suggests that in terms of education, the provincial government has more influence over what gets taught – and this is perhaps why education remains a provincial issue, as there is a view that the province has a better sense of the needs of students in their contexts, rather than their federal counterparts. I believe that the tensions between the federal and provincial political landscapes that we find ourselves today has complicated the teaching profession immensely. Government impact is a concept I feel should be discussed more openly, especially when considering the experiences brought to light by my participants. Though teaching is an innately political profession, capital-P politics should not get in the way of proper teacher development, especially when it pertains to the safety and well-being of all students, not just those that might fall into the majority.

The ‘Personal’ of Pre-Service Participants

Throughout the interview process, all participants noted ways the LGBTQ community has been classified, stereotyped and marginalized by mainstream media. However, most participants critiqued these perceptions, demonstrating a personal commitment to equality, as well as a belief that all genders and sexualities should be included in all schooling contexts. For
example, when discussing what he believes when he hears the term LGBTQ, Christian expresses how mainstream media has created unfair opinions of this community:

*I just think of how discriminated [the LGBTQ] are, like that whole community is... like through media, like movies and you know, all that kind of stuff, it's just like... almost a bad rap... just the unfairness and it's just not being right for people to judge people based on that at all* (Int. 3)

Research by Craig, McInroy, McCready and Alaggia (2015) suggest that positive representation of the LGBTQ in the media can be integral to forming positive resilience strategies in LGBTQ youth, yet positive representation in the media is minimal. As such, Christian’s awareness of this bias demonstrates a belief in acceptance, as well as a commitment to bettering LGBTQ youths’ experiences. Yet, it is difficult to improve LGTBQ students’ experiences when mainstream media perpetuates deeply embedded and unflattering stereotypes of members of the LGBTQ community. For example, the media has characterized LGBTQ individuals as promiscuous, eccentric and defiant versus their heterosexual peers (Craig, McInroy, McCready & Alaggia, 2015). These misconceptions can be further perpetuated by bullying via social media, as well as imbedded conservative values. This dynamic is explained by Christian, who says:

*You see bullying on social media and you hear... the way people talk, and you know, that they were probably brought up that way with the old-school fashion view... kids aren't born to hate, they are taught to hate, right?* (Int. 3)

Bullying in schools has become a prominent issue within all learning contexts, and with advancements in technology and social media, cyberbullying has also risen at staggering rates. As the research of Kearns et al. (2014) shows, LGBTQ students are at particular risk of bullying
and feeling unsafe in school, which reaffirms Christian’s concern for these students. Further, Christian’s statement regarding ‘old-school views’ is not surprising, as Tischler and McCaughtry (2011) suggest deep-seated conservative values still remain in school contexts, especially H&PE, thus making it difficult to deconstruct and move towards more inclusive practices in the subject area. Christian’s comments suggest a personal commitment to questioning these beliefs, as well as beginning to deconstruct why these norms are being reproduced the way have been.

Furthermore, when reflecting on what creates his definition of the LGBTQ community, Cole references social media outlets like Facebook, as well as media coverage has influenced his beliefs regarding the LGBTQ:

*All the things that happen on Facebook and whatnot. I always see events going on about the LGBTQ, or like Pride Parades and meetings and stuff [seem to have created my definition] (Int. 1)*

The cultural influence that social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram possess has grown tremendously, and as Cole accounts, can play a role in developing perceptions of people within the LGBTQ community. McInroy and Craig (2015) found that perceptions of the LGBTQ on online media platforms can be particularly transphobic, homophobic and ostracizing. Interestingly, the authors also found that more authentic representation of the LGBTQ was found offline, rather than through social media (McInroy & Craig, 2015). As such, Cole’s beliefs may be persuaded by mainstream media’s negative perception of the LGBTQ community, thus demonstrating the importance of critically analyzing what is seen online and coming to educated decisions based on varying contexts.
In similar fashion, Katie notes how popular culture can create negative and positive perceptions of the LGBTQ, though she does note how some programs are quite educational in understanding aspects of this community, thus leading to a desire to learn more:

*I think popular culture [creates a definition of the LGBTQ], I mean like I'm a huge fan of RuPaul's Drag Race... so, I mean that like understanding what certain things mean and then you want to know more and more about the culture in this community.* (Int. 1)

What Katie describes here is tension between what is perceived as positive and negative media. For Kate, ‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ provides a positive impression on what it means to be a part of the LGBTQ community, whereas others may define this show as flamboyant, uncomfortable and unnatural. These varying classifications will either drive more interest in the subject (as seen in Katie’s comment) or drive people away from understanding these communities. As such, it is important for teachers to keep an open mind to what can be expressed within the classroom, as well as critically reflect on what is seen within the mainstream media, and how these can affect students’ impressions of marginalized communities.

Contrary to other participants’ experiences, Drake’s opinions of the LGBTQ community have been influenced by family members’ experiences, particularly those who attend the Toronto Pride Parade annually, and describe their positive experiences of the event, therefore producing a positive opinion of the LGBTQ community:

*I've had family friends who I've gone camping with every single summer since I was born and they would go to the Pride Parade in Toronto every single year so that was like the first introduction to what Pride was for the LGBTQ community... their descriptions of what the parade was... it was happy, expressive, non-judgmental... kind of accepting*
those people for what they are biologically but also what they think they are emotionally.

(Int. 1)

I believe that one of the most powerful factors in accepting or ostracizing LGBTQ youth is an individual’s family belief system. In Drake’s case, his family talked openly about their experiences at the Pride Parade, which celebrates the LGBTQ community. As such, Drake was more willing to discuss these topics, and moreover, seemed to have an accepting viewpoint towards these individuals. Research by Walsh (2012) demonstrates the substantial influence that family beliefs hold, as their findings suggest that individuals’ habits and beliefs are most impacted by their immediate family, thus either leading to exclusionary or inclusionary perspectives, based on which belief is instilled by the family unit.

It is important to note that for this subtheme, I am focusing particularly on personal experiences, and when considered in parallel with my participants’ experiences in teacher education, these narratives can either support or disrupt what is being learned in these experiences.

**Moving Past Biases and Norms**

The importance of understanding the dynamic of cultural norms and expectations in inclusion and exclusion of the LGBTQ cannot be understated, however, many participants revealed ways in which they would move past these notions and begin to build a more accepting classroom for these students. Although implicit, many participants’ envisioned, general approaches reflected feminist pedagogies described elsewhere in the literature. It is important to note that many participants were not able to state explicit inclusionary strategies; rather, they articulated beliefs and experiences that could lead to less bias and exclusion in their classrooms. For example, the idea of implementing reflective practice to better understand one’s beliefs and
norms is discussed by Kate. In this example, Kate states how pre-service teachers should take it upon themselves to reflect on their past experiences, and look within to how these experiences impact how they would react to certain situations that come up within the classroom:

We can all sit at Teachers College and say well, ‘I don't have any biases and I'm not bringing anything with me into the classroom’, but I think we just really need to take that time to reflect on what our past has been... I think it's just having that self-reflection of: what are my biases and how have I approached these things in the past? (Int. 2)

Katie’s reference to reflective practice being an important tool to aid in identification and deconstruction of teachers’ biases and beliefs work hand in hand with research done by Kyles and Olfason. In their work, Kyles and Olfason (2008) provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to investigate their own personal beliefs and biases through reflective journaling and found that teachers who came from more diverse backgrounds were more likely to be accepting of diverse populations, versus those teachers who came from ‘monocultural’ schooling and life experiences. These findings establish the importance for reflective practice, as teachers from less diverse backgrounds can begin to identify their biases and look to develop strategies to best counter them.

In the same interview, Katie goes on to mention how teachers should think ‘outside of the box’ in terms challenging cultural norms in schools, and think of why students are being asked to change who they are just to fit pre-defined stereotypes:

It's just thinking of ways to think outside the box in terms of we don't need to ask people to change who they are, and what they believe in and their cultural norms for the purposes of education (Int. 2)
Throughout my own schooling experiences, I felt typecast by my teachers and wished that they would have looked past the persona I decided to display at particular points in time. For example, because I played high level sports and participated in H&PE throughout my schooling, I was thought of by many peers and teachers as a jock that had little intellectual capability. Moreover, this persona also carried an assumption that I must be straight. Both of these classifications are false, but due to what my teachers believed or assumed, I felt that I needed to meet these expectations to be viewed as successful in their eyes. My experiences reaffirm Katie’s belief that teachers have to take it upon themselves to move past stereotypical norms, and let students be who they want to be, rather than what society deems them to be.

When questioned about what society can do better to include the LGBTQ community, Katie notes how biases and categories play a fundamental role in their marginalization, and that society needs to move past these normalized beliefs by acknowledging the existence of varying categorizations of people (including the LGBTQ):

*There’re so many different factors, but I think just avoiding the bias that people in society might have [about the LGBTQ] and also talking about that bias with students and also like representation, so representing, the students that might fall under these categories* (Int. 2)

The impacts of deeply embedded stereotypes facing the LGBTQ community has been discussed extensively throughout this chapter, though this is one of the first times that a participant mentioned ways in which normalized thought can be deconstructed. As Katie states, positive representation of the LGBTQ is key to questioning biases, as well as moving forward to more equitable classrooms. Further, Katie also mentioned how teachers who identify as LGBTQ could aid in students questioning their biases and actions, as these teachers may be more likely to
discuss issues relating to gender and sexuality, or at least minimize the behaviours that marginalize students who fall outside the norm(s) (Neary, Gray & O’ Sullivan, 2016).

Working with colleagues who have different viewpoints can often be frustrating. This dynamic can be intensified when working with children, as one’s beliefs and values should arguably not affect what is taught within the classroom. However, perpetuation of beliefs is bound to occur, therefore leaving teachers in a challenging position. When questioned about working with individuals who have less accepting viewpoints of the LGBTQ, Christian expresses how he acknowledges everyone having their opinion, but excluding people based on their sexuality is not an option:

You express that everyone's entitled to their own opinion, but you don't have a right to make someone feel terrible or bad or discriminate against someone based on what your views are. You can have your opinion of someone, but you don't get to make someone feel unwelcomed or picked on or anything like that because of your view (Int. 3)

Christian’s position to stand for the rights of marginalized individual’s is refreshing, especially when considering that individuals who identify as a part of a marginalized group are less likely to voice their displeasure for a fear of judgement, ridicule and possibility of losing their job (King, 2004; Neary, 2014), while those who do not identify either fear ramifications themselves, or feel that nothing within the system needs to be changed (Block, 2014; Carless, 2012). Christian’s beliefs also implicitly reflect a recognition of respecting sexuality as a human right, and capture the main features of feminist thinking. It is vital that new teachers recognize the ‘unseen’ environments that some of their co-workers reside, much like what Christian has done. As such, deconstructing these experiences aid not only in creating a positive work environment, but also shows students that their teachers are willing to ‘look past’ the obvious.
Lack of Formal Education on LGBTQ Inclusive Practices

This theme represents my participants’ experiences in their formal university classes, specifically how these courses seemingly lacked teachings on involving and learning about LGBTQ students. This theme is divided into three (3) sub-themes: (1) Impact of instructor comfort & expertise, (2) No extensive course material on the LGBTQ and finally, (3) “I don’t think that I’m prepared.” As such, I will analyze the effect that instructor comfort and expertise play on what is taught within university classrooms, interpret the lack on in-depth material and strategies found within these classes and deconstruct my participants’ feelings of not feeling prepared to deal with issues relating to LGBTQ exclusion.

Impact of Instructor Comfort & Expertise

A premise that has been found throughout this chapter is the effect of teacher comfort, as well as expertise, however for analysis of this theme the context is shifting to university instructors rather than elementary and secondary teachers. Though these instructors are highly educated, this schooling is typically within a certain subject, therefore leading to a focus in this area, rather than more holistic avenues. This dynamic is examined by one of Cole’s course experiences, where he notes how inclusion was a focus in some of his H&PE classes in university, but in the realm of disability studies, not LGBTQ inclusion:

I’ve learned a lot about inclusion for physical education [contexts]... including individuals with disabilities, but aside from that not really any inclusion like strategies or anything... but not anything related to LGBTQ (Int. 2)

Although a focus on inclusion in disability studies is important for pre-service teachers to learn, but the fact that LGBTQ-inclusive strategies are still lacking from professors is worrisome, as what these professors teach could be thought to be at the ‘cutting edge’ of education. Further,
there has been a growing amount of research produced about the LGBTQ community, therefore there are professors (and researchers) who are passionate about these issues. However, this disjoint between research and practice leaves practicing teachers with a significant gap in knowledge in knowing and applying LGBTQ inclusive strategies.

Cole goes on to voice how what is taught in university courses is subjective to the professor’s interest and arguably comfort, particularly if formal and informal discussions regarding certain subjects are found within the course:

*I think if we were like explicitly taught something... it seems like a lot of the time... it depends on the Prof’s focus, for if general discussion or what not happens* (Int. 2)

Though similar themes pertaining to teacher interest and comfort are discussed earlier in this chapter, university professors are not guided by formal curriculum documents to set learning expectations. Rather, professors have a high degree of autonomy in creating their courses, and further, what and how information is communicated within the course. As Cole notes, “it depends on the prof, for if general discussion…happens,” which establishes the power professors hold in what can be discussed in class, and moreover, what cannot be discussed. If a professor decides to take a particular focus, akin to Cole’s passage above, there is little that can be done, thus making these professors’ decisions ever more impactful on what my participants learn in their university experiences.

Instructor comfort is another important notion that Katie brought to light throughout the interview process. Specifically, she claims that LGBTQ students are underrepresented in teachers’ college classes because of a lack of instructor comfort surrounding this subject. This is centred on Katie’s observations that some course instructors became flustered and uncomfortable when discussing LGBTQ bullying and concerns in the classroom:
I think [the LGBTQ community] is underrepresented in our teacher’s college experience and I have actually had a couple of teachers who I think get a little bit flustered, a couple instructors and Teachers College I should say, they get a little bit flustered when talking about how to address LGBTQ concerns (Int. 2)

In my teacher’s college experience, I remember discussions about the LGBTQ occurring only in my ‘Diversity Issues in Education’ class, with dialogue happening once or twice throughout the entire semester. Every other class, including my H&PE ‘teachable’ course, had no discussions about the LGBTQ community or LGBTQ inclusive strategies. As I reflect further, I recognize that my instructors may have had dissonance towards this subject matter, hence the lack of formal teachings integrated into the course(s). Though I do not believe this this discomfort comes from a place of ill will, instructors in teacher education courses need to unpack their own beliefs and biases to best inform practicing teachers of the strategies they need to be successful in today’s teaching realm.

No Extensive Course Material on the LGBTQ

One of the most troublesome trends faced by my participants in their formal university years is the lack of course material focusing on the LGBTQ community. In delving deeper into this phenomenon, I interpret this data through an in-depth syllabi analysis (as discussed in Chapter Three) of courses at Briarwood University, while utilizing the findings of this analysis to provide quantitative logic to my participant’s narratives and my own interpretation. The results of this analysis were alarming, as the percentage of syllabi not possessing at least one keyword of LGBTQ, homophobia, discrimination and sexuality was at 80% (16/20). Furthermore, when looking at kinesiology and H&PE courses specifically, only 18.2% (2/11) of these courses had one or more keywords in their syllabi. When looking at general education courses, no (0/4)
syllabi possessed a keyword while teacher education syllabi demonstrated the highest percentage, with 33% (2/6) of syllabi possessing at least one keyword. These findings coincide with the work of Douglas and Halas (2013), who found that through an analysis of Canadian Council of Physical Education and Kinesiology Administrators (CCUPEKA) curricula, gender and sexuality issues were addressed the lowest in these documents.

My participants’ experiences lend support to my syllabi analysis, as well as academic literature as the majority noted little to no course material specific to LGBTQ rights, concerns or inclusive strategies. For example, when asked if he could remember a lecture or reading relating to the LGBTQ throughout his university courses thus far, Cole states how these portions were very limited, and should perhaps be implemented more often:

*I remember it was in second year ... There was either a lecture, but it might have only been half lecture on it.... but [LGBTQ] was never focused on lecture but maybe there should be lectures on it every semester* (Int. 2)

Considering only 18.2% of kinesiology and H&PE syllabi contain information relating to the LGBTQ community, which are the majority of courses taken by Cole, his statement is not unfounded. Moreover, Cole’s statement demonstrates a continued lack of focus of university H&PE courses on LGBTQ issues, as a ‘half of a lecture’ cannot cover the information necessary aid students in better understanding this community. This said, Cole acknowledges that there should be more of a focus on LGBTQ content, which is representative of new teachers wanting to learn inclusive strategies, but not being provided these opportunities through their formal education.

Katie reiterates this trend, as she cannot remember an entire lecture focused on the LGBTQ community, and moreover, knows that her course textbooks contain information on this
community, but the instructor decided to focus on other content. She also notes how she would have liked to have a lecture based on the LGBTQ:

*I feel like we didn't have an entire lecture focused in on the LGBTQ community, which I really wish we did... How are you going to deal with students who might be a minority in your classroom... it was never like a sole class that we spent time actually debunking a reading on it and I do know that our textbooks do have chapters...but we haven't really had the time to go over that, which is too bad* (Int. 2)

Katie brings up a key question that university H&PE course instructors should consider when she asks: ‘how are you going to deal with students who might be a minority in the classroom?’ It becomes clear that with only 20% of syllabi containing just keywords relating to the LGBTQ; which does not guarantee that this content is going to be taught, pre-service teachers are not receiving the information they need to answer this question. Again, it seems Katie wants to learn more about the LGBTQ community but is let down by her university and teacher preparation.

Finally, Christian summarizes how, throughout his university career, he has not taken any equity or diversity-based classes, which contains content he wants to learn, and hopes will be found in his teacher preparation: *I don't really think we've taken any equity or diversity courses... we should actually... for sure. I'm hoping we do that in Teachers College* (Int. 2)

It is surprising to find that someone enrolled in a concurrent education program has not taken a diversity or equity-based course prior to their fifth year; however, my syllabi analysis indicates that keywords alluding to diversity and equity are minimal, thus suggesting that Christian’s claims about lack of education on these matters is justified. Furthermore, though Christian does want to learn more about diversity and equity, the syllabi analysis found that there will only be
one, half-year teacher education course that will focus on diversity and equity in schooling. I would argue that this course is not enough to cover the breadth and depth that comes with equity issues in education, therefore doing a disservice to Christian’s preparation to becoming a teacher.

“I don’t think that I’m prepared…”

Concluding with this theme has been by design, as I feel it encompasses my participants’ feeling towards working with LGTBQ youth in schools. For one, Drake asserts that his university experiences have not provided him with the answers necessary to help LGTBQ students, and more specific content catered to the LGTBQ is required:

*I don’t think [Briarwood University] has done a good enough job providing holistic answers [to LGTBQ issues] … more background is needed* (Int. 2)

Drake’s candid response expresses his frustration with a perceived lack of practical knowledge provided by Briarwood University’s H&PE program. Though he has not completed teacher preparation courses, Drake has already noted a lack of quality content associated with LGTBQ rights and inclusion in schools, leaving teachers like himself unprepared to deal with scenarios that may arise within their careers. In response to this lack of formal education, Drake has taken it upon himself to learn how to include the LGTBQ community through doing, specifically on-campus jobs, as well as extra-curricular involvement: *As a university student, learning how to include [the LGTBQ] community has mostly come from actually being involved in teaching youth and summer camps* (Int. 2). It is refreshing to hear a student take it upon themselves to learn about inclusionary strategies, however, university programs need to do a far better job in preparing their students to work with a wide range of individuals. This is echoed by Hiesh (2016), whose research suggests that resources, information and professional development regarding the LGTBQ are lacking, but are vitally important. A shift towards providing more
information, resources and professional development regarding the LGBTQ needs to occur for these teachers, as well as for the students that these teachers will engage with.

When asked how he would respond to homophobic bullying in his classroom, Christian started hesitantly, stating that ‘he didn’t know’; however, after some probing, he states how safety of all students is of utmost importance, while recognizing that though you may not ‘agree’ with how a student represents themselves, you are still obliged to intervene and help:

*The safety and well-being of your students is number one goal. So being able to make sure the class is comfortable and knowing how to... you know, handle situations if someone is being bullied, from LGBTQ or any other kind of minority group, you need to know how to properly handle that and realize that you know, whatever you may think [about that student] it doesn't matter, their safety is important* (Int. 3)

Christian recognizes the importance of teachers leaving perceptions of their students ‘at the door,’ as students physical, cognitive and social safety are of much more importance then their own perceptions and biases. Moreover, creating a comfortable environment for all students is an idea that has not been addressed much by other pre-service teachers, though Christian’s recognition of this approach demonstrates an understanding of what pedagogical foundations are necessary to be inclusive of marginalized students. Also, Christian’s remark of ‘knowing how to properly handle bullying’ of minority students is noteworthy, because though this participant recognizes the importance of proper intervention, this chapter’s narratives described teachers as unprepared to do so.

Katie also states that she has not been prepared by her formal university classes, while reflecting on how some of her past and present teachers are hesitant to deal with sensitive subject
matter in their classes. Furthermore, she ponders how she can ‘unpack’ issues facing marginalized groups in classrooms that may not truly grasp the depth of the issues:

*I don't think I’m prepared…but just seeing how many teachers walk on eggshells about certain subjects, I think that this is where I wonder... how do I unpack this in a classroom of like, you know, grade four or five students in maybe under a health topic or even just unpacking it in everyday situations* (Int. 3)

Interestingly, Katie believes that her own teachers have ‘walked on eggshells’ when talking about certain sensitive subjects, though this quotation suggests her own apprehension(s) due to a lack of professional development. For instance, Katie asks ‘how do I unpack [these issues] in a classroom… of grade four or five students?…,’ which first establishes a lack of professional knowledge, while subliminally showcasing an apprehension to gain this knowledge. I do want to clarify that Katie has taken it upon herself to learn strategies related to LGBTQ inclusive pedagogy (by, for example, researching how to properly use correct pronouns when working/communicating with transgender individuals), although this knowledge has not been disseminated through formal education.

When asked how LGBTQ education could be improved in university contexts, Katie states having instructors who identify as a part of the LGBTQ would be a positive scenario, as they likely have first-hand knowledge of marginalization issues through their personal experience. As such, having an instructor who can clearly articulate ways to counteract these problems could aid in pre-service teachers feeling more comfortable to discuss these issues in their own pedagogy:

*If we have a teacher or an instructor at Briarwood who identifies with [the LGBTQ] community, that would be like a two in one right, they’re teaching us the course content,*
but they're also teaching it through a lens of social justice as they've experienced it too so... I think taking a look at having those factors [effecting the LGBTQ] introduced a little bit more into the program, might help us become more comfortable as teachers out there (Int. 2)

Research by Nielsen and Alderson (2014) suggest that there has been a growing number of university professors openly classifying as lesbian or gay, as this decision is viewed as being authentic to themselves, as well as their praxis. Furthermore, this technique can be used as a means of demonstrating genuineness and praxis toward social justice, but some professors are still hesitant to ‘come out’, as they feel negative repercussions such as appearing biased or pushing the LGBTQ agenda can lead to a divide between themselves and the class they teach (Nielsen & Alderson, 2014).

Likewise, Christian believes one of the best ways to bring awareness to LGBTQ issues to have individuals who identify as a part of this community to come into classes and speak to their personal experience(s):

*Maybe bring in a guest speaker from the community, maybe bring someone in who is willing to share their story... if they've ever been bullied in high school or you know, considered suicide* (Int. 3)

I believe that Christian’s strategy is well-thought out, as in my own teacher preparation, a guest speaker who identified as a part of the LGBTQ community spoke to my class about the challenges faced by LGBTQ students, teachers and the community at large. It was refreshing to hear from a speaker with whom I could truly relate to and understand many of the issues I have faced thus far in my career. This said, portions of the presentation reminded me of the uphill
battle I face as a gay H&PE teacher, but nonetheless, this struggle drives me to ensure that the next generation of students and teachers don’t have to face the same limitations I do today.

**Influence of Formal Education Review**

The effects of social stereotypes, norms and classifications have played a role in forming my participants’ beliefs regarding the LGBTQ community, however they have taken steps to deconstruct their beliefs through critical reflection. Furthermore, the participants’ have mentioned how professors’ biases and expertise have seeped into the classroom, which effect the content they received from their formal education thus far. Though all participants voiced displeasure in not receiving an education that prepared them to work with LGBTQ youth from their university experience(s), all possess progressive viewpoints in bettering LGBTQ student experiences. The next chapter will discuss the impact of the findings, while identifying next steps for avenues of research.
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussions and Implications

In this chapter, I examine the results of this project through the lens of my research questions. Following this, I state my study’s significance while identifying several implications for school H&PE, teacher education, teacher’s professional development (PD), H&PE classes and curriculum and experiences of LGBTQ students. To conclude, I explore future directions for this line of research, and provide a final reflection on the research process.

Addressing the Research Questions

The following research questions have underpinned the research process and provided me with the necessary foundation to analyze my participants’ reflections of their past, present and future experiences in H&PE in relation to working with LGBTQ students. I used research on teacher beliefs and feminist theory to help guide my analysis. As such, I will address each of the research questions through relation to my data.

Research Question #1

What are pre-service H&PE teachers’ beliefs and experiences about working with LGBTQ students in schools?

My findings presented in Chapter Four suggest that my participants were generally accepting of LGBTQ students in their classrooms, with some demonstrating initiative to learn more and advocate for members of this population. For instance, Katie argued that LGBTQ students deserve respect and have the right to be included in all aspects of their education. Similarly, Christian suggested that LGBTQ rights and concerns should be discussed in classrooms (both H&PE and other subject areas), regardless of the political or religious background of people in those classes – both teachers and students. Another example of inclusiveness comes from Katie, who took it upon herself to learn more about the LGBTQ community to better understand what
her friend’s siblings were going through during their transitions. Taken together, the majority of my participants demonstrated accepting beliefs regarding teaching LGBTQ students in school. While these views indicate a willingness by many participants to include and advocate for the rights of LGBTQ students in all classes, some felt that the classifications of/for members of the LGBTQ community took things too far. For example, in saying “I think [the LGBTQ community] is going a little overboard with all the different sexualities and stuff,” Cole represented a belief system that takes exception to what might be interpreted as political correctness. However, for members of the LGBTQ community whose identities do not neatly ‘fit’ inside traditional classifications (such as two-spirited, questioning and so on), such a belief can be viewed as ignorant and unaccepting the growing acceptance of varying genders and sexualities. For example, a participant of this research expressed his disapproval with the number of labels attached to diverse sexualities that fall with the classifications of the LGBTQ community. It should be noted that Cole articulated accepting viewpoints when discussing shifting his pedagogy to be more accepting of various genders and sexuality, but in this instance, it could be argued that he demonstrated a lack of understanding of the complexities of issues faced by members of the LGBTQ community.

An important finding is that many participants did not articulate experiences in which they worked with LGBTQ students in their past or present schooling experiences. Instead, many participants referred to experiences with LGBTQ students outside of school contexts rather than within school settings. This highlights the importance of acknowledging informal learning experiences and their influence on pre-service teachers’ thoughts about teaching and learning to teach (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Feminist theory also helps to show that these pre-service
teachers did not engage in many experiences to disrupt notions of hegemonic masculinity in schools.

The findings of this research align with research by Niemi and Hahl (2018), who found that pre-service teachers articulated the importance of cultural diversity, but would either reproduce or disrupt understandings of culture based mostly on a combination of personal and school experiences. My research demonstrates similar findings, but focuses on the H&PE context. For instance, my participants voiced mostly accepting beliefs regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ students in the H&PE classroom, but occasionally reproduced stereotypes pertaining to members of the LGBTQ community based on their past and present experiences.

These findings also support the work conducted by Kitchen and Bellini (2012), who found that many pre-service teachers were comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues (to a point). These findings are quite similar to my own, as all of my participants were comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues and acknowledged a commitment to inclusion in some capacity. It should be noted that by self-selecting to participate in this research, this is perhaps not a surprise. Moreover, similar to several participants in the study by Kitchen and Bellini (2012) some of my participants acknowledged deeper personal connections to the LGBTQ community (through themselves, friends and/or peers) than perhaps a larger sample of pre-service teachers, thus providing a rationale to why they decide to include marginalized students.

**Research Question #2**

*What commitments do these pre-service H&PE teachers have toward inclusive practices?*

Every participant I interviewed during the data collection process demonstrated a commitment to enacting inclusive practices within their classrooms. For example, almost all participants articulated the use of reflective practice to better understand their own beliefs regarding
inclusion, as well as to identify any prejudices they may hold regarding the LGBTQ community. My findings support those of Farrell and Ives (2015), demonstrating that participants were aware of the ways that critical reflection could be helpful in understanding how beliefs influence classroom practice, but moreover, how critical reflection can be a tool in deconstructing prejudices that are held regarding marginalized groups.

Despite acknowledging the value of reflective practice learned through the pre-service teacher education program, most participants were openly critical about the lack of education they received from their pre-service teacher education regarding LGBTQ students, both in general terms and in specific reference to H&PE. While some participants referred to awareness of inclusive practices around FNMI students, they felt they needed more preparation to work with students from other minority backgrounds. I am not arguing against the teaching of FNMI-based content, but recognize that diversity as a concept is diverse, in on itself, and pre-service teacher education should include learning how to teach all students, with an awareness of issues surrounding gender, social class, sexuality, race/ethnicity, ability, and so on.

Research Question #3

What strategies can these pre-service H&PE teachers articulate about working with LGBTQ students? How have they developed these strategies?

My final research question focused on the application of participants’ expressed beliefs, as it is important for teachers to have both knowledge of content and knowledge of pedagogy (Shulman, 1986). I observed that many (if not all) of my participants struggled to articulate specific inclusion-based strategies that could be implemented in their classrooms. This finding reveals an interesting dynamic, as the participants are committed to inclusive practices but lack the education on how to effectively implement these methods. This may not be unexpected when my
data demonstrates that this group of pre-service teachers feel unprepared to work with LGBTQ youth due to what they perceived to be a lack formal of education. This is a point reinforced by the results of my syllabus analysis, where I found that the vast majority of formal university classes at Briarwood University have little to no specific subject matter or teaching and learning outcomes pertaining to LGBTQ rights and inclusion.

Work by Clark (2010) demonstrates similar findings to my own. In her research in the United States, participants (who were general subject teachers) suggested that they lack the necessary resources and strategies for becoming allies for LGBTQ students despite a willingness to do so (Clark, 2010). Furthermore, Clark (2010) asserts that this gap in knowledge is shared with countries outside the US, reaffirming suspicions that I had about my own research findings. Ayvazo and Sutherland’s (2009) research also demonstrates that pre-service teachers have been lacking preparation to deal with homophobia, specifically within H&PE contexts. It is highly troublesome to realize that this lack of preparation has been occurring for such a long time, when considering the years that these research projects were released (that is, more than 10 years ago). In my opinion, with the results of my own findings, as well as past research, it brings into question the ways in which H&PE teacher teachers prioritize LGBTQ rights and inclusion in their own teacher education classrooms and practices.

McCaughtry, Dillon, Jones and Smigell (2005) point out that while many pre-service H&PE teachers typically demonstrate accepting views regarding the LGBTQ community, the result of a lack awareness or experience in working with the issues, may mean that they struggle to enact their beliefs in teaching practice. These results serve as a direct connection to my participants’ narratives, as many demonstrate accepting belief systems but lack the experience or repertoire of pedagogical skills and language to put these beliefs into practice.
**Past Meets the Future**

It is surprising to note that several of the results of this research align with those of studies conducted decades ago. For example, Britzman (1995) noted that most teachers are not opposed to working with queer-based issues, but lack quality instruction to better deconstruct their prejudices regarding this community. This finding demonstrates a direct connection to my own, as the pre-service teacher participants in my research in 2019 are still not receiving the skills necessary to better enact their beliefs. Britzman’s (1995) research also alludes to the dissonance that teachers face between their beliefs and teaching practice when discussing LGBTQ content, as this subject is still perceived as controversial, and difficult to teach despite gains made in the acceptance of LGBTQ people and issues in the broader community. Again, this echoes findings in my own research, as the majority of my participants demonstrated a ‘quiet dissonance’ when trying to describe strategies that could best include LGBTQ students in their classrooms.

**Summarizing the Results**

Following the discussion in the previous sections, the core findings can be summarized as follows:

- This group of pre-service H&PE teachers possess varying beliefs regarding working with LGBTQ students in school contexts, with the majority holding accepting beliefs towards the LGBTQ community, mostly due to ‘educative’ personal experiences outside formal schooling contexts.

- Many of my participants articulated a commitment to inclusionary practices within their classroom, with some attributing this to reflective practice.
All participants struggled to provide explicit examples of ways they would include LGBTQ students in their classrooms, although they do believe that LGBTQ inclusion is important.

**Significance of the Findings**

There are several ways this research is significant:

1. From conducting this research, I have generated evidence from the perspective(s) of pre-service H&PE teachers about their preparation to teach LGBTQ students. Before the commencement of this project, there was little evidence to indicate how pre-service teachers in H&PE in Ontario felt about their preparation in working with members of the LGBTQ population. My findings suggest that this group of pre-service teachers from Briarwood University feel mostly under-prepared to work with the members of the LGBTQ population. Previous to this research, there had been no published research explicitly focusing on H&PE teachers’ beliefs and preparation in working with LGBTQ students within an Ontario or Canadian context (as of the writing of this thesis). Therefore, this study attends to a significant gap in the literature.

2. My findings also suggest that these pre-service teachers hold generally positive beliefs about working with LGBTQ students, which is based primarily on their personal experiences from outside formal learning contexts. Given the powerful influence of teacher beliefs on their present and future teaching practices (Pajares, 1992; Philpot & Smith, 2011), this is a promising finding. However, this also means that participants were mostly drawing from experiences outside of school or university to inform how they think about teaching LGBTQ students in schools. As such, participants may be drawing
from experiences based on assumptions and not informed by theoretical or practical understanding of pedagogy and teaching practice.

(3) This research provides insight into what teacher education programs can do to improve practical and theoretical opportunities for their teachers to better understand working with LGBTQ youth. Specifically, the results suggest a need for pre-service teachers to be given more meaningful and practical experiences to best work with LGBTQ students, informed by strong theoretical and empirical research. This research builds upon findings by Kitchen and Bellini (2012) as well as Clark (2010), who found that general pre-service teachers are lacking in their preparation to integrate LGBTQ students into their classrooms, but extends the research by focusing specifically on H&PE in schools.

(4) Considering the political landscape of Ontario in 2019, this research is especially timely. For instance, a recent challenge to the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms brought by the ETFO against the removal of 2015 H&PE curriculum was dismissed in an Ontario court, allowing the continued repeal of a curriculum that previously permitted discussions regarding gender identity and same-sex relationships (Jones, 2019). ETFO personnel highlighted the fact that this dismissal by the courts will lead teachers to utilize their ‘professional judgement,’ rather than a prescribed curriculum to discuss issues relating to the LGBTQ community. Findings of this research add to the ongoing discussions around this issue, as many of the participants’ beliefs and preparation pertaining to the LGBTQ community were formed outside of formal schooling contexts. As such, these experiences form significant portions of teachers’ professional judgement but it may be argued that such judgment might be more informed by personal rather than professional knowledge. The charter challenge by the ETFO reinforces the need for teachers to have discussions
with children about sexuality, as a lack of prescribed curriculum expectations can lead to significant gaps in knowledge if these discussions do not occur. At the same time, without a formal curriculum document upon which to base their teaching decisions, this may lead to such issues being ignored or poorly handled when they are left solely within the hidden curriculum. Tenets of feminist theory suggest a disruption of hierarchies of gender and sexuality. However; when placing my research findings in the current political climate in which the research was conducted, it is clear that much progress made in disrupting hegemonic categorizations of gender and providing inclusive experiences for all people has been undone at the swift hand of government policy. There is therefore a need to continue to engage in liberal politics informed by feminist and critical theories to continue to challenge societal structures to enable a more inclusive and just educational system.

**Implications of the Research**

The results of this study lead to a number of implications of this research for several stakeholder groups and processes around teaching and teacher education. These implications are discussed in the following two sections and accompanying sub-sections. The first section provides a discussion of the implications of this research for pre-service H&PE teacher education programs. The second section will focus on implications for the ongoing professional development of H&PE teachers. These implications centre around H&PE teachers’ pre-service education, PD, and impact on H&PE classes and curriculum. Finally, suggestions to how these findings influence the lives of LGBTQ students will be discussed.

‘Necessary’ Change to School Health & Physical Education
Based on the findings of this research, I believe there are two primary changes that need to occur in H&PE to better include LGBTQ students. First, the hypermasculine, heteronormative and highly gendered climate in H&PE should be changed. Second, well-developed discussions focusing on the LGBTQ community should to be incorporated in all aspects of school, not just in the formal health portion of the H&PE curriculum. Each of these ‘necessary’ changes is reviewed in the following sections.

**Changing H&PE Culture**

The culture of H&PE has been rooted in beliefs that preserve the notions of hypermasculinity, heteronormativity and stereotypical gender roles (Hickey, 2005; Hill, 2015; Linghede & Larsson, 2017; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Furthermore, most participants did not report having school experiences where their own teachers enacted supportive practices regarding H&PE students and instead, mostly reinforced the hegemonic practices that have pervaded H&PE for decades. While progress has been made to include individuals from varying backgrounds, LGBTQ students continue to feel marginalized due to the underlying beliefs found within the culture of traditional H&PE (Landi, 2018; Linghede & Larsson, 2017). If H&PE teachers are truly dedicated to inclusion for all, it is imperative for these teachers to question the status quo found within their classrooms and curricula, while moving past the passive teaching practices when it comes to addressing and confronting issues of sexuality described by many of my participants. For instance, I hope that H&PE teachers will intervene when overhearing homophobic remarks like ‘that’s so gay’ or ‘stop being such a fag,’ rather than simply brushing the comment aside or feeling hesitant to say something. Also, unlike other school teachers, H&PE teachers teach within a realm where physical proficiency, or a lack thereof, is on display to everyone (Hill, 2015). Rather than promoting a climate where others are demeaned for being
unsuccessful, H&PE teachers should create a climate where mistakes are welcome, and personal growth is the aim, not ‘winning at all costs.’ This latter approach was referred to by several of my participants, who noted excessive competition and how hypermasculine actions were left unacknowledged. I acknowledge that skills I learned from my H&PE teacher education classes were advantageous in learning ways to disrupt these practices, however, there remains inconsistency in how inclusive practices are enacted by H&PE teachers.

Changes to the H&PE landscape could also come in the form of changes to the H&PE curriculum, as well as to teachers’ pedagogy. At the moment, many H&PE programs seem to privilege team-based ‘power’ sports such as hockey and rugby, where traditional characteristics of masculinity dominate and are valued (Finnessy, 2016; Nash & Browne, 2015). It is not to say that these aspects of H&PE should be done away with, rather that serious thought needs to go into how these activities are set up, offered and prioritized. For instance, H&PE teachers could integrate individual pursuits such as yoga into their programs, providing a much better balance to what teachers typically facilitate in their units. It is important to note that many adults engage in these activities rather than team sports beyond school (Popiolek, Kusz, Alzubedi & Konopelko, 2018). If the subject of H&PE is truly committed to building the foundation for participation in lifelong physical activity, then the curriculum should better reflect this commitment to varying forms of physical activity. Furthermore, H&PE teachers would do well to incorporate teaching strategies such as the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) or Sport Education into their classes, which provide students with deep understanding of a range of skills across learning domains, such as physical, cognitive, and social. Delving further into these strategies, the TPSR model is founded upon the idea of teaching social and personal responsibility within H&PE, thus looking to promote a sense of acceptance for every student in the classroom, while
allowing students to deconstruct the prejudices they may have about communities like the LGBTQ (Hellison, 2018). The Sport Education model incorporates additional layers of holistic personal development in H&PE, where participants engage in and experience varying tasks and roles that highlight the importance of teamwork and sportspersonship (Kirk, 2004). These pedagogical models are in contrast to the traditional approaches that often characterize H&PE, where students typically ‘play’ a game for all period with little debriefing and cognitive thinking, with traditional masculine attitudes remaining the centre of professional practice (Hellison, 2018; Kirk & Vertinsky, 2016). Also, students in H&PE have likely lacked formal discussions about be social elements that pervade the activity they are participating in, as per my participants’ responses in Chapter Four, which can broaden their overall perspective about not only H&PE, but the social world that the student resides.

Opening the Door to Difficult Discussion(s)

One of the most powerful tools teachers possess is the ability to have educated conversations with their students about a variety of subjects, with the ‘Schottishe’ example described in Chapter Two providing strong logic of where these discussions can lead. However, there seems to be an imbedded hidden curricular taboo that comes with discussions about gender or sexuality (Neary, 2013). For one, the majority of my participants either noted their teachers’ discomfort with LGBTQ subject matter, or dissonance within themselves. Research by Schneider and Dimito (2008) and Kitchen and Bellini (2012) suggest that teachers often avoid these topics because they are ill informed on how these discussions should take place or the teachers themselves are apart of the LGBTQ community and wish to remain ‘closeted’. My results reinforce the fact that H&PE teachers are not well prepared to work with LGBTQ youth, however, it is important to note that it is still the teacher’s responsibility to teach in ways that
help students meet the stated curriculum outcomes, regardless of preparation (or lack thereof). If H&PE teachers feel that they cannot teach children to achieve objectives related to discussions of gender and sexuality, they need to engage in their own professional development or find someone who can teach about these issues. As a number of my participants pointed out, bringing in an educated guest speaker from the LGBTQ community may have a tremendous impact on the education students receive regarding this community. Moreover, having this speaker provides the teacher the capability to learn the material from this guest speaker, and feel more comfortable in explaining the content themselves. I acknowledge that forfeiting power in the classroom is not easy, but these discussions are imperative for the well-being of all students.

Furthermore, discussions surrounding gender and sexuality should not be confined to merely health education contexts. Heteronormativity and homophobia run rampant through a variety of school contexts (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016; Hickey, 2008; Landi, 2018, Neary, 2013), therefore it is every teacher’s responsibility, not just that of H&PE teachers, to intervene and educate when ostracizing occurs. If a climate of tolerance and understanding is implemented within a whole school, it will become far easier for these discussions to occur. As such, I believe teacher allies for LGBTQ students is central to ensuring a school climate that is aligned with the continued push for inclusion, and the challenging of homophobia and oppression facing this community (Potvin, 2016).

What’s Next for H&PE Teachers and LGBTQ Students?

LGBTQ students are some of the most at-risk students for homophobic bullying in schools (Farrelly et al., 2017; Landi, 2018), and though my results show that teachers are typically sympathetic to these situations, they also show that new teachers feel they lack the skills to intervene and provide appropriate support. As a result, LGBTQ students may continue to
experience homophobic bullying, ostracizing and increased amounts of suicidal thoughts and or attempts (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016). In addition to the changes discussed, the results of this research allude to implications facing the development of H&PE teachers, as well as the experiences LGBTQ students face within schooling contexts. These implications are discussed further in the following sections.

**Teacher Education**

From the results of this research, it is clear that pre-service teacher education programs, as well as providers of ongoing teacher education (in the form of continuing professional development) need to better equip teachers to work with LGBTQ students. This claim is justified by many participants not feeling prepared to work with LGBTQ as a result of their pre-service teacher education. For one, instructors of pre-service teacher education courses need to develop purposeful and intentional experiences that focus on developing pre-service teachers’ awareness of LGBTQ issues (Boyland et al., 2017; Devis-Devis et al., 2018; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). These lessons can include information on how marginalization of members of this community continues to occur within schools and more widely in society, but crucially, there is a need to provide pre-service teachers with a suite of strategies that can be employed to counteract any marginalization of LGBTQ students in schools. The widest gap of knowledge that my participants demonstrated was a lack of practical answers in dealing with homophobic bullying; therefore, practical elements must be a focal point of LGBTQ-based lessons. My syllabus analysis also showed that the vast majority of H&PE teacher education courses at Briarwood University lacked material and experiences focusing explicitly on the LGBTQ community. As such, pre-service teacher education programs need to do better in incorporating content on LGBTQ students.
I believe following the standard set out by the FNMI-based education, which is spurred on by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, would be a logical starting point as issues about FNMI people have been emphasised in pre-service teacher education discussions. For example, there have been a number of in-class, as well as in-service training sessions provided in Faculties of Education which focus specifically on FNMI concerns, such as the implications of losing Indigenous language due to residential schools. Furthermore, inclusive strategies pertaining to LGBTQ students should be logically integrated into existing coursework, rather than being ‘added on’ in tokenistic fashion. For example, teachers should incorporate LGBTQ person(s) or issues into their curriculum, as well as provide access to information and resources pertaining to the LGBTQ community in the school library (Lilienthal, Matyo-Cepero, Messinger & Mims, 2018). Another strategy could have students in certain classes research social and political issues faced by the LGBTQ, and have them review ways that both sides could better solve the issue at hand. Finally, a pre-service teacher could use the TPSR model to demonstrate how homophobic bullying/harassment might be dealt with in a H&PE context, with this model specifically emphasizing respect of self and others, tolerance for all and compassion. As such, I am hopeful that teacher education programs and teachers will begin to recognize the significance of including LGBTQ students within their curricula, as this is a growing population that deserves respect and inclusion.

*Professional Development (PD)*

Professional development is a fundamental aspect in continuing to extend and improve teacher’s pedagogy. Furthermore, I acknowledge that pre-service teacher education may never ‘fully’ prepare teachers for their work (Tsangaridou & O’Sullivan, 1997), so PD takes on a significant role to support teachers’ ongoing learning. One of the options available to teachers is
completing additional qualification (AQ) courses, which expand upon teacher’s knowledge within teachable subjects, or on personal interests. One of the AQ courses available in Ontario is entitled *Teaching LGBTQ Students*. The goal of the course is to provide teachers with the necessary background and tools to create safe and welcoming environments for their students (OCT, 2010). While the development of this AQ course offers much-needed resources for teachers, there needs to be a mandatory component for teachers’ professional development.

Taylor and Peter’s (2011) national survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia for EGALE Canada uncovered astonishing results—most notably that 75% of LGBTQ students reported that school staff did not intervene when they heard students making homophobic comments. The document prompted the authors to recommend that teacher education programs offer LGBTQ-inclusive components into their mandatory courses. Although this study was published in 2011, Ontario Faculties of Education and the OCT have been slow to react. Ontario teachers should receive adequate training in response to this study and to new curriculum changes. Sensitivity training on LGBTQ issues in education should also be a mandatory component for all teachers.

PD can also be employed during staff meetings and professional activity (PA) days. As such, this *should* provide ample opportunity for teachers to be educated on a wide variety of issues, including LGBTQ student inclusion. The question then becomes, why are the results by Taylor and Peter’s (2011) survey still present today? I believe that this trend can be attributed to teachers’ and administrators’ ongoing dissonance towards LGBTQ subject matter (Devis-Devis et al., 2018; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Schneider & Dimito, 2008). To this, I reiterate the fact that if an administrator can’t facilitate the information well enough, I suggest they find community partners who are more confident. I feel this decision can lead to clarification on why LGBTQ
issues are important to understand, and moreover, teach strategies to best counter the concerns that face these students.

Contemporary PD should be based in contexts of teachers’ work, be collaborative in nature and have ongoing involvements throughout teachers’ careers (Armour & Yelling, 2007). Instituting reflective practice techniques, such as reflexive journaling, or having monthly conferencing with department members regarding concerns or next steps will better equip teachers with the strategies to assist LGBTQ students in their classrooms (Tsangaridou & O’ Sullivan, 1994).

**H&PE Classes and Curriculum**

With the proposed changes to the 2015 H&PE curriculum coming into effect (as of the writing of this thesis), there are serious ramifications for LGBTQ students that need to be discussed. As a result of the changes to the curriculum document, instead of teachers describing misconceptions about sexuality in our culture, as well as explaining how these misconceptions may cause harm to people (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015), teachers have been given the option to engage in these discussions, which is further reinforced by the Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson, who believes these ‘talks’ should only be done on a case-by-case basis (Merali, 2018). Though I have faith that teachers will continue to integrate inclusive discussions into their pedagogy, the current government’s position implies these dialogues are not important enough to be broadcast to students, dehumanizing those who may not identify as a part of the norm. It should also be noted that there have been no content changes to the physical education portion of the curriculum, as well as other health units, such as substance use and abuse within the health education strands. As I continue to analyze the decision of the Ontario government to restructure the H&PE curriculum, I am convinced that this choice has not been made for the betterment of
education, but rather based on an ideological position to appease certain vocal minorities. This sentiment is echoed by one teacher in Ontario who explained:

When parents refused to send their kids to school on “Pink Day”—thinking it was promoting homosexuality, rather than anti-bullying—Thorncliffe teacher, Susan Mabey, got her first inkling that the controversy about the health curriculum wasn’t just about sex. It was also about homophobia. (Rushowy, 2015)

It is important for teachers like Susan Mabey, who are able to recognize potentially homophobic attitudes from stakeholders to be provided with appropriate advocacy tools to best support their students (and themselves), and also have the support of school administration. The consequences of revoking the newest H&PE curriculum has not been seen as of yet, however, as one of my participants stated: “I think that [changes to the H&PE curriculum] is a big step back and that just comes from a place of you know…ignorance” (Katie, Int. 2).

**LGBTQ Student Experiences**

As a direct result of the changes occurring within classroom contexts alike, LGBTQ students are, in my opinion, at the most risk they have been since the inception of the *Accepting Schools Act* in 2012, as well as the updated H&PE curriculum (Brard & Nicolaides, 2014). Unlike the previous provincial government who implemented an inclusion-based curriculum, this government does not appear to have the rights of minority students (such as LGBTQ and FNMI) as top of mind. On the contrary, with the revocation of the newest H&PE curriculum, the government is implicitly stating that certain religious and political beliefs are of greater importance than LGBTQ student inclusion. Consequently, LGBTQ students likely feel ostracized by the same government that is supposed to be supporting student achievement and inclusion. This point may be inferred by several trans students who have taken the provincial
government to court claiming that their human rights have been negated. There has been significant backlash against the removal from the H&PE curriculum from students and parents alike (Johnstone, 2018), however it remains to be seen how LGBTQ students will respond to the lack of inclusion-based content found within educational contexts. I believe that all pre-service teachers will need to rely more on personal research and experience to understand the LGBTQ community, rather than formal educational discussion, which can be troublesome considering the wide range of inaccurate information provided by online outlets. It then becomes the teacher’s job to educate students on what a reliable source is, while critiquing the stereotypes that may come with personal research. As a whole, I believe that teachers need to take certain risks to ensure the inclusion of students, particularly those who continued to be marginalized. However, this can be a challenging demand, particularly for newly qualified teachers (Florian & Linklater, 2010; Kirk, 2009).

Avenues of Future Research

The findings of this research suggest that pre-service H&PE teachers are not well equipped to work with LGBTQ students due to a lack of preparation from their formal university experiences. Furthermore, my participants’ experience(s) prior to university has influenced their beliefs and pedagogical ‘toolkit’ relating to this community.

I would first reiterate that the participants for this project came from varying educational backgrounds (due to the recruitment process), which provided diversity to the data, but sometimes lacked specific content relating to H&PE. As such, my first recommendation for future research is to look specifically at a broader and more contextually diverse sample of pre-service H&PE teachers’ narratives concerning preparation and experiences with LGBTQ students. For example, from teacher education programs in urban settings, in different localities
within and outside of Ontario, and indeed, outside of Canada. This specific focus regarding H&PE would allow for maximum insight into the subtleties that underpin the subject, while delving into what professional development has been provided to these teachers.

Similarly, longitudinal research into recently graduated H&PE teachers’ experiences with LGBTQ issues in schooling contexts can be another avenue taken by researchers. The ability to travel with new graduates from graduation to the field would provide further knowledge about the extent to which pre-service programs can and do make a difference to beginning teachers, as well as to highlight areas and strategies for program improvement. Additionally, this research can investigate what techniques need to be implemented into pre-service programs to better prepare teachers to work with LGBTQ rights and concerns.

The context of this study was based in primarily in Ontario, with data being interpreted from a relatively small sample size. This considered, another avenue that could be explored is increasing the number of participants involved in the study, while expanding the geography to include other provinces and territories. For example, researchers could investigate pre-service teachers’ beliefs and preparation towards working with LGBTQ in a variety of provinces and countries, thus shedding light on how different provinces possibly educate their pre-service teachers differently.

Another key area of research that comes from these findings is questioning LGBTQ students to articulate their experiences and perceptions of themselves in H&PE contexts (schooling, sports etc.). Student narratives provide powerful insight into what happens within the classroom, and while the majority of research suggests that LGBTQ students are undergoing hardships, the ‘best’ way to confirm this is to ask the students who are living the experiences.
Although I understand the ethical complications that would arise with research centred on LGBTQ students, I feel unprecedented findings could come as a result of this investigation.

Finally, research into developing relevant professional development (PD) for all teachers to work with LGBTQ students should take place, especially when reflecting on the findings of this project. Though pre-service education can have a significant impact on the development of pedagogy, one of the ways to continue teacher improvement through a teaching career is through PD. As such, research into developing PD that is relevant and striking to teachers would be imperative to ensure that LGBTQ student’s issues are not ‘swept under the rug,’ and teachers understand the serious implications that come with not actively engaging with these students.

**Reflection on the Research Process**

As I reflect on this research process, I realize how much this research has impacted my own beliefs and pedagogy. When I began my teacher education, I was afraid to be a ‘gay’ H&PE teacher, as I thought my students and colleagues would shun me for falling outside the prototypical H&PE stereotype. However, as I move through my first year as a certified teacher, I realize, despite some data suggesting things are as they have been for some time, that times have begun to change as I acknowledge that the next generation of teachers are committed to inclusive practices, which eases the anxiety I feel towards working with my teaching colleagues. I have also seen change in school climate, as I see the LGBTQ flag throughout the halls of schools I work at, thus promoting a sense of inclusion and acceptance for students (and teachers) who identify.

This said, there must be more done to educate teachers on how to be inclusive of LGBTQ students. In Chapter One, I cited the work of Bishop and Mccellan (2016), who state that LGBTQ students are far more likely to display low academic performance, as well as become
susceptible to major risk factors for mental health including depression, and an increase in suicidal thoughts and/or attempts. I believe that these findings demonstrate the dire need for change within the landscape of education. The fact that marginalization, homophobic bullying, and ostracizing are still salient experiences in these students’ lives stresses the need for rapid and sweeping changes in schools. After analyzing the narratives given by my participants, it becomes clear that a shift towards LGBTQ inclusion in H&PE is upon us. I hope that with the changes seen politically, socially and educationally, LGBTQ students will finally feel that they belong. I am buoyed by the participants’ favourable attitudes toward working with LGBTQ students and feel that that this generation of teachers could finally be the one to make the necessary changes to include these learners.

As I reflect on the final steps of this thesis, I am reminded of the story of Lawrence King, a gay youth who was shot twice, point blank, in the back of the head by one of his peers in school (Bishop & Mccellan, 2016; Cathcart, 2008). This story haunts me, but also serves as motivation to why I continue to work towards understanding what teachers can do to best include LGBTQ students. There is no excuse for this ever happening, particularly in a school environment in which everyone should be safe and included. Thankfully these stories are becoming less and less prevalent, however, it is not until these issues cease to exist, that my drive for inclusion will subside.

I know that this journey is not going to be easy and will be met with both successes and failures. Nevertheless, I feel that it is our duty as teachers, regardless of speciality, to ensure that LGBTQ students feel as included as any other student in our classrooms. I am encouraged that many of my participants expressed commitments to inclusion, even when they struggled to name
inclusion practices. Speaking from personal experience, having one person who is willing to be there and listen can make a world of a difference. I hope that we all can be that person.
References


APPENDIX A: Email Recruitment/Invitation Script

Hello Dr._____________________,

My name is Colin McCaughey and I’m contacting you to inquire if you would be willing to have me come to one of your early first semester EDBE 8P56/KINE 4P32 classes to recruit a total of 3-5 participants for my Masters research project entitled “Breaking down barriers: An analysis of pre-service physical education teachers’ assumptions and preparation for working with LGBT youth.”

I have attached the Informed Consent and Letter of Invitation to provide an overview of what I am looking for in regard to participant involvement in the research. I will also be inviting your students to fill out a survey (see attached) that has them rank their self-described perception of importance of LGBT student inclusion in Health & Physical Education settings, as well as to see if they are interested in participating in my research on this topic. This process should take approximately 10-15 minutes of class time. I also ask that you collect the completed surveys as I will not be in the room during survey completion.

For your information, this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [File: 17-423 FLETCHER]. Also, to contact the study’s principal investigator, Dr. Tim Fletcher, feel free to email tfletcher@brocku.ca or call 905-688-5550 ext. 6358.

Please let me know if this would be a possibility at your earliest convenience,

Regards,

Colin

Colin McCaughey, BPhEd, BEd, OCT
Teaching Assistant
Brock University | Department of Kinesiology
Niagara Region | 1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way | St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1
brocku.ca | E cm1ljq@brocku.ca

Rethink printing this email. It's green on the screen.
## APPENDIX B: Survey for Participant Recruitment

1. In your opinion, how important is it to be inclusive of LGBT students in Physical Education? Select (by placing an X on the appropriate place on the spectrum below) where you believe you best fit in answering the above question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. In your opinion, how prepared do you feel in implementing an inclusive classroom/environment for LGBT students in Health & Physical Education? Select (by placing an X on the appropriate place on the spectrum below) where you believe you best fit in answering the above question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unprepared</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Very Prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Would you be willing to discuss this phenomenon further in interviews as part of a research study? Check the answer that applies to you:

Yes _____

No _____

If you are interested in learning more about the interview phase of this study, please provide (1) your full name and (2) preferred method of contact

(1) Name: ____________________________

(2) Preferred method of contact and contact details. (E.g. Cell number, preferred email address etc.):

Preferred Method (ie. Cell #- text, email etc.): ____________________________

Contact Details (Eg. Phone number, email address etc.): ____________________________
APPENDIX C: Letter of Invitation

Date: September 25th, 2018

Title of Study: Breaking down barriers: An analysis of pre-service physical education teachers’ assumptions and preparation for working with LGBT youth.
Principal Student Investigator: Colin McCaughey, BPhEd, OCT
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tim Fletcher, PhD
Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

I, Colin McCaughey (Principal Student Investigator), from the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Breaking down barriers: An analysis of pre-service physical education teachers’ assumptions and preparation for working with LGBT youth.”

This form will be distributed to all students enrolled in KINE 4P32 (Teaching and Learning in School-Based Physical Education) and EDBE 8P56 (Health & Physical Education Curriculum and Pedagogy- Junior/Intermediate) within the Department of Kinesiology and Faculty of Education at Brock University. This letter of invitation will also be circulated with a recruitment survey (see attached) and an informed consent form (see attached) during a class that has been selected by the Principal Student Investigator (PSI) and course instructor.

There are two main purposes of this research. The first is to examine the assumptions that pre-service health and physical education (H&PE) teachers have regarding working with LGBT students in PE settings/classrooms. Second, the study will explore pre-service H&PE teachers’ perceived levels of preparation in regard to teaching matters pertaining to gender and sexuality, particularly concerning LGBT students.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in three one-on-one, in-person interviews. The first interview will commence in the first six (6) weeks of the Fall term. In this interview, I will ask you about your past experiences of physical education classes, with a focus on how your experiences have informed your beliefs about working with LGBT youth. The second interview will commence shortly after the Fall mid-term break and will explore the extent to which you feel that your university education has prepared you to handle issues of gender and sexuality in physical education. The third and final interview will take place at the end of the Fall term or beginning of the Winter term and will focus on your future pedagogy, asking you to imagine how you could develop strategies to be inclusive to all students in physical education classes, founded upon what they have learned in becoming physical education teachers.

Please note that if these dates are not amendable to your schedule, yet you would still like to participate, I will make every effort to accommodate you schedule, as I believe your participation is extremely valuable.

The expected duration of your total participation is estimated at three hours as each of the three (3) interviews are expected to last a maximum of sixty (60) minutes.
In terms of the potential benefits resulting from your participation in this research, this study is based on the belief that physical teachers have the distinct ability to emancipate and create inclusive learning environments of all learners. Reflecting on your experiences may enable you to identify ways you have learned to do this or can learn more about this in the future. Furthermore, the study of experiences and preparation of pre-service physical education teachers is seldom done in physical education, leaving a gap in the academic literature. This research will contribute to filling this gap through the much-needed perspective of pre-service physical teachers’ assumptions and preparation in working with marginalized students.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached survey questions. However, if you do not wish to participate, you can simply submit a blank paper in lieu of the recruitment survey.

Thank you,

Colin McCaughey, BPhEd, BEd, OCT, MA Candidate
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University
Principal Student Investigator
cm11jq@brocku.ca

Dr. Tim Fletcher, PhD.
Department of Kinesiology, Brock University
Faculty Supervisor
tfletcher@brocku.ca
905-688-5550 ext. 6358

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board [File: 17-423 FLETCHER].
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent

Date: September 25th, 2018
Title of Study: Breaking down barriers: An analysis of pre-service physical education teachers’ assumptions and preparation for working with LGBT youth
Principal Student Investigator (PSI): Colin McCaughey, BPhEd, OCT
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University
cm11jq@brocku.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tim Fletcher, PhD.
Department of Kinesiology, Brock University
tfletcher@brocku.ca
905-688-5550 ext. 6358

Invitation
I would like to invite you to participate in my graduate research study. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the experiences and preparation measures that pre-service physical education teachers have in regard to working with LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) youth and students.

What’s Involved
As a participant, you will be asked to participate in three (3) one-on-one, in-person interviews, which will be audio-recorded. Participation in these interviews will take approximately sixty (60) minutes each and will be held approximately two-four weeks apart. You will also be asked to partake in a member checking process in which I ask if my analysis of your responses accurately represents your answers and perspectives. This may occur up to 3 (three) times during my data analysis process, and I request that you respond to my ‘member check’ within one (1) week. If you do not respond within this timeframe, I will assume that my analysis reflects your perspective, and your data may be incorporated into my final findings of my research study. Finally, with your consent, I will use your survey responses to provide clarity on some of the assumptions and beliefs that students in the H&PE cohort(s) hold regarding working with LGBT students.

Potential Benefits and Risks
There are a variety of potential benefits that may result from your participation in this research, including for yourself, the teaching profession and the LGBT community. For instance, this research is based on the belief that physical teachers have the distinct ability to emancipate and create inclusive learning environments of all learners. Your participation may help you reflect on your previous experiences to examine what you have learned or what you would like to learn in the future. Furthermore, the study of experiences and preparation of pre-service physical education teachers is seldom done in physical education, leaving a gap in the literature. This research may contribute to filling this gap through the much-needed perspective of pre-service physical teachers’ assumptions and preparation in working with marginalized students. Finally, in discussing ways to create inclusionary practices/ classrooms for LGBT students, participants’ will have the opportunity to use reflexive and analytic processes, which may improve their teaching praxis.
There are potential psychological risks associated with participation in this study. For example, with the likelihood of discussions pertaining to gender and sexuality, participants may feel psychologically stressed due to recalling their past experiences or those of others (such as friends or family members), including bullying, exclusion and other factors. As such, I will ensure confidentiality of not only the participant, but the people referred to within the conversation. Furthermore, I will ensure participants’ rights to self-identification are maintained, while ensuring that assumptions that are made about these identities are not perpetuated. Finally, as a participant, you can stop the interview at any time you may feel uncomfortable or psychologically stressed. This considered, the principal student investigator (Colin McCaughey) will have a copy of support networks available.

**Confidentiality**

All information you provide is considered confidential; your name will not be included or, in any other way, associated with the data presented in the study reports. Please note that no information will be provided that will render your quotations personally identifiable.

Also, since classes being recruited from are small (20-25 students), there is a chance that a participant may be identified by their critiques or perspectives. However, this risk is mitigated by utilizing two classes with similar sizes in two different geographical locations. Furthermore, usage of anonymized techniques will also minimize the risk of identification.

I will be the only person who has access to the raw data. Data collected during this study will be stored in either password-protected files on password-protected computers or in locked drawers in password protected offices on Brock University’s campus. Data will be kept only until the completion of the final report, which is expected to be finalized in August 2019, after this time any hardcopy documents will be confidentially shredded and electronic files will be permanently erased.

Access to this data will be restricted to the principal student investigator. The faculty supervisor will only have access to the anonymized data.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty. Participants may also complete one or more interview(s) and withdraw from subsequent interviews. This process can be done through communicating with the principal student investigator via the contact information seen at the start of this form. Additionally, if you decide to withdraw, you will have the choice for your data to be retained or destroyed from the results of the research study.

**Publication of Results**

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If you wish to receive a final report of this research, the principal student investigator will send you an electronic copy in December 2019.
Contact Information and Ethics Clearance
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the principal student investigator, Colin McCaughey, or his faculty supervisor Dr. Tim Fletcher, using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [File: 17-423 FLETCHER]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records

Consent
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: __________________________
Signature: ______________________
Date: __________________________
APPENDIX E: Interview Guides

Interview Guide for Interview #1 - Past Experiences

Preface & Informed Consent: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The interview will take approximately an hour. You should feel free to skip over, come back to, or change your answer to any question at any time during the interview. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any references to friends, colleagues, and institutions will also be replaced with a pseudonym. You will be provided with a typed transcript of this interview several weeks after it is completed and you are free to change any responses as you see fit. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or my responsibilities as a researcher?

1. Thinking back to your own experiences as a student before post-secondary, what did you think of health and physical education (H&PE)?
   a) What did you enjoy?
   b) What did you not enjoy?
   c) Did you participate in these courses throughout high school?

2. Looking back on your H&PE classes, which teachers stood out to you? Why do you think that is?
   a) Are these characteristics/strategies something you would like to demonstrate/use when you are teaching?
   b) Did this teacher engage all students? How so? How not?

3. What were your experiences like with the health and gym components of your H&PE courses?
   a) What units were covered?
   b) What led you to enjoy or dislike the experience?
   c) Did your teachers cover the units in-depth? Why do you feel this decision was made?

4. In terms of the curriculum that was covered in your high school H&PE classes, was there discussions surrounding gender and sexuality?
   a) If so, what did these discussions look like?
   b) If not, why do you think that is?
   c) How did these discussions make you feel?
   d) How did you interpret the teachers’ emotions around the subject? Did this effect your own interpretation?

5. Can you recall any times when incidents or discussions related to gender and/or sexuality were raised as a result of something occurring in the class? For example, some saying “that’s so gay” or “you throw like a girl.”
   a) What did this look like? What happened?
   b) Did the teacher intervene? How so?
   c) Did you intervene? Why or why not?

6. When you hear the term LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender), what do you think of?
a) Why?
b) What has led to you create this definition of the LGBT community?

**Note: Due to the methodological foundations of this study (Qualitative Research), unprepared questions may be developed during the interview itself. Moreover, new questions may be implemented in the upcoming interviews in response to the narratives that were developed. Finally, this is an outline of the proposed interview, the exact order of questions may vary.

Interview Guide for Interview #2 - Present Experiences

**Preface & Informed Consent**: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The interview will take approximately an hour. You should feel free to skip over, come back to, or change your answer to any question at any time during the interview. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any references to friends, colleagues, and institutions will also be replaced with a pseudonym. You will be provided with a typed transcript of this interview several weeks after it is completed and you are free to change any responses as you see fit.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or my responsibilities as a researcher?

1. Last interview we spoke about your experiences of HPE in school and thought about any incidents relating to gender and/or sexuality. Considering this context, what have you learned about teaching in ways that promote inclusion from your experiences as a school student (or even from something outside of school, like from a coach, etc)?

2. What are your feeling about your teachers’ college experience thus far?
   a) What has stood out to you so far?
   b) To what extent have you been supplied with H&PE resources for next year?
   b) How have your placements gone?
   c) If you were to tell someone that is coming into teach teachers’ college one point of advice, what would you tell them?

3. What are you experiences like with the Equity/Diversity in Education class (EDUC 8P02)?
   a) What subjects have been covered? Which have resonated with you?
   b) Has the instructor focused on ‘issue’ more than others? Why do you think that is?
   c) Can you tell me some of the things you may have learned about equity and social justice which may be specific to HPE?
   d) Do you think you need to learn more about such issues? Why/Why not?

4. Considering the other classes you have had thus far, what learning has occurred (if any) regarding LGBT students in education? (e.g., discussions, reading, lecture topics, “teachable moments”). Please be as specific as possible. For example, identify readings if you can, describe an incident, etc.
   a) How have these discussions made you feel?
   b) Where they facilitated in a matter that helped you understand and possibly facilitate said subject matter?
   c) Where they applicable?
d) (If relevant, depending on response: …) Why do you feel there is a lack of focus pertaining to this subject?

5. Can you tell me about your university preparation in working with and including LGBT students?
   a) What can be done to improve it? (if low score),
   b) How has it been done well? (if high score)
   c) Tell me more about the experience.
   d) What would you do if you have the chance to change the programming?

Questions 6 and 7 will be generated either during discussion (co-construction), or be created prior to the interview due to information provided from the past interview.

**Note: Due to the methodological foundations of this study (Qualitative Research), unprepared questions may be developed during the interview itself. Moreover, new questions may be implemented in the upcoming interviews in response to the narratives that were developed. Finally, this is an outline of the proposed interview, the exact order of questions may vary.**

Interview Guide for Interview #3 - Future Pedagogy

**Preface & Informed Consent:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The interview will take approximately an hour. You should feel free to skip over, come back to, or change your answer to any question at any time during the interview. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any references to friends, colleagues, and institutions will also be replaced with a pseudonym. You will be provided with a typed transcript of this interview several weeks after it is completed and you are free to change any responses as you see fit. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or my responsibilities as a researcher?

1. Returning to a question I asked you in our first interview, when you hear the term LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender), what do you think of?
   a) Why? What has led to you create this definition of the LGBT community?
   b) Has your viewpoint changed at all? How so?
   c) If there has been change, describe how this has happened.
   d) What would you do if you met someone with a less accepting viewpoint?

These questions are looking to put you in the role of the H&PE teacher. The main question is: **How would you, as the teacher, respond to these scenarios:**

(1) You are teaching a volleyball lesson with Gr. 9 Boys’ at a high-performing (academically and athletically) high school. During the lesson, a student who is visibly smaller and less physically literate than his peers is struggling with the skills being taught, to a point that he can’t get an underhand serve near the net. The other boys start picking up his struggle and start to call him a ‘fairy.’ As the lesson continues, the heckling gets worse, as the student is called ‘gay’ or ‘fag’ and is told to ‘go home to his boyfriend.’ As the teacher, what do you do?
   a) What had you feel discomfort/comfort in this scenario?
b) Was there anything that you took account from the scenario that influenced your answer? Why or why not?
c) What experience have you been given to work with a situation like this?

2) I am going to read you a passage from a H&PE lesson, and I want you to tell me how you would respond (as the teacher) to the scenario that occurs: The teacher gathers the students and lets them know the content of the lesson is going to be dance. The girls are not happy that they have to dance with the boys and say that it’s ‘disgusting’. The teacher dismisses the comment by saying “Yes… that might be the case, but you’ll do it anyway.” Undeterred, one girl asks the teacher again, “Why must girls and boys dance together?” The teacher responds: “Because we normally do that… boys dance with girls” Student responds: “Well, perhaps I’m a lesbian…”
a) What would you do?
b) In this scenario, the teacher admits that “It’s my heterosexual norm that haunts me” and goes to restructure the lesson so girls can dance with girls and boys dance with boys etc. How do you feel about this response?
c) How would your response be similar or different?
d) Do you believe that this is good teaching practice? Why or why not?

2. What are some concrete strategies you have learned or would use to promote inclusion of LGBT students in H&PE?
a) Can you try to identify when/how you learned to do what you described?
b) What do you attribute your pedagogical (teaching) knowledge of this situation to?
c) What do you think you need in order to describe or plan to teach in LGBT inclusive ways better?

**Note: Due to the methodological foundations of this study (Qualitative Research), unprepared questions may be developed during the interview itself. Moreover, this is an outline of the proposed interview, the exact order of questions may vary.
APPENDIX F: Support Services

Personal Counselling:
905-688-5550 x. 4750

Human Rights & Equity (Sexual Violence Support):
905-688-5550 x. 4387
OR
Brock Student Sexual Violence Support Centre
905-397-7671
support@asaferbrock.org

Campus Security/ Police Services:
9-1-1 (Emergency- Police)
905-688-5550 x. 3200 (Emergency)
905-688-5550 x. 4300 (General)

Pathstone Mental Health
905-684-3407
https://www.pathstonementalhealth.ca/

CMHA (Canadian Mental Health Association) Niagara
1-866-550-5205
https://cmhaniagara.ca/