

# **Creating Controversy: Sex Education and the Christian Right in South Australia**

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## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the conditions of the *Copyright Act* 1968.

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*Sally Gibson*

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*Date*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>AFLA</b>	Adolescent Family Life Act
<b>ANCHARD</b>	Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases
<b>ASCA</b>	Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse
<b>DECS</b>	Department of Education and Children’s Services (called SA Education Department)
<b>FOL</b>	Festival of Light
<b>FPO</b>	Family Planning Organisation
<b>FPQ</b>	Family Planning Queensland
<b>GLBTIQ</b>	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
<b>GDHR</b>	Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HRE</b>	Human Relationship Education
<b>IPPF</b>	International Planned Parenthood Federation
<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>NT</b>	Northern Territory
<b>QLD</b>	Queensland
<b>SA</b>	South Australia
<b>SHARE</b>	Sexual Health and Relationships Education
<b>SHine SA</b>	Sexual Health information, networking and education, South Australia
<b>SIECUS</b>	Sex Information and Education Council of the United States
<b>STI</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infection
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>WA</b>	Western Australia

## **Thesis summary**

In 2003 a panic was created about the introduction of a new model of sex education in South Australia known as the Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHARE) project. This thesis explores the particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003. It does this through analyzing the similarities and differences between the campaign against SHARE and others that have taken place against sex education in Australia and the US since the 1980s in terms of the organisations involved, the strategies used and the fears/moral panics invoked and evoked. I use the controversy created against the SHARE project as a starting point, not only to produce an historical account of a particular event in sex education in Australia but also to contribute to an understanding of the power dynamics that govern sexuality locally and in a broader global context.

The methodological approach used in this thesis includes an analysis of ‘local discursivities’ relating to the SHARE project and the genealogy of those discourses. Following Foucault and queer and feminist applications of his work, the thesis particularly explores how discourses relating to ‘homosexuality’ and ‘child abuse’ were deployed in the campaign against the SHARE project. The thesis then identifies alternative discourses and approaches that can strengthen sex education programs in Australia based on the lessons learnt from the campaign against the SHARE project.

To assist my analysis of the controversy about the SHARE project interviews were conducted with other educators who have produced sex education resources in Australia. These revealed that while there has been some opposition to sex education in Australia over the last 20 years this has not been well organised or sustained. The campaign against the SHARE project therefore represents a unique event in the history of sex education in Australia. The thesis argues that one major contributing factor to this event is the strengthening of the relationship between conservative political parties and evangelical activist groups in Australia and their use of tactics and materials developed by Christian Right groups in the United States. The thesis analyses the implications of this religious activism within the context of current Australian politics and assesses whether the ‘family values’ discourse, which was central to the controversy created about the SHARE project, is positioned any differently as a result of the recent changes in political leadership in Australia and the United States.

**Creating Controversy:**

**Sex Education and the Christian Right in South Australia**

*I believe that any teacher who gets in front of a group of students as young as 11 to encourage this sort of so-called sexual education is in fact participating in grooming children. Those who know the way in which paedophiles groom young children know exactly what that means.*

Trish Draper, Federal Liberal Member of Parliament,  
Speech in House of Representatives, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2003

*THEFT OF CHILDREN? Some government educators want to steal your children's values and thinking away from you. HOW? The new SHARE SEX EDUCATION course deliberately seeks to NORMALISE AND POPULARISE HOMOSEXUALITY & BISEXUALITY. Don't let the Education Department STEAL your children's innocence or your family's values.*

Anonymous advertisement *Port Lincoln Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2003

## **Introduction**

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In 2003 I found myself in the centre of a 'sex panic'<sup>1</sup> around what young people in South Australian state high schools should be able to learn about sexuality and relationships and also what can be said publicly about young people's desires and pleasures. This was a great surprise as sexual health and relationships education (popularly known as sex education) has been formally part of the school curriculum since the early 1970s. A conservative response to sex education was also unexpected in South Australia given the previous progressive social policies of the state. For example, South Australia was the first state in Australia to decriminalise homosexuality (in 1975) and to liberalise abortion laws (in 1971).

I also complacently believed that such an emotive response to sex education was primarily the province of the 'bible belts' of the United States. I was familiar with the rise of the US 'abstinence only until marriage'<sup>2</sup> movement and the adoption of

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'sex panic' was used by Carol Vance (1984) to describe battles over sexuality. Irvine (2007) notes that this term is drawn from Stanley Cohen's (1972) concept of 'moral panic'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abstinence only until marriage' teaches that sexual abstinence before marriage is the community standard and omits accurate information on contraception and condom use. Alternatively, 'comprehensive' sex education recognises that young people may be sexual outside of marriage and provides information on ways to do this safely (Kempner 2001).

‘abstinence’ as the official policy of the Bush Administration, including in its funding of international HIV prevention programs (Di Mauro and Joffe 2007). I had personally experienced the globalization of this abstinence movement while working with a local family planning organisation in Fiji in 2000. At a meeting with the then Fijian Health Minister I was provided with a document that he believed set out a best practice approach to sex education in schools. It was *True Love Waits*, a popular abstinence approach developed by a US church group (Life Way Christian Resource). The presence of *True Love Waits* in Fiji was not surprising given the history of missionary activity in Fiji and the establishment of Christianity as the national religion.<sup>3</sup>

South Australia in 2003 seemed a long way from Fiji’s cultural environment with its overtly religious façade. It is a state in the south of Australia with a population of approximately 1.5 million people. Despite being known in the past as the ‘city of churches’, the 2006 census reveals that the majority of the state’s residents have no religious affiliations (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). However SA does have an active evangelical Christian community which has become increasingly involved in politics. For example one of the largest churches in the city of Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, is the Assemblies of God Paradise Community Church in the north eastern suburbs. A former pastor from this church, Andrew Evans, was instrumental in forming a new conservative political party in South Australia, the Family First Party, and was elected to the upper house of the South Australian Parliament in 2002. This party now operates at a national level and has one Senator in the Australian Parliament. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, Andrew Evans played a key role in opposing the sex education project which was called SHARE<sup>4</sup> (Sexual Health and Relationships Education).

The SHARE project was introduced into 15 high schools in South Australia in 2003 for a three year period. It did not introduce significantly new curriculum materials but instead piloted a new model for delivery that was based on a ‘whole school approach’. This meant addressing the sexual health needs of young people not only through classroom lessons but also through creating a school environment that was safe and supportive with

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<sup>3</sup> In my time in Fiji I became used to morning prayers before each sexual health education session with young people, many of whom were sexually active despite usually identifying sex outside of marriage as sinful and shameful. See Gibson (2001) for further discussion on the sexual health of young people in Fiji.

<sup>4</sup> The full name of the South Australian SHARE project was SHARE: respect, health, life. This should not be confused with another SHARE program in Scotland called Sexual Health and Relationships: Safe, Happy and Responsible.

a particular focus on introducing strategies to target sexual harassment and homophobic bullying. The project included a range of interventions including new teaching materials accompanied by two days of compulsory teacher training as well as resource booklets for parents and students. Schools were required to deliver 15 lessons a year at years 8, 9 and 10 (ages approximately 12 – 15 years)<sup>5</sup>. The project also had an extensive evaluation process that was implemented in partnership with a university.

The schools involved had volunteered for the project and were located in both the city of Adelaide and in several small country towns in South Australia. The project was funded by the South Australian Health Department and delivered in a partnership between the non-government organisation Sexual Health information networking and education (SHine SA)<sup>6</sup> and the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, known as DECS, hereafter called the SA Education Department. I was the manager of the SHARE project as part of my management role within SHine SA.

Within two weeks of the launch of the SHARE project conservative groups and political parties in South Australia began an organised and sustained campaign against the project. The opponent groups included the Right to Life, the Festival of Light, and the Australian Family Association as well as the major conservative political party, the Liberal Party, and the Family First Party. At the time the campaign against SHARE took place South Australia had a newly elected minority Labor Government that was dependent upon the support of an independent Member of Parliament to form government. This political vulnerability was evident in the way the government responded to the campaign against the SHARE project. The Labor Government had to respond to the concerns of these conservative groups in order to consolidate their political position amongst conservative constituents.

In 2003, when the SHARE project was introduced, the conservative Coalition<sup>7</sup> Government led by John Howard had been in power at a federal level for seven years. In 2007 the Howard Government was convincingly beaten in the federal election by the Kevin Rudd led progressive Labor Party. The 11 years of the Howard Government were

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<sup>5</sup> SA has 13 years of schooling usually divided into primary school with eight year levels from reception to year seven and high school from year eight to twelve. Schooling is compulsory until the age of 17 years.

<sup>6</sup> SHine SA was formerly known as Family Planning SA and is a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

<sup>7</sup> The coalition was between the Liberal Party and the National Party. John Howard was leader of the Liberal Party which had the majority of seats in the Australian Parliament.

marked by social policies that have been likened to the conservative policies pursued by the Bush Administration in the United States. One of the leading writers on religion and politics in Australia, Marion Maddox (2005), summarises Howard's legacy in the following way:

Howard spoke the recognizably American language of 'political correctness', 'racial resentment', 'traditional family'. He postured tough on drugs and terrorism, flirted with capital punishment and brought the previously near-invisible issue of gay marriage to front page wedge status. He delivered tax cuts to the rich and encouraged segregated Christian schools, attacked the public broadcaster and espoused a proud arts philistinism, while speaking knowingly of 'values'. He clothed an assumed patriarchy in talk of family 'choice' (to have the mother at home) and 'male role models' (except at home), while taking away choice for gay and lesbian couples wanting to adopt children or have them by IVF. Headline by headline he remolded Australia in the American right's image. (Maddox 2005, p.221)

Maddox's claim that Australian politics has been reshaped in the image of the American right is disputed by other political analysts. For example Dennis Altman (2006) argues that the strongest religious influence in fact may stem from the British Baptist and Methodist churches who imported a less zealous moral approach to social issues; "Perhaps the difference between our two societies is summed up by the fact that the Americans had Prohibition while we had six o'clock closing" (p.74). Altman (2006) also cites Australia's more progressive response to the HIV epidemic as further evidence of the weakness of the argument in regard to the influence of the Christian Right<sup>8</sup> in Australia.

Despite these differing views on the source of inspiration for the Howard government, what is apparent is that the same issues highlighted by the Christian Right groups in the United States (particularly gay marriage and abortion) became sites for political mobilisation by conservative religious groups in Australia and by a number of influential parliamentarians. In fact the Howard Government went further than the Bush

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<sup>8</sup> I use the term 'Christian Right' to refer to those groups who form coalitions around an orthodox Christian vision and a defense of the traditional nuclear family formation. It includes Catholics, evangelicals and Christian fundamentalists. I do not include those of Jewish or Islamic faiths although they may share similar views on the family and work in coalition with Christian Right groups. For further information on the Christian Right see Buss and Herman (2003).

Administration when in 2004 it amended laws relating to marriage to ensure that the definition of marriage only applies to couples of the opposite sex (Johnson 2003).

Historically, there has been relatively little political attention in Australia on sex education. While there have been struggles over how sex education is implemented within state schools there has not been the divisive debates that have been seen in the United States (Irvine 2002; Doan and Williams 2008; Rose 2005). One reason for this may be the difference between the processes for determining curriculum content in Australia and the United States. In Australia state governments are responsible for setting curriculum in accordance with national curriculum benchmarks. The US system gives much more power to the parent committees of schools which means that contentious issues such as sex education are more likely to become embroiled in local politics and the individual belief systems of the parents.

### **Research question and aims**

The political context for sex education in South Australia from 1900 – 1990 has been analysed in an historical research project by Jim Jose (1995). Jose finds that there was surprisingly little opposition to the implementation of sex education within the formal curriculum in South Australia in the 1970s and that “the presence of sex education within the curriculum is itself no longer controversial” (p.1). This finding is important as it raises the key question of this thesis: *Why, if sex education has been part of the curriculum for thirty years, was there an organised campaign against sex education in South Australia in 2003?*

The campaign against SHARE is used as a starting point to both produce an historical account of an event in sex education in Australia as well as to produce a new body of knowledge that can be applied to understanding the dynamics of power and sexuality in South Australia.

In particular my research aims are to identify:

- i. The similarities and differences between the campaign against SHARE and others that have taken place against sex education in Australia and the US since the 1980s in terms of the organisations involved, the strategies used and the fears/moral panics invoked and evoked;

- ii. The particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003; and
- iii. Alternative discourses and approaches to sex education programs in Australia based on the lessons learnt from the campaign against SHARE.

### **Thesis structure**

This thesis is structured into seven chapters:

**Chapter One** presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that are used to analyse the campaign against the SHARE project and links these to the methodologies employed to address the three research aims. The primary source for my analysis is the work of Michel Foucault who wrote extensively about the linkages between knowledge, power, sexuality and subjectivity. This includes his work on the ‘art of governing’ or ‘governmentality’ which explores how power operates through the social body (such as schools) as well as upon and around the individual bodies of its citizens (a process he referred to as bio-power) (Foucault 1978; Foucault 1982).

The use of Foucault’s theoretical approach to sexuality and power has great relevance to this thesis by providing a tool by which to analyse the discourses that surround sex education and young people. These link to other discourses in South Australia that have been produced through previous responses to sexuality, most notably those related to the sexual abuse of children and homosexuality. This is an example of what Foucault describes as a genealogical method whereby historical analysis can contribute to a greater understanding of contemporary discourses and above all the relations of power produced through discourse (Foucault 1977).

I also use Foucault’s concept of genealogy to interrogate my own position within the debate given that I assisted in shaping both the SHARE project itself and also its public representation. My role in this thesis is therefore as an actor with my own history and experiences as well as an observer. Chapter One includes a discussion of the methodological implications for the other actor position I bring, as a publicly identified lesbian, who experienced the campaign against the SHARE project not just through the lens of my experience as a sexual health manager and educator but also from the often

impossible position as the embodiment of the deviancy that the opposition groups were most concerned about. There were numerous instances where I experienced surveillance and silencing based on my own sexuality during the campaign<sup>9</sup>, a process that mirrors what actually happens within a school environment and which the SHARE project was trying to change.

My analysis of the place of the 'homosexual body' (including my own) within the debate around the SHARE project draws on a theoretical approach which has become known as queer theory. Queer theorists have used Foucault's analysis of surveillance and control of the 'homosexual' to explore the operation of power based on a privileging of heterosexuality (Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1990; Warner 1993). In this endeavour they have added to the work of feminists who also have challenged a heteronormative approach to sexuality whereby men are constructed as active and sexual and women are constructed as passive and 'naturally' heterosexual (Rich 1980; Vance 1984). Feminist and queer theory inform my analysis of the campaign against the SHARE project particularly in regard to the way discourses on homosexuality and gender were used to create anxiety about the SHARE project.

**Chapter Two** outlines the histories of sex education in Australia with a particular reference to previous conflicts and debates about such education. This provides a basis for judging similarities and differences between the controversy created about the SHARE project and past activism against sex education. It also illustrates that the history of sex education in Australia was driven by similar anxieties and concerns as those that shaped the development of sex education in the United States and the United Kingdom. Chapter Two concludes with a history of the abstinence until marriage movement in the United States, as this movement has taken historical anxieties about young people's sexuality and built a powerful political movement that seeks to protect the 'natural family'. The US abstinence movement has had a major influence on the discourses and tactics used against sex education in other countries, including Australia.

**Chapter Three** explores the history of the relationship between religion and secularism in Australia and the impact this has had and continues to have on politics in Australia. It

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<sup>9</sup> One example of this was in a meeting with the Australian Medical Association (AMA). One of the AMA doctors turned to the four of us from SHine SA who had provided a briefing on the SHARE project and suggested that a major factor contributing to the controversy was the perception that SHine SA was run by lesbians.

also analyses the implications that arise from recent literature which suggests that there has been an increase in visible religiosity within Australian politics. One area where religion and the state have come into recent conflict in what has become known as ‘the culture wars’ has been over the issue of gay marriage. In Chapter Three I use gay marriage as an example of a moral panic that has become a central focus of the activism of the ‘family values’ movement in Australia. This activism, much of it fuelled by religious lobby groups, which Hunter (1991) calls ‘para church’ groups, relies on strategies that deliberately aim to create controversy. I then describe the battle for gay law reform in the state of Tasmania as one example of the influence of these para church groups in Australia, as this battle shares many similarities with the campaign against the SHARE project.

**Chapter Four** outlines the details of the campaign against the SHARE project that took place in 2003. This is the part of the thesis that serves as an historical account of this event. It draws on data from media reporting, parliamentary transcripts, SHine SA records and my own notes and reflection. By the end of this chapter the landscape of the campaign will be populated by the actions and statements of the main actors who contributed to the conflict. This includes those who supported as well as opposed the project. In this task I am guided by the analysis of sex education debates by the US sociologist Janice Irvine (2002) who wove her analysis around a detailed recording of specific conflicts around sex education in the United States. Using Irvine’s summary of the strategies used by US Christian Right groups I demonstrate that the opponent groups in South Australia relied on similar strategies to create controversy about the SHARE project.

**Chapter Five** reports on the outcomes of interviews I conducted with nine key educators in Australia who have produced sex education texts over the last 20 years. When the campaign against the SHARE project was at its most intense, I became interested in searching for other campaigns against sex education programs in Australia to try and understand what was happening in South Australia. I was aware that many other sex education teaching resources with similar content had been implemented in Australian state schools without any apparent opposition. Indeed, the materials used as part of the SHARE project drew on many of these.

These interviews reveal that other educators do not report a similar experience of an organised campaign although they do identify some censoring of the content and presentation of their materials. This particularly related to content on same sex relationships. These interviews also demonstrate the way that the discourses of ‘morality’ and ‘risk and safety’ are deployed to either create or avoid controversy about sex education in Australia. I analyse the impact that these discourses have on the actual implementation of sex education programs in Australia and on the sexual subjectivities of young people.

**Chapter Six** moves the focus back to South Australia and addresses the second research aim of identifying why the SHARE project emerged as a problem in 2003. Using a genealogical analysis I examine how discourses relating to ‘child abuse’ and ‘homosexuality’, the two key areas around which anxieties were created, have been produced and operate in South Australia. I show that while the deployment of these discourses shares many common features with those in other states in Australia and also with other countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, there are some unique South Australian experiences of these issues that continue to resonate through the political and cultural landscape in South Australia. These include positive achievements such as being the first state to decriminalise homosexuality as well as sensational events such as a series of macabre murders allegedly committed by a group of homosexual men known as ‘The Family’. I explore the discursive legacy of these and other antecedents for the meanings they provide for understanding how these discourses were deployed in the campaign against the SHARE project in 2003.

Chapter Six also looks at the role of state instrumentalities in South Australia in facilitating or resisting the campaign against the SHARE project. Using Foucault’s theory on governmentality, I argue that a neo-liberal approach to governing can be seen in the response of the SA Education Department which sought to minimise risks by refusing to endorse the approach used in the SHARE project and through the actions it took to signal that it had responded to the claims of the conservative groups. These actions included reducing the number of references to same sex relationships in the teaching manual, which is an example of the way the state affirms and privileges heterosexuality.

**Chapter Seven**, the concluding chapter, analyses the meanings that can be drawn from the campaign against the SHARE project and discusses the implications of these for future sex education programs. The chapter begins with an update on the evaluation of the SHARE project and then outlines how sex education programs at SHine SA have expanded as a result of two very different government inquiries. The first, conducted at a national level by the Senate of the Federal Parliament, looked at the sexualisation of children in the media. The second inquiry focussed on the experience of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities in South Australia. These inquiries drew on anxieties about the safety of children and recommended that sex education was one strategy that could assist in protecting children.

These new sex education initiatives at SHine SA continue the discursive construction of young people as vulnerable and ‘innocent’. I discuss this issue in the context of recent literature on sex education which draws on Foucault’s notion of ethics and pleasure. I critique what this approach may offer to future sex education programs and argue that in addition to the inclusion of pleasure within sex education curriculum, an ethical approach to sex education must take into account different regimes of power, including race. The relevance of this ethical approach to sex education programs with Aboriginal young people is explored within the context of recent government policies affecting Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory of Australia.

The recent expansion of sex education programs at SHine SA has taken place without the controversy that occurred over the SHARE project. In this final chapter I explore the silence from the opponent groups for what it says about the factors that contributed to the controversy over the SHARE project. In particular I examine whether the election of Kevin Rudd in Australia and Barack Obama in the United States has created a different environment for the influence of Christian Right groups and ‘family values’ discourses and whether as a result there may be new possibilities for sex education programs.

*I try to make an archaeology of discourse about sexuality, which is really the relationship between what we do, what we are obliged to do and what we are allowed to do, what we are forbidden to do in the field of sexuality, and what we are allowed, forbidden or obliged to say about our sexual behaviour. That's the point. It's not a problem of fantasy; it's a problem of verbalization.*

(Foucault 2000a, p.125)

## **Chapter 1:**

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### **The problem of sexuality: introduction to theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches**

In 1976 Michel Foucault published the *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, in France. Foucault, a French intellectual who lived from 1926 – 1984, undertook historical investigations of how knowledge in particular areas of the human sciences contributes to the production of the modern human subject. One of the areas he examines is sexuality and as the above epigraph indicates, Foucault is concerned with the way sexuality and sexual behaviour become a key site for regulating and controlling individuals. Foucault notes that one important strategy for regulating sexuality is the education of children:

The sex of children and adolescents has become, since the eighteenth century, an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed. (Foucault 1978, p.30)

This chapter outlines Foucault's analysis of power, sexuality, knowledge and subjectivity as developed not only in his *History of Sexuality Volume 1* but also in some of his later work, particularly that which relates to his exploration of ethics and the 'technology of the self'. It is in his subsequent volumes on the history of sexuality that Foucault engages most extensively with the processes by which an individual "delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as a moral goal" (Foucault 1985, p.28).

My use of Foucault's work in this thesis is informed by an understanding of sexuality as something that is not a fixed, essential attribute but instead as something that is socially constructed. That is, "sexuality must be understood as integral to an entire matrix of

social, economic, cultural, and relational forces” (Petchesky 2008a, p.12). The challenge to an essentialist conception of sexuality grew out of the increased attention given to the study of sexuality from the late nineteenth century. Early investigations by sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing (1840 – 1902) and Havelock Ellis (1859 – 1922) sought to categorise sexual behaviour in order to seek answers to perceived deviations from what was considered normal. At this time normality was associated with heterosexual relationships aimed at reproduction and this led to considerable attention being given to any behaviours considered perverse or abnormal, such as homosexuality, in order to try and correct these deviations (Hawkes 1996, p.24).

Foucault is often credited for being the first to conceptualise sexuality as being formed through historical and cultural circumstances. In fact prior to the publication of *The History of Sexuality*, other writers such as Mary McIntosh<sup>10</sup> had raised questions as to how sexual roles such as the ‘homosexual’ emerged at particular historical moments. That is, she queried the essential nature of sexual identities. Feminist writers such as Gayle Rubin (1984) and Adrienne Rich (1980) and the gay historian Jeffrey Weeks (1985) also contributed to challenging the institutional demands of heterosexuality (often called heteronormativity) that link biological sex with gender and sexuality. They disputed that there is anything ‘natural’ about heterosexual desire or indeed the legalistic and moral frameworks built around the privileging of heterosexual relationships through institutional practices such as marriage.

The history of sex education reflects the shifting notions of sexuality and also the changing expectations of roles for men and women. Prior to World War 1, sexual relationships were a matter of morality and sexual purity was considered essential, particularly for women (Moran 2000; Egan and Hawkes 2007). However during the early twentieth century sexuality came to be understood increasingly in biological terms. This was reflected in the emergence of the eugenics and social hygiene movements which held that sexuality education was important to assist with breeding a strong and healthy human species. The high rate of venereal disease after World War II was used as evidence that sexual education could not just be left in the hands of parents. However formal sex education in schools was not implemented in Australia for another 30 years

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<sup>10</sup> In 1968 Mary McIntosh published an essay called *The Homosexual Role* in which she “opens up a set of questions about the emergence of sexology and related disciplines, their constitutive role in categorizing sexual patterns, their impact on legal processes, and their effect on individual lives” (Weeks 2000, p.60).

and by this time sex education was perceived as necessary not only to avert potential dangers such as diseases and pregnancy but also to assist young people to lead fulfilled lives (Scott 2005; Logan 1980; Jose 1995).

In Chapter Two I discuss in detail the struggles to implement sex education in schools in Australia and the United States and particularly focus on the groups and political organisations that have been active in both implementing and opposing this education. This will provide a context for the recent conflict over sex education in South Australia. This will also show that there are common areas of contention that emerge from all debates on the sexual education of young people. These are: the role parents and state institutions should play in providing this education, the content that should be included, and the values that should guide this education.

Over the course of the last 30 years of implementing sex education in Australian schools the treatment of the issues of gender and homosexuality has raised the most concern. Conservative proponents of sex education (which they prefer to be called family life education) argue that strict gender roles for men and women should be taught to prepare young people for their marriage responsibilities. Early feminist critiques of sex education were concerned that sex education did in fact focus on these issues and in doing this was “further replicating sexist attitudes and stereotypes” (Szirom 1988, p.139). In taking this approach sex education at first ignored homosexuality but with the increased visibility of gay men and lesbians and the introduction of equal opportunity legislation, gay and lesbian issues were introduced through discussion as a ‘special issue’ (Redman 1994). This approach served to reinforce a marginalised position for homosexuality and more recent sex education programs instead encourage same sex relationships to be included in all aspects of sex education and to be affirmed as being equal to heterosexual relationships (ANCHARD 2001).

In summary then, debates over sex education focus particularly on gender, sexuality and the role of parents and the state in providing the moral framework for this education. Conservative groups who support abstinence until marriage education want the curriculum to include the explicit instruction that sex outside marriage is harmful. However education provided by state Education Departments views such exhortations to be the province of parents and religious institutions and generally confines itself to only supporting sexual education that encourages compliance with state laws (such as age of

consent). Underpinning all these concerns is the question of what it means to live a life of value, to become fully human, and these are questions that inspire diverse religious and philosophical views and provide fuel for the battles over sex education.

I draw on the work of Foucault because of what he has to say not only about sexuality, particularly homosexuality, but also about morality and ethics and the human subject. Foucault (1994) summarizes his body of work as being “concerned with the *historical knowledge of struggles*” (p.21) and I believe his analysis of these struggles offers a useful way to explore the struggle that took place over sex education in South Australia. I am also informed by the body of work that has become known as queer theory and by feminist theory. This will be applied particularly in my analysis of why the issues of gender and homosexuality became central concerns raised by the opponents to the SHARE project.

Foucault’s work does not fit within one disciplinary boundary. It serves as both an historical investigation of social conditions (with different books covering madness, criminality and sexuality) as well as the production of techniques that can be applied to understanding the mechanisms of power. I draw only on those areas of Foucault’s work that can be applied most usefully to addressing the research aims of this thesis and recognise that there will be many other parts of Foucault’s considerable body of work that will remain unexplored. This is consistent with the approach taken by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) who note that:

Since we are using Foucault’s work to aid us, we make no claim to comprehensiveness as to the breadth of issues which, at various times, have been the object of Foucault’s studies. This seems to us fair since it is precisely how Foucault handles the master thinkers of the past. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, p.xix)

The limits of Foucault’s approach are also examined in this chapter. It is interesting that despite, or perhaps because of, the lack of clarity or purpose in some of Foucault’s work there has been extensive debate and engagement with his ideas which has served to establish Foucaultian approaches across a wide range of disciplines including cultural studies, education, gender studies, politics and even theology. Hoy (1986) notes that critics of Foucault “must first be interpreters, and criticisms of a particular aspect of his thought may not count against, or may even be obviated by, other aspects” (p.2).

One of the often cited weaknesses in Foucault's work is his failure to condemn the domination he exposes through his analysis and to provide explicit strategies by which this domination can be resisted and indeed overcome. Taylor (1986) argues that:

This is rather paradoxical, because Foucault's analysis seeks to bring *evils* to light; and yet he wants to distance himself from the suggestion which would seem inescapably to follow, that the negation or overcoming of these evils promotes a good. (Taylor 1986, p.69)

It is this particular criticism that has led to some thoughtful responses from gay, lesbian, queer<sup>11</sup>, and feminist theorists. While feminists such as Bartkowski (1988) have been strongly critical of the androcentric nature of Foucault's gaze and theorizing (as seen in his concern for self mastery as a 'man') others see that his approaches have been applied by some feminists in a way that has resulted in "pathbreaking and provocative social and cultural criticism" (Sawicki 1991, p.95). Much of this scholarship has focussed on the effects on the female body of the disciplining process identified by Foucault.

Similarly gay, lesbian and queer writers have used Foucault's analysis of power and sexuality to provide personal insights into their own social and cultural locations and also to provide inspiration for "effective and empowering techniques of social and political resistance" (Halperin 1995, p.14). In the final section of this chapter I draw on the work of two queer writers, David Halperin (1995) and Ladelle McWhorter (1999), to discuss my own inspiration and location for the research presented in this thesis.

### **1.1 Sexuality, power and subjectivity**

The problem of sex education has two dimensions. First is the consideration of what sexual behaviour (and choice of sexual partner) is considered safe and healthy for young people, and second is the debate regarding the form of education that will be effective in producing productive members of society. That is, sex education is important for what it offers to individuals *and* to society. Foucault's theory of 'bio-power' addresses both these dimensions. It describes the regulatory mechanisms that are directed towards populations as a whole ('the species body') as well as individuals ('anatomy-politics of

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<sup>11</sup> Many writers who may be captured under the broad umbrella term 'queer' in fact write from a consciously gay or lesbian perspective that has a history of scholarship in its own right. See Jagose (1996) for a discussion of this issue.

the body’). “The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the power over life was deployed” (1978, p.139). Between the management of populations and the individual lies a space which Foucault calls the ‘social’ and it is in this space that social institutions such as schools become the site where the boundaries relating to public and private responsibilities for schooling about sex are contested (Jose 1995).

In the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* Foucault identifies the aim of his research on sexuality to be not sexual behaviour itself but instead about giving:

... an account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the overall ‘discursive fact’, the way in which sex is “put into discourse”. (Foucault 1978, p.11)

It is important at this point to explore further what Foucault means by the term ‘discourse’ as I draw on his meaning of this term in the analysis of discourses relating to sex education. It was in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002/1969) and *The Order of Things* (1970) that Foucault first outlined his concept of discourse. While noting that words and signs are important he identifies his main interest as being the ways in which the objects of discourse emerge through a process he calls ‘discursive formation’. Discourses are therefore a set of statements which focus on the same topic and which are regulated by a set of rules. Foucault emphasizes that the discursive practices that hold the statements together cannot be known by just looking at what is said or written; it is necessary to look beneath the surface to find what he calls the ‘episteme’ which serves to unify the different systems of knowledge.

By *episteme* we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transitions to epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization are situated and operate; the distribution of these thresholds, which may coincide, be subordinated to one another, or be separated by shifts in time; the lateral relations that may exist between epistemological figures or sciences in so far as they belong to neighbouring, but distinct discursive practices. (Foucault 2002 /1969, p. 211)

Foucault proposes that the transition from one episteme to another occurs as a result of a complete rupture, which has no unifying historical logic. However Foucault has been criticised for his failure to give a fuller account of the reasons why such ruptures occur (McNay 1994). This problem was recognised by Foucault and, in his later work, he reworks his conceptualisation of discourse to give greater attention to the relationship between power and knowledge and the historical processes by which something comes to be thought of as a fact or true. This is the technique that, following Nietzsche, he calls 'genealogy'.

For Foucault, genealogy is a method of interrogation which moves beyond an interest in causation. It "opposes itself to the search for 'origins'" (1977, p.77) and in doing so undermines particular knowledge systems. From a genealogical perspective no-one can stand outside of their discursive practices (Jose 1998, p.28). It is therefore necessary to turn the analytic gaze on ourselves to investigate the particular circumstances by which something becomes known as the 'truth'. The genealogical process is therefore closely linked to the study of power as it is through the workings of power that certain knowledge becomes dominant.

Foucault challenges the notion that power should be conceived as juridical, coming from the prohibitive force of the law or from a "group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state" (1978, p.93). He disputes this view of power whether it is conceived through a liberal idea of the state or from a Marxist conception (1994). Instead he proposes that power is located everywhere, and is enacted in every interaction, and needs to be viewed more as a grid or a capillary network that then becomes "embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies" (1978, p.93).

Foucault argues that prior to about the seventeenth century, the family provided the primary model for the 'art of government' and for the relations between the sovereign and a subject. However with the advent of industrialised society this changed and the issue became one of how to manage populations outside of family structures. The name he gives to this management of populations is 'governmentality' which he defines as:

...the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its technical means, apparatuses of security. (Foucault 1991, p.273)

Foucault argues that it is important to look 'beyond the state' to understand the dynamics of power, particularly as it relates to sexuality. Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996) note that contemporary political complexities lend support to the analysis offered by Foucault that has a focus on "a politics of life, of ethics, which emphasizes the crucial political value of the mobilization and shaping of individual capacities and conduct" (p.1). This approach reconceptualises the relationship of the individual to the state and liberty becomes something that is an effect of governmental intervention rather than something that is the unalienable right of individuals (Hindess 1996, p.65).

One of the important sites for the operation of governmental power is the human body itself through a process that Foucault calls 'disciplinary power'. He describes this regime of power as being deployed in institutions such as factories, the army, schools and prisons and resulting in the production of 'docile bodies' (1995). Foucault selected Jeremy Bentham's plan for a Panopticon to illustrate how the perception of permanent surveillance regulates and controls human behaviour. The Panopticon was a large courtyard with cells around the outside and a tower in the middle which enabled constant visibility of inmates. Foucault utilises this structure to emphasize both the physical enabling aspects of surveillance, such as the geographic layout of institutions, as well as the effects of a presumed permanent 'gaze' on the body.

While Foucault does explore the negative aspects of power he also argues that it is a productive and generating force and that "where there is power there is resistance" albeit usually "mobile and transitory" (1978, p.96). Foucault posits that the possibility for resistance is one of the defining features of a power relationship as without this, power would just become a process of physical domination. Power also serves a normalizing function as it requires a 'production of truth' that relies on drawing on the truths that society demands. "Power never ceases its interrogations, its inquisitions, its registration of truth; it institutionalizes, professionalizes, and rewards its pursuits" (1994, p.32).

*The History of Sexuality Volume 1* can therefore be read as a critique of the truth claims made in relation to sexuality. These truths are generated and enabled through scientific, medical and religious discourses. Foucault also particularly targets Freud's psychoanalytic approach which held that psychic health was linked to uncovering the truth about sex (Freud 1977). He contests the popular belief that sexuality had been repressed particularly in Victorian times, a belief he calls the 'repressive hypothesis', and asserts instead that an investigation of how "sex has been put into discourse" illustrates that:

What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadowy existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret. (Foucault 1978, p.35)

Foucault identifies that from about the eighteenth century the practice of Christian confession which had traditionally controlled sexual behaviour was replaced by new 'scientific' discourses. This resulted in the confessional act remaining, even though carried out in different contexts - between psychiatrists and patients, parents and children, teachers and students. One important dynamic of confession is the relationship between the one 'confessing' and the one 'listening'. To speak is to claim at least some power, even though it may be marginal, and in this act the speaker can both assert and have affirmed the truth of sex and also their own subjectivity. "And this discourse of truth finally takes effect, not in the one who received it, but in the one from whom it is wrested" (1978, p.62).

The other outcome of the increased number of sites for 'confessing' about sex and pleasure was the opportunity they provided to develop an archive of material around which strategies of knowledge and power could be deployed. This resulted in increased surveillance and control of the bodies of women and children and also those considered to be abnormal in some way. He describes the subject positions to emerge from this attention as, "The hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult" (1978, p.104). Foucault suggests that one of the perverse identities to emerge in the nineteenth century is that of the 'homosexual', an identity formed both through the legal and psychiatric attention given to sex between men as well as a process Foucault calls 'reverse discourse', where "homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same

vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (1978, p.101).

Concern with the masturbating child is just part of the broader anxiety relating to the sexuality of young people, including if, what and how they should be taught about sex. It is important to note that Foucault uses the example of the education and disciplining of children on sexual matters, not just to explore how power is produced through this process, but also to contribute to his overall project which he later defined as being, “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (1982, p.777).

In *The Subject and Power* Foucault (1982) drew together the different areas of investigation he had undertaken across all his major works to describe three modes of objectification through which humans are transformed into subjects. The first of these concerns the various forms of knowledge involving “the objectivizing of the speaking subject” (p.777) or “scientific classification” (Rabinow 1984, p.8). Here Foucault cites areas of knowledge including biological sciences and linguistics that contribute to the discursive production of the truths which in turn shape the possibilities for human expression and subjectivity.

The second mode of objectivization involves what Foucault calls “dividing practices” where the subject is “divided inside himself or divided from others”. Examples he gives are “the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminal and the ‘good boys’” (1982, p.777). These four examples of dividing practices correspond with the major studies he conducted in his works *Madness and Civilization* (1973), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978). In all these studies Foucault explores the links between the development of ‘scientific knowledge’ and the application of social policies that serve to manipulate the groups around which these new knowledges are produced. In this process Foucault is challenging one of the key tenets of modernity where knowledge is viewed as part of the movement towards increased freedom rather than control.

Foucault’s final mode of objectivization deals with “the way a human being turns himself into a subject” and he gives the example of “how men have learned to recognise themselves as subjects of ‘sexuality’” (1982, p.778). Through this process humans apply

the knowledge that is used to objectivize them to produce their own subjectivity. Jose (1998) suggests that these different modes did not exist in isolation but in fact “were different facets of the same process; different vantage points from which the process of the formation of subjects, both as individual consciousnesses and as members of a given social and political community, could be conceptualised and understood” (p.3).

Several theorists have applied Foucault’s approach to subjectivity to critiques of the effects of education (Kenway 1990; Youdell 2004; Besley and Peters 2007). Schools are sites which rely on setting boundaries (physical as well as subjective), they draw on normative discourses in different curriculum areas and pedagogical approaches and encourage the disciplining of the self. In regard to sex education, Mayo (2004) comments that, “Schools play a role in demarcating proper from improper identity and inscribing boundaries around particular identities and activities” (p.28). I explore these issues in Chapter Five when I analyse the particular discourses that operate around sex education in Australia and the role these have on the subjectivities of young people.

## **1.2 Morality and ethics**

A key discourse that shaped the controversy around the SHARE project is that of ‘morality’. One of the reasons that I find Foucault’s discussion on sexuality and power useful is that it exposes the multi layered nature of talk about sex. While battles can appear to be about who has sex and why, in fact the struggles are much broader and deeper than that and involve fundamental concerns about the nature of how life should be lived. It is these struggles that resonate within contemporary debates that have become known as the ‘culture wars’ where moral visions get expressed as polarising tendencies between religious orthodoxy and progressivism (Hunter 1991).

Foucault’s project on the history of sexuality changed to one of being a ‘problematization’ of the human subject itself and not just of sexuality. When Foucault first published *History of Sexuality Volume 1* he announced that this was a methodological framework that he would follow in subsequent volumes analyzing - 2: The body and flesh; 3: The children’s crusade; 4: The wife, the mother and the hysteric; 5: The perverts; and 6: Populations and races. Instead, after the release of *Volume 1*, Foucault did not publish another book for eight years and then *Volume 2, The Use of Pleasure* and *Volume 3, The Care of the Self* were simultaneously released in 1984. These volumes focus not on the themes identified in *Volume 1* but instead on the final

'objectivising mode' of the way humans turn themselves into subjects. To do this Foucault (1985) turns to the eras of classical Greece and imperial Rome in order to investigate what he calls "the history of the desiring man" (p.6).

One of the rationales Foucault gives for taking this approach is that he wanted to explore the rules of conduct around sex that are not shaped by the modern values of Christianity. In effect he is interested in the human subject in a time before 'sex', before the sexual subjectivity that had been produced by the religious and scientific discourses he describes in *Volume 1*. Foucault is also interested in the ethical concerns that underpin these rules, which he calls the 'arts of existence'. He defines these as:

...those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria. (Foucault 1985, p.11)

Foucault's aim in doing this is not to seek some glorified age of sexual freedom but instead to broaden the terms by which an ethical life can be lived in the present. It is interesting to note that Foucault explicitly disputes the belief that modern era Christianity brought new forms of moral interdictions on sex outside marriage, chastity or homosexuality. He observes that early Christian doctrines borrow extensively from the moral philosophy of antiquity and cites as an example that:

...the first great Christian text devoted to sexual practice in married life – Chapter X of Book II of the *Pedagogue* by Clement of Alexandria – is supported by a number of scriptural references, but it also draws on a set of principles and precepts borrowed directly from pagan philosophy. (Foucault 1985, p.15)

However he does caution that while the same themes may be found in Christianity and paganism they should not be viewed as a part of a continuum.

One of the key differences in Greek society (at least for certain men and excluding women, children and slaves) was that rules around sexual practice did not arise only out prohibition of particular practices at certain times but out of the requirement to constitute selfhood through the demonstration of certain behaviours. One of the terms used by the

Greeks was *aphrodisia* which Foucault understands to refer to the “acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure” (1985, p.40). Young men were to create themselves through exploring *aphrodisia* in an appropriate ‘manly’ way. This meant having sex with women, boys or slaves but doing this in a way that avoided behaviours that were passive, such as being penetrated. It also meant not experiencing an excess of emotional attachment that may result in unmanly passive sentiment. “For a man excess and passivity were the two main forms of immorality in the practice of *aphrodisia*” (1985, p.47).

Throughout the two later volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces the way ethical problematizations shifted over time in classical Greece and imperial Rome. One change is that while the Greeks practised the ‘art of existence’ aimed at shaping the character of men during early adulthood, the Romans practised something Foucault calls ‘the cultivation of the self’ which was a lifelong enterprise (1985). Halperin (1995) identifies that these practices were:

...designed to produce a heightened scrutiny of oneself, a constant monitoring of one’s behaviour and dispositions, a holistic and therapeutic regimen of mind and body. The result of self-cultivation was not only self-mastery but self-sufficiency and happiness. (Halperin 1995, p.70)

The practices themselves were not confined to sexual acts but also included others that focussed on improving the mind; a process that in Greek was called *askēsis*. For Foucault, philosophical activity itself is a practice of *askēsis* as it requires “an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought” (1985, p.9).

These later volumes of the *History of Sexuality* provide a different way of thinking about ethics and morality that I draw on in this thesis. Foucault’s exploration of the relationship between ethics and sexual behaviour in the classical times challenges the notion that Christian rules of conduct on sexual behaviour are necessarily the foundation of a moral life. Foucault defines morality as a “set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches and so forth” (1985, p.25). While following these rules may lead to an individual becoming an ethical

subject this could only be considered to be the case if an individual does this as a practice of self improvement rather than an act of blind obedience.

In his final lecture series in 1981-82 on the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault (2005) says that “in reality *askēsis* is a practice of truth” (p.317) as it does not require compliance with some legal authority and nor does it require a ‘self-renunciation’. It requires ‘acquiring something’ and that something is the ‘self transfiguration’ required to prepare an individual for their future life. In Greek this is called *paraskeue* and Foucault defines this as “the structure of the permanent transformation of true discourse, firmly fixed in the subject, into principles of morally acceptable behaviour” (p.327). Foucault concludes this lecture by emphasizing that the process of *askēsis* from the classical age is very different from the ascesis seen in Christianity where truth telling is based on a Revelation or Text and requires sacrifices and finally renunciation of oneself to demonstrate that one is given over to God.

One of the important approaches to this self knowledge for Foucault is the attention he gives to the place of ‘pleasure’. The turn to pleasure was framed both as an aesthetic technique for living as well as a ‘counter attack’ on a deployment of sexuality built around repression of desire (1978, p.157). Foucault’s advocacy of a move away from ‘sex-desire’ towards ‘bodies and pleasure’ also reflects a desire to ‘desexualize’ sexual identities. Based on this, a ‘homosexual’ is not one unified subject position produced through discourses around a defined set of sexual practices but instead is a body open to “intense and intensifying, pleasures that took the entire body as the surface and depth of its operation” (Butler 1999, p.11).

The framing of an ethical life in terms of practices of the self is evident in the debates over values and sex education. The abstinence until marriage movement locates ethical behaviour as acceptance of strict rules around sexual behaviour, consistent with the belief that a good Christian must learn to control their sexual desires. The approach to education known as ‘comprehensive’ sex education emphasizes the development of skills and knowledge that leads to self-awareness about sexual desire and actions and self-care strategies such as practising safe sex. Both of these processes contribute to the sexual subjectivities of young people and both make ‘truth claims’ about which is best for the health and wellbeing of young people and for society as a whole.

These contrasting approaches raise the question as to how one is to judge the best approach. Should it be based on 'science', appealing to notions of rationality drawn from evidence gained from investigations of young people's sexual behaviour or should it be guided by an appeal to a higher moral good and universalizing, utopian ideals? Is there in fact a real difference between these approaches or are both simply part of the same system of disciplinary regimes of the sexuality of young people? This philosophical conundrum is at the heart of some of the debates on Foucault's methodological approach.

### **1.3 Critical challenges to Foucault's work**

Any critique of Foucault's theoretical and methodological approaches necessarily has to engage with the diverse range of topics he covered and the different methods and purposes of that work. While some limitations apply to his whole body of work, such as his failure to adequately incorporate an analysis of gender, others relate to specific aspects of his methodology as well as the philosophical implications and possible contradictions of his investigations.

I have already briefly discussed the way that Foucault modified his approach to discourse formations as a result of the difficulties he encountered in explaining their epistemological foundations without referring to the 'grand underlying theories' that he was opposing. McNay (1994) also argues that Foucault needed to move away from what he called an 'archaeological' approach as "the premises of structural analysis apply to language as an already constituted, finished and closed system, but do not take into account language as an act of speech, an utterance or an event" (p.78). Without the social context for the language it becomes difficult to attribute any meaning at all to the discourse and the process becomes one that risks being seen as "nihilistic non-seriousness" (Hoy 1986, p.5).

Foucault's subsequent development of the genealogical approach he called 'the history of the present' focussed on studying the link between knowledge and power through an analysis of different social issues (madness, sexuality, punishment). However this genealogical approach has also been criticized for not being able to provide a basis for judging why some experiences of power may be more oppressive or harmful than others and why, if power is just a circulation of discursive and non-discursive formations, resistance is possible and even desirable. These criticisms are informed by a critique of Foucault as being anti-humanist. One of the leading proponents of this view is the

influential German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas (1986) as seen in the following statement he made on Foucault's work:

Hasn't history, under the stoic gaze of the archaeologist Foucault, frozen into an iceberg covered with the crystals of arbitrary formations of discourse? Doesn't this iceberg, under what appears as the cynical gaze of the genealogist Foucault, have a much different dynamic than the actualizing thinking of modernity cares to acknowledge – namely, a senseless back and forth of anonymous processes of subjugation in which power and nothing but power appears in ever-changing guises. (Habermas 1986, p.106)

Habermas here is questioning Foucault's relationship to modernity based on his understanding of Foucault's views on the enlightenment. Habermas does not agree with Foucault's pessimistic analysis of the effects of the human sciences and points to his failure to see the possibility of different forms of freedom that arise from these modernist knowledges. "Where Habermas sees the dialectic of freedom, Foucault sees the progressive subsumption of bodies under an inexorable disciplinary regime" (McNay 1994, p.106).

Habermas and Foucault were never able to properly debate their differences due to Foucault's death in 1984, however a number of critical studies of their different positions have been written<sup>12</sup>. One of these is by Nancy Fraser (1994) who in her essay, *Michel Foucault: A Young Conservative* offers the alternative view that instead of being against modernity, Foucault may more accurately be described as taking a critical approach to humanism which she asserts is not the same as making a total rejection of modernity. She suggests it is possible to see humanism, which is based on the enlightenment notion that individuals are rational and seeking self realization, as just one facet of modernity. However Fraser argues that even if this argument can be made it is still not possible to defend Foucault for taking this approach as he fails to justify either philosophically or strategically any rationale for the rejection of humanism. In particular she agrees with Habermas that Foucault's failure to develop any alternative criteria that can be used to make value judgements, means that he himself has no grounds on which to even make his own critiques (Fraser 1994).

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<sup>12</sup> See particularly the essays published in Kelly (1994).

In fact in his later years Foucault sought to clarify his position. In his essay, *What is Enlightenment* Foucault (2000b) proposes a conception of modernity that situates it as an “attitude” or “mode of relating to contemporary reality” (2000b, p.309). This requires a “critical interrogation on the present” (2000b, p.319) where the limits of reason are constantly reviewed. In taking this approach Foucault is signaling that he is standing within rather than outside the enlightenment tradition. Hoy argues that by doing this “Foucault is not claiming that the enlightenment tradition is dead, but only that it would die if we stopped doing genealogical investigations that explore the ‘contemporary limits of the necessary’” (1986, p.23).

The variety of scholarly views on whether Foucault should be considered as anti-humanist reflect both the sometimes contradictory and changing nature of Foucault’s work as well as the various philosophical traditions by which this work is judged. For some queer writers the fact that Foucault may be an anti-humanist is not of concern and is even celebrated as humanism is perceived as providing the mechanisms by which queer lives are delegitimised (McWhorter 1999, p.97).

Foucault’s ambivalent relationship to humanism is also evident in his formulation of the human subject. As I have described previously, Foucault uses a dual process of subjection: both in the sense of ‘subjectivity’ and in the sense of being constrained or limited by discourse. However it is not clear by what process the individual subject can in fact subvert dominant discourses. If there is no such thing as human essence, what agency or resource do individuals mobilise to initiate this resistance and where does it come from? This criticism also relates to the overall lack of attention that Foucault gives to the voices of those involved in resisting regimes of power, particularly women. Bartkowski (1988) makes the important observation that:

The confession of which Foucault speaks at length is an attempt to give voice to the resistance: yet what we (readers/confessors) hear are not the voices of women, children, homosexuals, perverts, but the voice of power as it institutionalizes, rationalizes, domesticates, and suppresses those very discourses by which it shores itself up. (Bartkowski 1988, p.45)

Bartkowski is critical of the fact that Foucault does not take account of the many different ways women have actively resisted the patriarchal systems of knowledge that sought to

control their lives. She suggests that this reflects Foucault's own authorial position of power as a white male intellectual within this patriarchal system. It is he who controls which voices and actions actually get recognition.

Bartkowski's (1998) critique of Foucault as author poses an interesting dilemma. If Foucault's work is read as something which reflects his own social position as a white privileged homosexual man then this could be seen to contradict one of the main premises of his work; namely that the modern subject should refuse fixed identity categories. I agree that Foucault's failure to adequately address issues of gender, race and class can lead to legitimate claims that *The History of Sexuality* is "complicit in a will to reproduce a hegemonic white, masculinist discourse, power and identity" (Angelides 2001, p.154). However even with this limitation I believe that Foucault's interrogation of the historical construction of sexuality provides a useful model for investigating contemporary political struggles involving sexuality.

The other key concern about Foucault's account of subjectivity is whether it allows for the transformation of power relationships. It is in his later writing on the 'technologies of the self' that Foucault (2000c) articulates ways to redefine the relationship to the self in such a way that self mastery is achieved. This account also has limitations particularly around how power shaped through class and wealth interacts with 'self mastery'. However as can be seen in the following quote, Foucault did recognise that a desirable outcome of these self practices was the need to create a more egalitarian society.

I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible. (Foucault, 2000c, p.298)

Foucault's work then is contentious and challenging as evidenced by this summary of some of the limitations and cautions that apply to his theoretical and methodological approaches. It is notable that critiques of Foucault's work are marked by passion and serious engagement with the implications of his work even as its inconsistencies are recognised. I believe this passion comes from the desire to achieve the practical elements

of social change suggested by Foucault's insights, even though he himself did not identify a plan for such action. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1986) defend Foucault through clarifying and restating the purpose of his intellectual work, a purpose that they believe has been misread by his critics. They argue that:

Foucault sees the job of the intellectual as one of identifying the specific forms and specific interrelationships which truth and power have taken in our history. His aim has never been to denounce power *per se* nor to propound truth but to use his analysis to shed light on the specific dangers that each specific type of power/knowledge produces. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1986, p.116)

This defense of Foucault in terms of what he was exposing rather than advocating is often used by queer and feminist theorists and others interested in progressive political and social change (Said 1986; Sawicki 1991; Halperin 1995). Foucault himself suggests such a defense in his often quoted statement that "if everything is dangerous then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper-and pessimistic activism" (2000e, p.256). The following section describes some of the influence Foucault has had on the work of feminist and queer theorists and activists.

#### **1.4 Foucault, feminism and queer theory**

Foucault's work is often characterized as having an early, middle and later phase which corresponds to his focus on disciplinary processes, surveillance and the 'docile body' (in *Discipline and Punish*), the development of bio-power and the production of subjectivities (*History of Sexuality Volume 1*) and concluding with his attention to practices of ethical self formation (*History of Sexuality Volumes 2 and 3*) (Deveaux 1996). Feminist and queer literature draws variously on all of these phases to produce a diverse, complex and sometimes conflicting engagement with Foucault's work.

While feminist theory concerns itself with the position of women in society Jagose (1996) identifies that 'queer':

...has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identification and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies. (Jagose, 1996, p.1)

A local South Australian example of this can be seen in the approach to sexual identity taken by what used to be called the 'Feast Adelaide Gay and Lesbian Cultural Festival'. From 2008 'Gay and Lesbian' was dropped from the title and it became simply the 'Feast Festival, Australia's leading Festival of Queer Arts and Culture'. In the *Feast Program Guide (2008)* the artistic director for Feast writes, "I guarantee an abundance of artistic excellence, daring and groundbreaking expression, and inclusive, welcoming community events, in which the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex & Queer community can celebrate who it is".

This statement exemplifies some of the complexities of identity discussed by Foucault and taken up by queer theorists. The statement includes an appeal to identity categories that are singular and discrete while at the same time suggesting an abundance of possible arrangements of gender and sexuality. It is also envisaged that this collection of identities can come together in one idealised community in an act of celebration. The unifying theme is one of diversity; a diversity that is produced against a dominant heterosexual paradigm.

As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* was received into an intellectual environment that was already challenging fixed notions of sexual and gender identity and in fact Foucault was informed by some of this writing and also by the political activity of the nascent gay and lesbian liberation movement (Macey 2004). Jeffrey Weeks (2000), an English sociologist who began writing histories of sexualities in the 1970s, comments that:

...in many ways Foucault fundamentally challenged the easy ideology of early sexual radicalism, and especially the assumption that sexuality in and of itself could provide a challenge to the complex configurations of power. (Weeks 2000, p.9)

One of the reasons that Foucault has been controversial is that his work critiques crucial elements of liberation movements that relied on categories such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'woman' as the organising principles for demands for rights and freedoms. These tensions are evident in the relationship between queer theory and gay and lesbian identity politics. Warner (1993) argues that:

...the preference for 'queer' represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favour of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal. (Warner 1993, p.xxvi)

Unlike the early homophile movements which sought to promote tolerance for homosexuals, gay liberation posited that "gay identity was a revolutionary identity: what it sought was not social recognition but to overthrow the social institutions which marginalized and pathologised homosexuality" (Jagose 1996, p.37). Gay liberation initially formed around the concerns of white homosexual men and had a particular focus on challenging the psychiatric classification of homosexuality as a mental illness and the laws that criminalized sex between men. While some women (who often called themselves 'camp') had links to homosexual men through bars and cafes it was not until the women's liberation and gay movements of the 1970s that a visible lesbian liberation movement emerged (Baird 2005).

My own history intersects with the emergence of this lesbian movement. From the 1980s I participated in what was known as the lesbian feminist movement in Australia in many different ways. These included working in a collectively run women's refuge, studying feminist philosophy, living in lesbian households, playing in a women's band, having relationships with women and joining with others in political action<sup>13</sup>. In the late 1980s I started working in the response to HIV and AIDS and witnessed the change in community structures with the gay and lesbian communities becoming much more closely integrated. I also experienced some of the heated debates that took place at this time over issues of gender and sexuality such as: Should transgender women be able to attend lesbian events? Can men be feminists? Are sadism and masochism practices a legitimate form of pleasure or a replication of abusive power relations? Does the feminist movement have relevance for indigenous women and other women of colour in Australia?

Into these discussions came the concept of 'queer', which at first was regarded by many of the lesbian feminist women and gay men I knew as having little utility for either our lives or our political work. However in the early 1990s the identity claims of transgender

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<sup>13</sup> This action included demonstrating against Jerry Falwell from the US Christian Right group Moral Majority, who visited Australia in 1982.

and bisexual people and the splintering of gay and lesbian identities into sub identities defined through such things as sexual practice, appearance and culture altered the language of sexuality and queer became a possibility if not always one that was embraced. One prominent Sydney activist, Craig Johnston, is reported as expressing his exasperation with 'queer theory' by commenting, "I'm gay but I'm not happy. Because I'm fucking pissed off with so called queers... The agenda is still liberation for lesbians and gays. For homosexuality" (Johnston quoted in Flynn 2001, p.70).

While queer emerged as a 'disrupter' of identities, in fact its application does not always operate in this way. As can be seen in the *Feast Guide*, 'queer' can become just another identity category along with a long list of others. In my work at SHine SA one of the communities we worked with was often referred to as 'GLBTIQ'<sup>14</sup> and it was particularly the young people involved in the organisation who requested the inclusion of the category of 'queer'. There are different ways to interpret the comfort they found in being thought of as 'queer'. It may reflect a positive framing of a political identity (that may or may not have anything to do with who they have sex with) or it could be interpreted as a disavowal of perceived old fashioned gay and lesbian identities around which homophobic discourses have crystallised (Halperin 1995).

One of the most challenging, and I believe valuable, contributions of queer theory that emerged out of gay and lesbian scholarship is that it 'problematized' the humanist aim of the gay and lesbian movements. It asked difficult questions of what was actually achieved through the framing of essentialist gay and lesbian identities. However the question emerges as to whether these identities could be, as Halperin suggests, just a "fantasmatic projection, an incoherent construction that functions to stabilize and to consolidate the cultural meaning of heterosexuality by encapsulating everything that is 'other' than or 'different' from it" (1995, p.61). One of the outcomes of the interrogation of the essential nature of gay and lesbian identities was the denaturalising of heterosexuality itself. This resulted in scholarship that focussed on heterosexuality (Katz 1995; Jackson 2003) and assisted in reshaping the discourses of normalization that had emerged from the investigations into the perceived problem of homosexuality

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<sup>14</sup> Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer.

A related intellectual shift, which had major significance for the feminist movement in the 1980s and 1990s, is the re-theorizing of the relationship between gender and sexuality particularly around the notion of 'woman' as a universal unitary category. An important influence for this is the work of Gayle Rubin who, in her article *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality*, argues that it is "essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically to more accurately reflect their separate social existence" (1984, p.308). This challenged the feminist ideology of seeing lesbian oppression as part of the overall oppression of women rather than part of a system applied to a range of so called 'sex perversions'. Rubin also emphasized that female sexuality could be focussed on desire and pleasure, an approach that differed from the position of some radical feminists who constructed sexuality only in terms of danger (Sawicki 1988).

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions to a rethinking of the issue of gender and also to the development of queer theory is the philosophical work of Judith Butler (1990). Unlike Rubin, Butler theorizes that gender and sexuality are inseparable. In her landmark book *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler (1990) argues that "Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women" the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (p.2). Her aim in this book is to establish a critical genealogy of the construction of the categories of sex, gender, sexuality, desire and the body as identity categories and show them to be products of 'compulsory heterosexuality' and 'phallogocentrism'.

Butler (1990) argues that gender is a cultural performance, a "stylized repetition of acts" (p33), which creates the reality of gender but which in fact is responding to the heterosexual imperative required for intelligible gender and sexuality roles. In her book *Bodies That Matter* Butler (1993) extends her analysis of gender to take more account of the cultural production of 'sex'. She suggests that:

In the first instance performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act" but rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. What will, I hope become clear in what follows is that the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual

difference in the service of the consolidations of heterosexual imperative. (Butler 1993, p.2)

Butler uses the insights of psychoanalysis to provide an alternative theory of the production of sexual difference and her focus in this is on:

...denaturalizing and destabilizing the duality of sexual difference as it stands in the hegemonic symbolic order, which she characterizes as heterosexist, as well as phallogentric, in order to open up the possibilities for alternative imaginaries that are neither masculine or feminine. (Jagg 2008, p.75)

One of the most challenging aspects of Butler's (1993) approach is the proposition that there is not a materialist notion of sex (or the body) around which gender becomes socially constructed. This goes against much feminist theory which constructs gender through patriarchy and proposes resistance through changes in social relations between men and women. It also challenges Foucault's theory on the human subject which assumes a stable corporeal entity around which subjectivity is discursively created.

Butler's important contribution to queer theory is the visibility she provides to the way philosophical conceptions of what it means to be human are built on the exclusion of gay and lesbian subjectivities. That is, the assumed 'naturalness' of heterosexuality is in fact created psychically and culturally against the abject 'homosexual body'. In doing this Butler seeks to expose the power relations that make the homosexual body unrecognizable and 'unhuman'. "The question of who and what is considered real and true is apparently a question of knowledge. But it is also, as Michel Foucault makes plain, a question of power" (Butler 2004, p.27).

As is evident from the above quote, Butler (2004) makes extensive use of Foucault's work but she also draws on other theorists including Derrida and Althusser. As with Foucault her post structuralist approach to gender, sex and sexuality has been criticized for its failure to account for "how individuals come together to act for change, how these actors are changed by their activities, and how these acts and actors crystallize as movements" (Cohen 1991, p.84), that is, for lacking an account of a political strategy. However Butler (1991) answers this challenge by cautioning against the terms by which the political is defined and asks the question, "Can the visibility of identity *suffice* as a

political strategy, or can it only be the starting point for a strategic intervention which calls for a transformation of policy?" (p.19).

Butler has produced an extensive body of work which is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in depth. However I will return to key elements of her theories particularly in my analysis of how the homosexual body has been understood within the schooling system in South Australia, and the implications this has for the subjectivities of young people. I conclude this section by outlining briefly some of the ways that Foucault's final work on ethics and self transformation has been applied by feminist and queer theorists.

At the end of his life, Foucault increasingly talked about an ethical life organised around the care of the self. Feminists have applied this notion of the aesthetics of the self to particularly explore the possibilities of finding an embodied femininity that is able to resist the process of normalization, a move away from using Foucault to just describe the process by which female bodies are rendered 'docile'<sup>15</sup>.

Mariana Valverde (2004) finds examples of ethical self formation in the truth telling practices associated with Alcoholics Anonymous. She is careful to distinguish this process from the Foucaultian notion of 'confession' by arguing that it does not take place within an environment that is working towards an 'authentic self' and is indicative of the fact that "there are many different practices of truth telling and, therefore, many different kinds of selves and that these can easily coexist, even in the same person" (p.73). Other opportunities for personal transformation have been found in a diverse range of aesthetic practices relating to the female body; from body building (Haber 1996) to line dancing (McWhorter 1999) and yoga (Heyes 2007).

Such creative applications of self formation may be surprising but Foucault himself described a range of practices that he suggested as forms of *askesis*. In interviews with the gay press he discussed drug use and S & M practices which he said offered "new possibilities for pleasure". He also talked about the task of creating a gay life, of "becoming gay" (2000d, p.165). Halperin posits that 'queer' marks the very site of "gay

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<sup>15</sup> For example Bartky (1988) writes that the patriarchal system of sexual subordination "aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers" (p.75).

becoming” and that a range of practices, both sexual and relational can be part of this queer *askēsis* (1995, p.79).

This turn to queer transgression raises important questions. Are such activities really transformational or do they reflect a superficial commodification of what it means to be gay as evidenced in the marketing of gay lifestyles for the ‘pink’ dollar? Some of these applications of Foucault’s later work have also been challenged philosophically. For example Gros (2005), who wrote the course summary for Foucault’s lecture series on the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, comments that:

It has been said [...] that in the face of the collapse of values, Foucault, in appealing to the Greeks, gave in to the narcissistic temptation. That he proposed an “aesthetics of existence” as an alternative ethic, indicating to each the path to personal fulfillment through a stylization of life [...] Or else it is said that Foucault’s morality consists in a call to systematic transgression, or in the cult of cherished marginality. These generalizations are facile, excessive, but above all wrong, and in a way the whole of the 1982 course is constructed in opposition to these unfounded criticisms. (Gros 2005, p.530)

Nevertheless Foucault’s appeal to focus on the self’s work is important and I believe it offers a counter point to drawing on concepts of morality which rely on adherence to codes of conduct based on the control and denial of sexual desire. Opening up the field to different forms of ethical practice is complex and raises many other questions about the relationship of the self to community and to the state more broadly. I agree with feminist critiques of this aspect of Foucault’s work which argue that an individualized concept of self transformation fails to capture the importance of collective action in making the social changes that can assist women to achieve personal empowerment. Allen comments that “personal transformation of any sort can be accomplished only if reciprocal affective and communicative relations with others are in place such that a coherent self can be formed” (A. Allen 2004, p.252).

Sawicki (2004) agrees that Foucault does not provide answers that can address the issues raised by such critiques. However she views this as a strength of his work as:

...his aim was less to bolster particular programs than it was to pose questions and problems for politics as usual across the political spectrum – and, I would add, to serve as a stimulus to a myriad of possible forms of resistance to dominant regimes of power and knowledge. (Sawicki 2004, p.177)

My use of Foucault in this thesis can therefore be seen as responding to this stimulus as described by Sawicki (2004). How can the controversy around the SHARE project be understood in terms of the power/knowledge dynamics in South Australia and what does this mean for resisting these dominant regimes of power? In the next and final section I outline how the work of Foucault and also feminist and queer theorists informs the methodological approaches that I apply in this thesis.

### **1.5 Methodological approaches and authorial dilemmas**

This thesis takes a particular event, the campaign against the SHARE project, to identify the devices and strategies that were deployed to create the controversy. My investigation starts with the fact that the opponents to the project were drawn primarily from fundamentalist Christian organisations which I collectively call ‘Christian Right’ groups. My analysis will therefore focus on the tactics and strategies used by these groups in Australia and in the United States, and the effect this has on sex education generally as well as specifically in South Australia.

My aim in doing this is to examine the dynamics of power at the micro level, such as in the classroom, as well at the macro level of state instrumentalities. While I particularly focus on the conservative response to sex education, I also examine the productive nature of such conflicts and critically reflect on how all the actors, including my own employer and the SA Education Department, are implicated in producing this controversy.

The methodological approach used in this thesis includes an analysis of ‘local discursivities’ relating to the SHARE project and the genealogy of those discourses. As I have previously outlined, genealogy describes the “tactics whereby on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledge which were thus released would be brought into play” (Foucault 1994, p.24). Genealogy therefore concerns itself with investigating how certain knowledge gets constructed as the truth.

This methodology will be applied to three sets of materials:

**1) Written documents relating to the SHARE project.** These include the curriculum and resource materials, media transcripts, parliamentary debates and records relating to the SHARE project. The analysis of these documents will be not only on what was said, but also on what was not said and the meanings that can be made of this in terms of the power-knowledge nexus that exists for sexuality in South Australia.

**2) Key informant interviews.** Nine people with extensive involvement with sexual health and relationships education were interviewed (see Appendix 1). These people were selected on the basis that together they have produced the majority of sex education texts used in state secondary schools across Australia.

Five sex education ‘texts’ and programs are discussed in the interviews. These are: *Taught Not Caught* (Clarity Collective 1983), *High Talk* (Family Planning Queensland 1997), *Talking Sexual Health* (ANCHARD 2001), *Catching On* (Department of Education & Training, Victoria 2004) and *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* (Government of Western Australia 2003).

These interviews will be used to identify others’ experiences of controversy over sex education in Australia, constraints that have been experienced in developing or implementing the sex education materials, and other perspectives on what circumstances may have existed in South Australia that produced the controversy over the SHARE project. (See Appendix 2 for questions used for these interviews).

**3) Published literature on sex education debates in USA and Australia.**

The discourse analysis of the published materials on the SHARE project and the outcomes of the key informant interviews will be complemented by the published literature on sex education in Australia and the United States.

Together these three sources of data will be used to address the two research aims of identifying:

- i. The similarities and differences between the campaign against the SHARE project and others that have taken place against sex education in Australia and

the US since the 1980s in terms of the organisations involved, the strategies used and the fears/moral panics invoked and evoked.

- ii. The particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003.

In undertaking this analysis I draw on queer and feminist theory to explore how discourses relating to gender and sexuality were deployed and to examine the meaning this has for education of young people and for the effect this has on their production as sexual subjects. This approach is based on my understanding that sexuality is not an essential attribute but is discursively constructed. Based on the above analysis I then address the final research aim of identifying:

- iii. Alternative discourses and approaches to sex education programs in Australia based on the lessons learnt from the campaign against the SHARE project.

The unique position I find myself in with this thesis is that in my role as media spokesperson for the SHARE project, I generated some of the materials which I draw on for discourse analysis. My media role posed some interesting dilemmas as I found myself sometimes desexualizing the debate and even using the rhetoric of ‘family values’ to counteract the opponent group concentration on sexual acts. I explore these issues in Chapter Four where I analyse the campaign against the SHARE project in detail. I want to now discuss some of the methodological implications for the dual roles I have in this thesis: namely as manager of the SHARE project as well as being a publicly identified lesbian.

### **1.5.1 Being a publicly identified lesbian in a post-structuralist world**

The overall approach taken in this thesis is one that is consistent with post-structuralism. However in taking this position I am not disregarding completely the need for attention to the political and social institutions that impact on gender and sexual minorities around the world. The Australian political scientist, Dennis Altman (2001), is highly critical of what he perceives as the tendency of queer theorists to dissolve identities to a point which leaves no room for social movements and political change (p.158). While I believe Altman overstates the lack of political utility of queer theory I do agree that it is

important to explore the circumstances which make social change possible. In this thesis therefore I maintain a focus on the material circumstances that shape sexual and gender identities and behaviour but at the same time resist notions that attach identity to any one fixed location.

This approach also informs how I see my own sexual identity. I am comfortable with maintaining a lesbian identity but do so with the caution that this should not be viewed as a totalizing identity. As I have described in this chapter my lesbian identity is informed by many different factors, some of which relate to my sexual relationships but many of which draw on other cultural and relational experiences. Judith Butler (1991) asks the useful question of “What or who is it that is ‘out’, made manifest and fully disclosed, when and if I reveal myself as a lesbian?” (p.15). This relates to the problem Sedgwick (1990) refers to in her book *The Epistemology of the Closet*. She identifies that even when an individual is ‘out’ of the closet they are at the same time ‘in’ a new sexually marked space where meaning is still being created, so one can never be totally ‘out’.

My own use of a lesbian identity has fluctuated over my adult life. At times it has served as a political statement but at other times it has had more cultural meanings of identification with a certain community, such as playing in the lesbian soccer team in Adelaide. During the time I lived in Fiji I rarely proclaimed myself as a lesbian as I was working in an environment in which this had little intelligibility and so instead signalled my non-heterosexuality through the relationship with my female partner.

I use the term ‘publicly identified’ as I have been in public positions that have been based on a lesbian identity. These include the Ministerial Council on Gay and Lesbian Health as well as the Board of the Feast Festival. While I don’t assume everyone who meets me would know anything about my sexual identity (or necessarily be at all interested) it is very easy to locate information that identifies me as a lesbian. This was of particular relevance during the campaign against the SHARE project when the opposition groups were individually targeting those of us working on the project. However again this leaves open the question raised by Butler (1991) of what being a lesbian actually means.

My use of Foucault in this thesis is therefore based on the insights and inspiration his theorizing provides for challenging heteronormativity and this is based (in part) on my own experiences as a lesbian. In adopting this approach I am departing from any sense of

being an objective observer, a position that I take to be impossible anyway given that everyone brings various subject positions to the task of analysis. The inclusion of my own experience is not intended as some sort of narcissistic exercise but instead aims to add to the exploration of power in this thesis and to make explicit the effect of my multiple identities (as manager, media spokesperson and public lesbian) on the genealogical investigations.

Foucault himself never discussed his sexuality in his books but in several interviews related some of his work to his own gay sexuality. It is ironic that while Foucault is sometimes criticized for failing to address strategies for liberation his work has been extensively applied by gay, lesbian and queer activists in their struggles for social change. Halperin (1995) reports that the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* was the book cited most frequently by people involved in AIDS activism in New York in 1990. Rubin (1994) also says that Foucault's work "clarified issues and inspired me" (Rubin in Butler 1994, p.7).

The position of sexuality and authorial position is explored in different ways by Ladelle McWhorter and David Halperin. In *Bodies and Pleasures* McWhorter (1999) undertakes a detailed analysis of Foucault's work through applying it to her own life and journey of self definition. She does this both as a demonstration that the application of philosophy can be an 'art of life' and to explore the question of whether "Foucault's work really does function as a help or a hindrance to political activity by and on behalf of non-heterosexual people, as so many theorists over the years have said or at least implied" (p.xix). At the end of the book she argues that Foucault's texts effect change through the ways they destabilize meanings which, she believes, is the "way they mobilize" (p.228).

Halperin's (1995) book *Saint Foucault, Towards a Gay Hagiography*, explores the effect Foucault has had on the lives of gay and lesbian intellectuals and on the debate referred to as the culture wars. His approach to the issue of being a gay author is closer to the position I take in this thesis than that pursued by McWhorter as it concerns the problem of how to use the experience of non-heterosexuality in an academic environment. Halperin (1995) comments that:

The problem of authorization, [...] dramatizes the more general social and discursive predicament of lesbians and gay men in a world where a claimed homosexual identity

operates as an instant disqualification, exposes you to accusation of pathology and partisanship [...] and grants everyone else an absolute epistemological privilege over you. (Halperin 1995, p.8)

Halperin (1995) argues that some of the criticism directed towards Foucault is based on the perception that his own sexuality and sexual practices somehow reduce the legitimacy of his work. In a similar vein, one of the ways I experienced the homophobic discourses invoked in relation to the SHARE project was the risk that my sexual health expertise would be dismissed because of the perception that I have a vested interest in supporting comprehensive and same sex relationship affirming education for young people. In the media interviews I was able to counter concerns about homosexuality through the use of 'scientific evidence' but to draw on any personal experience of the effects of homophobia could have risked contaminating this evidence and would have been seen as inappropriate. It is therefore with some pleasure that I approach this thesis outside of the strictures of employment in any organisation and can therefore engage in the process Foucault called 'fearless speech', where individuals get to engage in their own truth telling.

I want to conclude this discussion on my authorial position by broadening the scope of my personal experience into the two other areas implicated in the controversy over the SHARE project; that is, schools and religion, both of which play important roles in the normalizing of the human subject. It is significant that the following two vignettes explore these institutions through the lens of sexuality. This reflects Foucault's observation that "sexuality; its discourses and mechanisms saturate our society and each of our lives completely" (McWhorter 1999, p.24).

### *School*

In 1976 I was a student at a girl's secondary high school in Sydney. I was immersed in sexuality and yet I was also oblivious to it. I spent many hours doodling the name of different boys on my pencil case and gossiping with friends about potential and current boyfriends. Sex was on my mind and in my body but out of conscious reach. I had been schooled well in both heterosexuality and being a 'good girl'. I belonged in this middle class milieu of responsible femininity.

Six years later I had graduated from university and decided to try my hand at being a teacher. This involved doing practical teaching placements in two girls' secondary schools. I had been in a relationship with a woman for three months and was learning how to negotiate my way through the complexities of the inside/outside nature of sexuality. "To be out is really to be in – inside the realm of the visible, the speakable, the culturally intelligible. But things are still not so clear, for to come out can also work not to situate one on the inside but to jettison one from it" (Fuss 1991, p.4). My experience was that being 'out' in the school environment was not possible for me, emotionally and practically.

Instead I experienced teaching in these girls' high schools as a period of intense and uncomfortable surveillance of my sexuality and my body. Unlike my own school days of oblivious heterosexuality I took every question of whether I had a boyfriend or why I didn't wear a dress as a sign that my 'outness' was being too visible. This experience stayed with me a long time and contributed to my decision to pursue work with young people outside of a school environment where there was less emphasis on producing heterosexual subjectivities through the schooling process. While these experiences took place 25 years ago, Chapter Five summarises more recent research which finds that school continues to be an uneasy and often unsafe place for gay and lesbian teachers and students.

### *Fundamentalist Christianity*

In 2000 a political coup took place in Fiji and parliamentarians were held hostage by the coup leaders for 56 days. I was living in Fiji at this time with my partner who worked for the Federation of the Red Cross. The director of the Fijian Red Cross was John Scott, a European/Fijian whose family had come to Fiji four generations previously as Methodist missionaries<sup>16</sup>. John was in his 50s and had a male partner Greg whom he had been with for over 20 years.

Due to restrictions on our movements and because of the commonalities we shared as 'white' gay couples we spent a lot of time with John and Greg, having Christmas with their extended family and discussing the complexities of life in Fiji after the coup. I had just returned to Adelaide in July 2001 when I received a phone call to say that John and

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<sup>16</sup> See Scott (2004) for a history of the Scott family in Fiji and for an analysis of John Scott's murder.

Greg had both been murdered in their home. I immediately returned to Fiji to support my partner who was still there and to attend John's funeral which was a full State Fijian funeral.

It was a shocking experience and there were many theories about why they were murdered. Was it because of John's role in supporting the hostages which created some enemies or was it related to their sexuality? The then Fijian Police Commissioner suggested at first that they had found evidence that John and Greg were paedophiles and drug users which subsequently was found to be false. After a bungling investigation, a young Fijian man, Apete Kaisua, was arrested and charged with their murders but was eventually acquitted on the grounds of insanity and today he is a resident in St Giles psychiatric hospital in Suva. He said he killed them in the name of God and to purify Fiji.

In an excellent documentary on these murders<sup>17</sup> the families of John Scott and Apete Kaisau are interviewed along with human rights and gay activists in Fiji. What emerges from these interviews is a disturbed young man who had once been very close to John and Greg. As with other Fijians, Apete had been immersed in a Methodist religious environment that had become more fundamentalist and nationalist since the first coup in Fiji in 1987. Homosexuality was a sin and some Fijians marched in the streets to oppose it. For many Fijians, including the police, guilt lay with the victims and not the perpetrator.

Gail Mason (2005), in her study of hate crimes, points out that "a number of postcolonialist and queer theorists have argued that it is the material or symbolic proximity of the other, rather than distance, that engenders negative emotional reactions" (p.588). This is particularly so when the other enters 'our' territory. It is clear that John and Greg entered territory that was deemed not to be theirs; both culturally and sexually. This experience brought home to me the stark and brutal reality of religiously fuelled homophobia.

The point of these vignettes is not to give any sort of definitive account of either schooling or Christianity or indeed to summarise the totality of my experiences relating

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<sup>17</sup> *An Island Calling* directed by Annie Goldson,

to schools or religion. Instead they are presented as important parts of the genealogy of my understanding of sexuality and religion and the importance of education that creates possibilities for all people to be valued.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This thesis is concerned with exploring the problem of sexuality through the lens of the struggle that took place over the SHARE project. The relevance of applying a genealogical approach to this task is that it ensures that the controversy is seen as more than just one isolated incident. Instead it is understood as being produced through a multiplicity of discourses and histories relating to sex education and also to the key anxiety points of gender, homosexuality and the sexual agency/innocence of young people. Most importantly it needs to be understood as reflecting the effects of power, where power is understood as a “relation of force” (Foucault 1994, p.28).

Foucault also emphasises that it is important to study power “at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices” (1994, p.35). In the context of this thesis this study of power is in the practical consequences of the battles to establish the truths about sexuality within South Australian schools. However as will become clear, these local battles also reflect the globalised debates that have become called the culture wars. One aspect of these wars is the political influence of the abstinence until marriage movement, made possible through the additional political and financial support of the Bush Administration in the United States.

Herman (1997) argues that Christian Right attacks on sex education should not just be seen as reflecting anxiety about perceived sexual permissiveness. Instead she recommends that:

We explore current social struggles for what they are – struggles for hegemony between competing belief and value systems. The CR [Christian Right] has a long history of social criticism [...] and it also possesses a comprehensive, progressive social vision. The CR is a utopian movement dedicated to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth. (Herman 1997, p.69)

In the next chapter I explore the history of sex education in schools in Australia and the United States through the struggles that have been created around it.

*For many progressive educators, the emphasis upon the need for the child to express his or herself freely is modified by doubts about the corrective and normative elements of sex education. For many conservatives the emphasis upon the freedom of the parent is modified by an awareness of the family's responsibility to co-operate with public health strategies. Each of these problems has a history in the circumstances which shaped current relations between school, families and young people, placing them within a circuit of governmental strategies.*

(Tait and Meredyth 1996, p.134)

## **Chapter 2:**

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### **Conflicts and consensus: a history of sex education debates in Australia and the US**

This chapter outlines the evolution of sex education for the newly created category of young people known as the 'adolescent'. The identity of 'adolescent' emerged in the early twentieth century to describe the "probationary period between sexual awakening and 'legitimate' sexual activity within marriage" (Moran 2000, p.232). Bay-Cheng (2003) argues that a defining attribute of the adolescent is that they are "infused with a biologically determined hypersexuality" (p.62). Adults then assume responsibility for civilizing the unruly sexual adolescent.

The first two sections of this chapter focus on the Australian experience of sex education and trace the debates that took place as sex education moved from being an essentially private responsibility of parents to a state responsibility delivered through the education system. In presenting this history, I highlight the role and influence of Christian groups in order to give a genealogical perspective to the actions of the Christian Right groups involved in the campaign against the SHARE project.

Unlike Jeffrey Moran's often cited history of sex education in the United States, *Teaching Sex*, (2000) there is not one overall account of the Australian history of sex education. Instead there are a small number of localized histories of the experiences within different states of Australia. One of these is the South Australian history of sex education from 1900-1990 completed by Jim Jose in 1995. In undertaking this research Jose found that while there is "no dearth of literature in which sex education is a focus

[...], only a few works have been devoted to historical analysis of sex education” (Jose 1995, p.67). A review of more recent literature reveals that this situation has not changed. Most research in Australia focuses either on strategies for implementing sex education and /or undertakes a critique of the limitations of this education for particular populations of young people<sup>18</sup>. However the political and social context that shapes sex education in Australia has received little attention<sup>19</sup>, particularly when compared to the American experience.

While there are some unique characteristics of the Australian experience there is similarity between Australia and other western countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom in terms of the arguments that were used to advocate for and oppose sex education within schools. This reflects the colonial history of Australia which created a schooling system based on the English model and also the common religious, psychological and medical discourses that informed the debates on children’s education and sexuality. Auchmuty (1979) records that “the first books of sex education in Australia were copies of the *Home Cyclopaedia* which proliferated in Britain and America before the First World War” (p.174). The connection between sex education in Australia and other western countries has led me to draw on international literature on the histories of sex education where it has particular relevance for events in Australia.

The last section of this chapter describes the history of the abstinence until marriage movement in the United States from the 1980s. The emergence of this movement, with considerable funding from different US government administrations, marks a significant shift in the politics of the debates on sex education, not only in the United States but also globally. During the 20 years that I have been involved in HIV and sexual health education one option presented to prevent infection with a disease or pregnancy has been to abstain from certain ‘risky’ sexual practices. However ‘abstinence’, as promoted by the Christian Right in recent years, has become much more than just one of a range of strategies for prevention. It now signifies a conservative political position in the broader cultural debates on morality and sexuality. It has come to assume this place through the deliberate deployment of discourses that create anxiety and fear about adolescent

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<sup>18</sup> For example see Rasmussen (2004) and Hillier and Mitchell (2008) for a discussion on the inadequacy of sex education for same sex attracted young people in Australia.

<sup>19</sup> One exception to this is *Schooling & Sexualities* edited by Laskey and Beavis (1996) which contains a collection of papers given at a conference in Melbourne that explores the social dimensions of sex education in Australia.

sexuality. One of the mechanisms for this is the manipulation of ‘scientific’ information, such as overstating the health risks of contraception or the failure rate of condoms, in order to represent all sexual activity outside marriage as dangerous. This strategy is very important for influencing sex education in state schools where biblical ideals of chastity cannot be advocated explicitly due to the requirement to keep religious instruction outside of government schools (Irvine 2002).

The history of debates about sex education in Australia includes active involvement by small religious lobby groups and from the larger religious institutions. It is also evident that Australian religious groups have shared inspiration and information through their affiliations and networks with similar groups in other countries, including the United States. As previously outlined, one of the central issues to be considered in this thesis is the particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in 2003. One key avenue for exploring this issue is to identify whether the conservative opposition to the SHARE project is something politically and culturally significant in the histories of sex education in Australia or simply just another outbreak of evangelical fervour similar to many that have come before it.

I explore the abstinence until marriage movement in this chapter as it is my contention that the campaign against the SHARE project represents a unique event that needs to be understood in the context of a globalised discourse on abstinence that originated in the United States. Following Foucault, I argue that this discourse is produced as a strategy of power in relation to the sexuality of young people and has been evoked to counteract the perceived risk to the stability of the ‘natural’ family unit of mother, father and their biological children. That is, the abstinence discourse is not just about young people’s sexual behaviour but is also aimed at challenging the gains made in the human rights of women, gay men and lesbians.

## **2.1 Early twentieth century: leave it to parents and the doctors**

The history of sex education is closely aligned to the development of an education system that was based on the need to produce citizens who complied with a racialised and bourgeois concept of normality. Hunter (1994) argues that schools were modelled on a Christian pastoral approach with teachers assuming the role of training children on appropriate behaviours and social roles (p.173). Schooling therefore serves as a

normalizing process through instruction and physical punishment and enforcement of codes of conduct both within the classroom and the playground (Rose 1999, p.77).

In South Australia a key event in the history of schooling was the *1915 Education Act* which established compulsory education and state control of public schools. This Act changed the relationship between parents and the state as parents could no longer control whether their children attended school or the content of their learning. This schooling also reinforced class and gender divisions with middle class boys being encouraged to attend university and working class boys to attend technical schools. Girls were primarily directed to studies based on a future performing domestic duties (Jose 1995, p.159).

The importance of secondary schooling as an opportunity to exert moral influence on the adolescent can be seen in the following statement made by the Queensland Inspector-General of Schools in 1916 in support of compulsory education beyond primary level schooling:

The withdrawal of all educational control just at the period of adolescence, when mind and body are beginning to ripen, amounts to an act of national folly. The child at that age is most susceptible to receive impressions from without; and much stronger in understanding than in previous years; and assuredly it is alike the duty and the interest of the State to see that in this critical stage of life he is not left without some form of educational guidance, for freedom without the sense of responsibility, and physical energy without the wisdom of experience, are dangerous possessions. (R.H Roe cited in Logan 1980, p.4)

A number of religious organisations were created in Australia to provide education on sexual matters. One of these was the White Cross League which was a group that began in the United Kingdom and expanded to Sydney in 1901. The League was an active member of the Purity Movement and presented public lectures and some school talks, primarily in the eastern states of Australia (Logan 1980, p.10). In 1916 the leader of the White Cross League, RHW Bligh, came to Adelaide and visited 75 schools with the approval of the SA Education Department. This caused some consternation at the time as the 1914 Royal Commission into education in South Australia had specifically rejected the idea that sex education should be undertaken in schools. Nevertheless Bligh

continued to come to South Australian schools until the 1920s and delivered a message of sexual self control to young men (Jose 1996, p.51).

Tait (1996) argues that organisations like the White Cross League were involved in an ideological battle with the emerging medicalisation of sexuality; a body of knowledge Foucault refers to as the *Scientia Sexualis* (Foucault 1978). The historical contests over sex education in Australia clearly reflect Foucault's observation that:

...all those social controls, cropping up at the end of the last century, which screened the sexuality of couples, parents and children, dangerous and endangered adolescents – undertaking to protect, separate, and forewarn, signaling perils everywhere, awakening people's attention, calling for diagnoses, piling up reports, organizing therapies. These sites radiated discourses aimed at sex, intensifying people's awareness of it as a constant danger, and this in turn created a further incentive to talk about it. (1978, p.31)

The growing need to talk about sex in Australia can be seen in the number of different inquiries and conferences that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. The high rates of venereal disease provided the impetus for much of this attention. In 1942 the Federal Government implemented a law called the *National Security Regulations Venereal Disease and Contraceptives Act (1942)* and established a committee (known as the Amour Committee) to inquire into whether information on sexual matters and VD could be broadcast. This Committee concluded that public talks on sex and VD were dangerous and that instruction on these matters should remain with parents. This was also the conclusion of the Bean Committee set up to investigate education in South Australia in 1942 (Jose 1995, p.218). Teachers also lobbied for sex education to stay with parents. Powell records that at a conference organised by the Queensland Teachers Union, teachers resolved that there were too many practical difficulties in implementing sex education in the classroom (Powell 1994, p.5).

From the 1930s to the 1950s other organisations and groups participated in the debates on sex education and also provided some education to parents and children. These included the Father and Son Movement (which became the Family Life Movement in 1969), the Social Hygiene Movement (which became the Family Planning Movement) and various women's groups (such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union). These women's

groups believed that sexual instruction was important for protecting the welfare of women and children by controlling men's behaviour (Auchmuty 1979).

The parent body group known as the Public Schools Committees' Association resolved at their 1948 annual conference that every state parent body should consider the issue of sex education. A 1949 report by the South Australian Public Schools' Committee Association recommended that sex education should be provided through lectures to parents by people who were able to provide a religious perspective on the issue with the support of medical experts from the British Medical Association (the precursor to the Australian Medical Association). Jose (1995) suggests that their report reflects the four common themes associated with sex education over the previous 50 years. These he identifies as:

The deference to the authority of medical knowledge, a reiteration of Christian moral values, acknowledgement of parental prerogatives in imparting knowledge about sex, and the use of schools to facilitate rather than substitute for these parental prerogatives. (Jose 1995, p.267)

One of the key changes that took place over these years was a move from seeking to control sexual conduct through juridical means and moral instruction to a deployment of discourses produced through the emergence of what Nikolas Rose calls 'the psy' knowledges of human individuals. These include psychology and educational theory. Rose (1999) posits that as a result "disciplinary techniques and moralizing injunctions as to health, hygiene and civility are no longer required; the project of responsible citizenship has been fused with the individual's project for themselves" (p.88). This change, which Foucault identifies as a technique of 'governmentality' underpinned the eventual decision by state education agencies to implement sex education within the formal school curriculum in Australia.

## **2.2 1970s: sex education becomes formalized in the school system**

The *Kinsey Reports* on male and female sexuality (released in the United States in 1948 and 1953 respectively) showed that an "unthinkable number of Americans failed spectacularly to live up to the middle-class standards of sexual morality" (Moran 2000, p.156). In Australia too, sexual cultures were changing and there was rising anxiety about the growing number of young women having children out of wedlock. The

contraceptive pill was introduced in the early 1960s and Siedlecky notes that there was controversy over whether unmarried women should have access to it. “A number of doctors equated prescribing contraceptives to a young woman before the age of consent (21 at this time) with aiding and abetting the crime of carnal knowledge. As a consequence, the question of sex education became more urgent” (Siedlecky 2006, p.2).

The other urgent issue of the time was abortion. Abortion Law Reform Associations were created in each Australian state and in 1969 South Australia was the first state to achieve legislative reform through an amendment to the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act*. This enabled abortion to be lawfully performed up to 28 weeks of pregnancy as long as it takes place within an approved hospital and a doctor is satisfied that continuing the pregnancy would involve greater risk to the life or physical and mental health of the mother than if the pregnancy were terminated, or where there is a substantial risk that the child would be born with serious deformities. While this change of law did not achieve ‘abortion on demand’ as favoured by the Abortion Law Reform Association, it was accepted by the group as a pragmatic compromise given the visible opposition to abortion being fermented by the newly formed Right To Life organisation in South Australia (Siedlecky and Wyndham 1990, p.81).

The legal availability of contraception and abortion reflect the significant social change in the status of women in Australia and also the successful activism of the women’s liberation movement. In 1971 the Adelaide branch of the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) produced their own pamphlet on contraception, abortion and sexually transmitted infections and distributed it to young women. This action attracted some negative media attention with the main criticism being the fact that this information was being delivered directly to young women and not through their parents as was the official government policy at this time (Jose 1995, p.337). Another publication that caused controversy was the Danish publication *The Little Red Schoolbook* which was distributed in 1972. This gave explicit information on sex and drugs and was banned in several states of Australia (Auchmuty 1979, p.186).

The other organisation formed at this time was the Family Planning Association of South Australia (FPSA), later to become known as SHine SA, the organisation that implemented the SHARE project. The Family Planning Associations in Australia grew out of the Racial Hygiene movement which had been active in NSW from the early

1930s. The focus at this time was on venereal disease and unplanned pregnancy but the organisation later took up the issue of contraception as different technologies became available (Siedlecky 2006). Family Planning South Australia was formed in 1970 by a group which included doctors who set up family planning clinics. It received its first government funding in 1971 and by 1973 the Commonwealth Government had established a family planning funding program and a national network of Family Planning Organisations was formed. This network was formally affiliated to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the first regional meeting of IPPF members was held in Sydney in 1972 (Siedlecky and Wyndham 1990, p.216).

The Family Planning Organisations (FPOs) in Australia shared the same ideological approach as the influential Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) established by Dr Mary Calderone in 1964. Irvine (2003) notes that, “SIECUS was a study in contrasts. It represented both consistency with, and discontinuity from, an earlier tradition of highly moralistic, social hygiene education” (p.17). The approach taken by SIECUS and by the FPOs was to see sexuality as a natural part of being human but also as something that required appropriate education if it was to be enjoyed with pleasure and safety. This approach stood in opposition to those religious groups who wanted to restrict access to education on sex or associate it with guilt and shame, but continued the construction of sexuality as a problem that required careful management.

The issue of sex education became aligned with progressive politics in Australia with the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 and the subsequent establishment of a *Royal Commission on Human Relationships*<sup>20</sup>. This Commission was mandated to inquire into all aspects of human relationships and included one specific term of reference that required it to report on “the extent of relevant existing education programs, including sex education programs, and their effectiveness in promoting responsible sexual behaviour and providing a sound basis in the fundamentals of male and female relationships in the Australian social environment” (Royal Commission on Human Relationships 1977, p.ix). The wide ranging investigations into human sexuality and relationships presented an opportunity to highlight the social changes that had taken place, particularly in the role of women, and the Commission attracted some criticism that it was undermining family values (Szirom 1988, p.77).

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<sup>20</sup> The Commission had three members: Justice Elizabeth Evatt, Chairperson, Felix Arnott and Anne Deveson. It released its findings in five volumes (Royal Commission on Human Relationships 1977).

Anne Deveson, a well known broadcaster who was one of the Commissioners, notes that the capacity of the Commission to actually create change was limited as responsibility for action primarily lay with State and Territory Governments and not with the Commonwealth who set up the Commission. However the Commission did enable people to talk openly about sex and relationships.

But what we found was that what was really important was this process of listening to people. And people came forth in their thousands and talked about issues that they had never talked about in public before. And we were able to get the media to come along to these hearings, and to report on them. So what you had was almost like a social revolution because suddenly people were talking about what it was like to be homosexual and to be bashed up, and to be vilified, and to be rejected by your families. People were able to talk about what it was like to try and have an abortion because it was the last resort (Deveson 2004).

In the lead up to the 1977 federal election the final report from the Commission was hastily released. Deveson recalls that both political parties viewed the recommendations made by the Commission as politically dangerous:

When the commission report first came out, it was absolutely vilified by both parties. I think Labor ... the Labor Party was ... they didn't vilify it, they were quiet about it. But they didn't support it. And there's some very terrific cartoons, a Molnar cartoon I remember, of showing politicians turning their backs on this little man who was clutching all these volumes of reports saying, 'No time for human relationships in an election,' or something like that ... and there were headlines in the Mirror [a Sydney newspaper], I think, that said ... or, no, in the tabloid press that said, 'Abortion for 13-year-olds recommended ... Whitlam Government recommends abortion for 13-year-olds' ... or Whitlam Commission, something like that. So it was ... it was manipulated. It was very badly treated politically. (Deveson 2004)

One of the actions taken by the Commission was to ask each State and Territory to report on the education programs they conducted on human relationships and sex education. In 1973 the SA Education Department had responded to the lobbying from school parent groups for school based human relationship education by establishing a Health Education Project team whose role was to trial a new health curriculum in South Australian secondary schools. Sex education was to be covered through topics such as 'disease and

disability' and 'family life education'. The Department reported to the Commission that in 1975, 40% of the student population was receiving sex education and that parents retained the right to withdraw their children from these lessons. The Department was supported in this work by the Family Life Movement, the Family Planning Association and the Marriage Guidance Council (Jose 1995, p.361).

The Commission recommended that human relations education should be offered to students and parents and that this should be factual and frank. It also recommended that teachers should receive special training and that voluntary agencies should be funded to assist with the education (Royal Commission on Human Relationships 1977, p.74). The SA Education Department followed up the Commission's review with its own evaluation of the pilot health education program which found that the introduction of the program was generally well accepted (Jose 1995, p.371). This led Jose to conclude that:

The introduction of sex education in the SA curriculum appeared to be a relatively smooth process. There was some opposition and instances of brief controversy. However these reactions were nowhere near the level of intensity that many educators (and others in the community) feared would occur. [...] It is apparent that the fear of controversy rested less on an empirical basis and more on presumption about what was acceptable to the public. (Jose 1995, p.376)

Despite the lack of organised opposition to sex education in South Australia there were small groups who regularly lobbied against its introduction. One of these was the Festival of Light (FOL), a religious group formed in 1973 and modelled on the Festival of Light organisation set up by Mary Whitehouse in the United Kingdom<sup>21</sup>. The FOL (which changed its name to Family Voice in 2008) says it is "for Christian values and the family – permanence of marriage, sanctity of life, primacy of parenthood and limited government". It is strongest in South Australia and New South Wales where its leader, the Reverend Fred Nile, has been a Member of Parliament for the Christian Democratic Party since 1981. Within South Australia, the FOL has been active in the debates on sex education since the 1970s and has particularly opposed any movement towards affirming

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<sup>21</sup> In fact Mary Whitehouse launched the Festival of Light in Adelaide on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1973 and gave a speech called "Licence or Liberty". A review of this event said that "South Australians, we trust, will never be the same again. Decent people have been encouraged, the manipulators have been challenged and a light has been lit for God which shall never be put out" (Holy Trinity News, Oct 1973).

the legitimacy of same sex relationships. As I discuss in Chapter Four, the FOL played a key role in organizing the campaign against the SHARE project.

In 1983 the Australian Federation of Family Planning Associations published their own book, *Teaching About Sex*. This book is part of an attempt by Family Planning Organisations to advocate for the expansion of sex education and is particularly aimed at encouraging teachers to be more active in this education. The contributors to the book are drawn from the Family Planning Organisations across Australia and the preface notes that they are a:

...very special group of people – people who have worked in loneliness and isolation and retained their commitment and sense of humour; people who have been publicly criticized and harassed for trying to help others learn about their sexuality. So often those who harass offer no alternative other than a nostalgic fantasy about the ‘good old days’. (McCarthy 1983, p.vii)

This observation reflects the fact that even a small amount of opposition to the introduction of sex education into state schools creates anxiety for those who are at the forefront of implementing this education. This may account for Jose’s (1995) suggestion that the perception of opposition to sex education in the 1970s was overstated by educators. However activism by small religious groups does not just create stress for sex educators; it also contributes to the discursive construction of this education as controversial and dangerous and makes it a politically sensitive issue. It also affects how the education is taught in schools. I explore this issue in greater detail in Chapter Five where I analyse the interviews I conducted with Australian educators on their experiences of developing and implementing sex education programs.

Since the 1970s there have been ‘outbreaks’ of controversy over sex education in other states in Australia. Histories of sex education in Queensland (Logan 1980; Powell 1994) identify that in 1978 the activities of two conservative organisations, Society to Outlaw Pornography (STOP) and the Campaign Against Regressive Education (CARE) led to the banning of two curriculum resource kits. The spokesperson of these groups, Mrs Rona Joyner, was reported to oppose these materials because she believed they were a form of social engineering and also a reflection of an international movement led by the United Nations to undermine the family. During the late 1970s these small lobby groups had a

sympathetic hearing from the conservative Bjelke-Petersen Government in Queensland and attempts to implement comprehensive human relationships education in Queensland state schools were not successful until after Bjelke-Petersen had been replaced by a new Premier in 1988 (Powell 1994, p.14).

In Victoria a group called the Concerned Parents Association viewed the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Human Relationships on sex education as a danger to children and produced a pamphlet entitled *They've Got Your Kids*. This group depicted predatory gay teachers as one of the biggest threats. In 1978 the Victorian Gay Teachers and Students Group had published a sex education booklet called *Young, Gay and Proud*, and after lobbying by religious groups, the Director General of Education issued an edict to make sure the book was not available in state schools (Angelides 2005, p.289). Lesley Preston, who was a teacher in the human relationships program in a secondary school in Victoria at this time, describes how the course she was running was suspended in 1980 after a community meeting was called by the mayor of the town and allegations were made that “the course was to a large extent politically motivated, particularly the suggestion that it was a part of a Communist plan to corrupt children” (Preston 2007, p.26).

The growing opposition to sex education orchestrated by Christian Right groups in the United States in the 1980s was of concern to Australian sex educators. For example in 1983, Thea Mendelsohn, the then Education Officer at Family Planning Western Australia, acknowledged the influence of right wing groups in the United States on some of the tactics used by ideologically similar groups in Australia.

The Australian right has international links, The Right to Life Movement here peddles an American audiovisual program in schools which fits completely into the pattern of fear, horror and denial of individual freedom. Recently Jerry Falwell, the guru and political tactician of the Moral Majority, made a lightning trip to Australia to tutor the locals in ‘anything-goes tactics’ for taking power. (Mendelsohn 1983, p.108)

Mendelsohn (1983) believes that the actions of these opponents contributed to a lack of strategic focus on sex education within public schools but she also cautions against seeing the groups in Australia as having the same power or influence as those in the United States. She argues that differences in the structures of the education systems

whereby parent participation in school curriculum in Australia is minimal meant that there was less opportunity for curriculum to be affected by parent lobby groups.

By the late 1980s sex education was being taught in most state schools, generally as part of health or human relationships programs and usually with the continued support of agencies such as the Family Life Movement and the Family Planning Association. In April 1989, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met in Hobart to discuss a national framework for schooling. This process culminated in the *1989 Hobart Declaration* on schooling which set out 'Common and Agreed National Goals' for schooling in Australia. One nominated area was health and physical education and processes were put in place to develop statements that provided a broad framework of what should be included in a curriculum area. The statement for health and physical education explicitly focused on learning relating to 'sex education'. This included growth and development, effective relationships, identity, safety and risk (Curriculum Corporation, 1994).

The emergence of the HIV epidemic in the mid 1980s in Australia highlighted the importance of a comprehensive approach to sex education and the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy released in 1989 included school based sex education as one of the priority areas (Sendziuk 2003). This resulted in compulsory HIV education that included more explicit discussion on safe sex and homosexuality. In 2001 a national framework for education about Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV/AIDS and blood borne viruses known as *Talking Sexual Health* was developed by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University for the Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases (ANCAHRD).

One of the defining features of this educational framework is that it reinforces what is known as a comprehensive approach to sex education. This was summarized by Ollis (1996) as having five key elements.

- Taking a whole school approach and developing partnerships;
- Acknowledging that young people are sexual beings;
- Acknowledging and catering for the diversity of all students;
- Providing an appropriate and comprehensive curriculum context;
- Acknowledging the professional development and training needs of the school community.

An interesting aspect of sex education in Australia is that while there is a national framework on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections there is not a nationally consistent approach for other sexual and reproductive health issues (such as rape and sexual assault, abortion, pregnancy). There also continues to be great variation in how schools actually implement these education programs. The report on the first year of the SHARE project identifies that:

...while most schools had implemented some sexuality related education in different parts of the curriculum (primarily in health and physical education) this had usually been of limited duration and primarily offered to years 8 and 9. The SHARE project therefore sought to fill this gap by providing effective and broadly based sexual health and relationships education to young people in years 8, 9 and 10. (SHine SA 2003, p.7)

One of the aims of the SHARE project therefore was to bring together the newer HIV curriculum materials and the more traditional reproductive health topics into one program. Despite the extensive work that has taken place on sex education in Australia, surveys of young people's sexual behaviour, pregnancy and abortion rates continue to be used as evidence that school based sex education is inadequate in Australian schools. For example the supporting evidence for the SHARE project included the fact that Australia has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy, birth and abortion rates in the developed world (other than the US) and that young people under the age of 25 have the highest rate of sexually transmitted infections (SHine SA 2003, p.8).

During my time working on the SHARE project I became adept at quoting these statistics to support the approach taken by SHARE as did the opponent groups who used the same statistics to support their argument that comprehensive sex education fails to deliver health benefits to individuals and the community. In fact young people's sexual behaviour is influenced by a myriad of physical, cultural and social factors and to expect that 10 or even 20 hours of formal lessons will produce a change in behaviour is optimistic and probably unrealistic. Moran (2000) concludes his analysis of sex education in the United States by making the point that:

...the disconnection between sexual information and sexual behaviour suggests that a student's response to education is itself socially determined. The critical question is not

whether students understand the mechanics of the condom but whether their vision of their own life is such that preventing pregnancy or avoiding disease is important enough for the condom to seem relevant. (Moran 2000, p.222)

It is for this reason that progressive and conservative educators fight over what that vision of life should look like; gay or straight, chaste or sexually adventurous.

The Australian history of sex education reflects anxieties over “normative definitions of sexuality, which have varied over time” (Scott 2005, p.185). Moral issues have vied with medical issues, a contest that is evident in the debates on the SHARE project. While governments in Australia were slow to embrace any formal involvement with sex education, recent initiatives have sought to pragmatically address young people’s sexual health needs. This approach stands in contrast to the recent American experience of sex education outlined in the next section, where virulent and organised opposition by Christian Right groups pushed sex education firmly into the frontline of the culture wars.

### **2.3 The rise of the abstinence only until marriage movement in the United States**

In 2005 I attended a conference in San Francisco on ‘Sexual Rights and Moral Panic’<sup>22</sup>. At one session on sex education attended primarily by college lecturers from the United States, I heard stories of how young students arrive in college with poor knowledge of how to protect themselves from pregnancy and infections and without the range of skills to confidently negotiate their sexual relationships. These lecturers described how they tried to impart this knowledge to those students who were interested and the opposition they sometimes encountered from other students who strongly advocated for education to be based only on the Christian ideal of abstinence until marriage.

These stories indicate the way sex education has become a central platform of what Doan and Williams (2008) call ‘morality politics’ in the United States. One of the interesting aspects of the American experience is that research has shown that the majority of parents believe that sex education should prepare young people to use contraception and safe sex as well as helping them to delay first sex (Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). However, Christian conservatives have been able to exert their political influence

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<sup>22</sup> Fifth International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society, San Francisco State University, June 2005.

through exploiting the moral anxiety that attaches itself to adolescent sexuality. Doan and Williams (2008) argue that:

...constructing teenage sexual activity and the subsequent risk of pregnancy and disease as a case of weakening morals begets a policy solution that simply requires a strengthening of values as a solution to the problem. Abstinence-only instruction became cast as an easy, and moral, solution for a litany of public health and social ailments: unwanted pregnancy, disease prevention, and poverty reduction. (Doan and Williams 2008, p.11)

The United States has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates among developed countries with a pregnancy rate of 87 pregnancies per 1,000 per year in 1999. This was a reduction from the rate of 116 per 1,000 recorded in 1990 (Advocates for Youth 2004).<sup>23</sup> By comparison South Australia's rate in 2005 was 36.1 per 1,000 (SHine SA fact sheet, 2006). Teenage pregnancy is strongly associated with a young woman's cultural background and economic position with black women having the highest rates in America and indigenous women the highest rates in Australia. Teenagers in America start their sexual activity at about the same time as other young people in comparable developed countries but are much less likely to be using contraception (Allan Guttmacher Institute 2002).

A major factor that contributes to the sexual risk taking of American teenagers is the negative social attitudes to their sexual relationships. A comparative study of parent attitudes to sexuality in America and the Netherlands found that American parents view adolescent sexuality in terms of uncontrollable sexual forces that require containment while Dutch parents are more likely to have confidence in their child's own capacity to make sexual decisions and provide education from an early age to assist with this (Schalet 2004, p.7). A similar study in Denmark highlights that another significant difference between America and a country like Denmark is that a rights based approach is taken to the sexuality of young people which ensures they have access to contraception and education. This has not always been the case but has been a policy pursued by the

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<sup>23</sup> There has been criticism of the way teenage pregnancy statistics have been used by pro-family planning groups in the United States. Levine (2002) argues that one of the contributing factors to the rise of the abstinence movement was the report *Eleven Million Teenagers* released in 1976 by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (the research arm of Planned Parenthood). This speculated that an epidemic of teenage pregnancy was taking place but instead of creating more support for family planning programs it gave legitimacy to the conservative response of trying to stop teenagers having sex (p.96).

Danish government over the last 30 years. The teenage pregnancy rate in Denmark is 9 per 1,000 (Rose 2005, p.1218).

The abstinence movement in the United States is part of what is often called the 'family values movement'. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, the Christian Right orchestrated its political campaign not only to counteract the perceived gains of the women's liberation and gay rights movement but also to achieve its goal of reshaping the state according to Christian values (Herman 1997). The progressive social movements created social change that separated sexuality from procreation within a nuclear family unit. They also challenged the division of labour in families and the dominance of parental authority over children (Di Mauro and Joffe 2007, p.68). Sex education assumed a place of special importance for the Christian Right as it is one place where social expectations about gender and sexuality are made explicit and can be visibly resisted, even if just through the symbolic use of language such as 'abstinence only until marriage'.

America's history of debates and contest over sex education followed a similar path to that in Australia and the United Kingdom. Historically, there were many short lived controversies over the teaching of sex in public schools but these issues were not central to the political ideology of the conservative groups known as the New Right. However from the 1960s more formal campaigns started to take place as conservative political leaders saw the political opportunities such campaigns offered for mobilising support for the Republican Party from the grassroots Christian community. While these campaigns created a lot of media attention they did not usually lead to a curtailment of sex education programs (Irvine 2002, p.61).

The 1970s saw the emergence of an organised Christian Right movement that was galvanized to take action after the *Roe vs Wade* decision of 1973 which legalized abortion. This created a focus not only on abortion but also on strategies to prevent unintended pregnancies in young women. In 1978 debates about the family became the subject of political debate after the then President Jimmy Carter held a national conference on family policy which resulted in more formal networking between Christian Right groups who were advocating a pro-family position (Irvine 2002, p.68). As I outline in Chapter Three it was the networking power of this family values movement that resulted in the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980.

In 1981 the Reagan government passed the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA). This created a funding stream for programs to prevent teenage pregnancy that were based on the promotion of chastity and the terms of its funding ensured it only went to organisations that were anti abortion, that is church based groups. In 1983 the American Civil Liberties Union filed a law suit against the US Department for Health and Human Services<sup>24</sup> on the grounds that state money was being used for religious purposes and that this violated the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The lawsuit resulted in an investigation of programs that had been funded under AFLA to determine whether the programs were being used to promote religious ideology. As Irvine notes, “such scrutiny aggravated Christian Right activists, who by the nineties began to complain that they represent a persecuted religious minority” (Irvine 2002, p.100).

In response to this lawsuit (which was eventually settled under the Clinton Administration in 1993) the Christian Right adapted their curriculum to promote abstinence but used scientific rather than religious arguments. As I have previously mentioned one major way that this took place was to emphasize the dangers of sex and to claim that condoms do not work so there is no such thing as safe sex. In this way the only safe option becomes abstaining from sex. This strategy is one that is also used to oppose abortion where Christian Right groups claim that medical evidence shows that abortion is linked to depression and breast cancer (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2004 cited in Doan and Williams 2008, p.12).

In response to pressure from conservative groups, President Clinton created a new funding program that directed even more funding to abstinence based programs. Di Mauro and Joffe (2007) identify that:

By 1996 the Religious Right had been successful in getting its sexuality education platform enshrined in federal legislation in the form of Clinton’s welfare reform legislation, the 1996 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act. This legislation initially provided \$50 million for an even more rigid educational approach than the 1981 Adolescent Family Life Act. (Di Mauro and Joffe 2007, p.80)

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<sup>24</sup> This lawsuit was known as the *Kendrick vs Heckler* lawsuit.

The inclusion of funding for abstinence only education in Clinton's welfare bill was a strategy to gain the support of conservative Republican politicians to get the Bill passed by Congress. The rationale used for the inclusion of this funding was that it would assist in preventing teenage pregnancy and therefore reduce young women's dependency on America's welfare system. Doan and Williams (2008) argue that this policy decision represents a "perceived need to protect white American teens while controlling racially 'other' teens, who are constructed as both hypersexual and likely to become welfare dependent" (p.39).

The funding guidelines for this new abstinence funding known as Title V defined abstinence education as an education or motivational program which:

- A) has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- B) teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school age children;
- C) teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- D) teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity;
- E) teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
- F) teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;
- G) teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and
- H) teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity (Dailey 2003, p.16).

These guidelines clearly illustrate the way that abstinence only education is aimed at reinforcing a heterosexual paradigm that is built upon religious values. There is no mention in the guidelines of how gay students might receive education and the emphasis on the danger of childbearing out of wedlock has the potential to stigmatise the family status of the many students who are themselves the child of a single parent (Kaplan 2004,

p.196). Despite there being some opposition to these guidelines every state eventually took some of this funding, with significant proportions of it going to organisations outside of schools to fund the development of abstinence based curriculum (Levine 2002, p.92).

Funding for abstinence only education received even more financial support with the election of George W. Bush in 2000. As part of his presidential campaign Bush promised to increase funding to a level equal to the funding that was available for adolescent family planning programs. He achieved this when he implemented a new program called Community-Based Abstinence Education <sup>25</sup>(CBAE) which provides funding directly to community based organisations, including faith based agencies. Funding for CBAE started at \$20 million in 2001 and reached \$137 million by 2007. At the same time this was introduced the Bush administration tightened the funding requirements for Title V so that states had to demonstrate that they were meeting each of the eight requirements and were not using the funding to promote use of contraception and /or condoms (Doan and Williams 2008, p.42).

The growth in funding and curriculum resource documents combined with the strength of the advocacy for abstinence to be taught in schools led to a reshaping of how sex education is delivered in US schools. A research study that compared the content of sex education in US Public Secondary Schools between 1988 and 1999 found that:

... in 1999, 23% of secondary school sexuality teachers taught abstinence as the only way of preventing pregnancy and STDs, compared with 2% who did so in 1988. Teachers surveyed in 1999 were more likely than those in 1988 to cite abstinence as the most important message they wished to convey (41% vs 25%). (Darroch, Landry and Singh 2000, p.1)

Teachers are often caught in the middle in the conflict over the content of sex education programs. It is sometimes hard to capture what actually takes place in a classroom unless it is directly observed and the above findings reflect that the majority of teachers in this sample are in fact teaching what could be called comprehensive education, if they are also providing accurate information on contraception and condoms. However the

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<sup>25</sup> Also known as SPRANS (Special Programs of Regional and National Significance Community-Based Abstinence Education) (Kreinin 2003).

political climate places pressure on teachers and school leaders to avoid issues that may attract undue attention and to frame their education within the dominant discourse, which in America is the language of abstinence (Goldfarb 2003, p.18). One important example of this is the fact that progressive educators in America say that they too are committed to supporting abstinence as well as teaching about safer sex and contraception. This is often called ‘abstinence plus’ education<sup>26</sup> (Blake and Frances 2001). Levine quotes the then president of SIECUS, Debra Haffner, as saying “SIECUS supports abstinence. I repeat: SIECUS support abstinence” [...] “But SIECUS does not support teaching young people only about abstinence” (Haffner quoted in Levine 2002, p.93).

As I have mentioned previously most parents in the United States do not support taking an abstinence only until marriage approach. As school communities have to make the decision as to which approach is taken in their school there can be emotional and vitriolic debates between parents. In her book *Talk About Sex*, Janice Irvine (2002) documents some of these debates which often include “unrestrained emotional volatility” (p.149). One of the main factors that contribute to this emotional state is the use of provocative speech by conservative groups. She suggests that:

... speech about sexuality is used in a way to scare parents with threats to their children and to mobilise these parents, through emotional overt display, to oppose comprehensive education. Language and images are strategically intended to frighten, outrage and disgust. (Irvine 2002, p.148)

In the US, opponents of abstinence only education have received support from research into the effectiveness of this education and progressive politicians have forced debates that have focussed attention on some of the inadequacies of this approach. One politician who has led this is the Democrat Henry Waxman who commissioned an evaluation of the content of the most popular abstinence only curricula funded through SPRANS. This widely quoted report found that “over 80% of the abstinence-only curricula, used by two thirds of SPRANS grantees in 2003, contain false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health” (US House of Representatives Committee on Government

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<sup>26</sup> Australian educators are more likely to talk about ‘delaying sex’ rather than using the word ‘abstinence’. This is partly for ideological reasons, to signify that they support young people’s own decisions as to when to be sexually active, and also because there is great confusion over what abstinence actually means. Is it from all sexual activity or just from penis-vagina intercourse? As I show in Chapter Four, there was considerable pressure for the word ‘abstinence’ to be included in the teaching resources for the SHARE project but this was resisted.

Reform 2004, p.i). This false information particularly related to the risks associated with contraception, condoms and also abortion. The Waxman Report was also critical of the way abstinence curricula relied on gender stereotypes of female passivity and male accomplishment.

Doan and Williams (2008) analyse four abstinence only curricula for secondary schools. These are *Sex Respect, Sexuality, Commitment and Family (SCF)*, *Sex Can Wait and Choosing the Best Life*. In addition to the issues identified in the Waxman Report they are particularly critical of the fact that all these curricula erase race as an issue for discussion but at the same time draw on the racialised discourses of black young women's sexuality to justify their programs.

The inclusion of abstinence within a welfare reform law may be read as an attempt to instill "middle-class" values of delayed childbearing in young girls caught in the culture of poverty, which assumes that young, poor (and likely minority) women are promiscuous. This is woven throughout the different texts and apparent in the colorblind writing of the curricula. Little to no attention is given to racial, ethnic, or class differences among adolescents. (Doan and Williams 2008, p.122)

In the highly emotional context of conflict over sex education, evaluation and research have become important ways of giving legitimacy to the claims made about the different approaches. As I have previously mentioned, in fact it is difficult to assess the impact of any education within schools given the great variability in how this is delivered and also the multiple influences on young people's sexual behaviour. One of the often cited researchers in this area is Douglas Kirby (2002). In 2007 he produced a report for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy in the United States that summarized the evidence of effectiveness of different forms of sex education programs. This report found that "40% of comprehensive education programs delayed the initiation of sex, reduced the number of sexual partners, and increased condom or contraceptive use" (p.15). It also found that there was no strong evidence that "abstinence programs delay the initiation of sex, hasten the return to abstinence, or reduce the number of sexual partners" (p.15).

Another piece of research that is used to destabilise the claims of the abstinence movement shows that young people who take the "virginity pledges" promoted by the

Southern Baptist Church (who also developed the curriculum *True Love Waits*) may delay having sex but when they do eventually have sex they are more likely to have unprotected sex. The research attributes the effect of the pledge on age of sexual debut to the fact that these young people are engaged in an activity that connects them to a social community and it is this connectivity that is important and not necessarily the religious dimension of chastity (Bearman and Bruckner 2000). However by the time these young people do have sex (which is defined as vagina-penis sexual intercourse) they are much less likely to use contraception, possibly because the identity they have created for themselves is as someone who is not going to have sex and therefore does not need to be prepared.

In all these debates over the place of abstinence in sex education the dominance of the discourse of heteronormativity is evident. Most abstinence based curriculums fail to mention at all that some young people are attracted to and possibly having sex with someone of the same sex. Even in programs that may discuss safe sex it is very rare that this will be in terms other than between opposite sex partners. This failure is not confined to abstinence based programs. A recent research study on same sex attracted young people in Australia found that sex education in schools usually totally ignored the needs of these students (Hillier and Mitchell 2008). However another important strategy of the Christian Right in the United States has been to actively resist any attempts to implement support programs for gay and lesbian students. Josephson (2003) outlines a range of tactics used by different conservative groups to undermine attempts to make schools safer for gay and lesbian students. One example is that of Focus on the Family which “offers a set of resources for antigay activists to use to prevent the implementation of safe schools programs” (p.177). As I discuss later in this thesis, creating panic about homosexuality continues to be an important tactic for those conservative groups who oppose comprehensive sex education both in the United States and in Australia.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Present day sex education in Australia is built upon the histories described in this chapter. In his study into sex education in South Australia Jose (1995) identifies that one of the defining features of sex education in South Australia was that it “had to be consistent with the prevailing gendered sexualities of women and men” (p.391). It has been harder to maintain this with the social changes brought from the women’s rights and gay liberation movement and as a result sex education continues to be a site of conflict. In

Chapter Five I analyse the discourses that shape the actual content of sex education in Australia and the way Australian sex educators contribute and respond to these.

The religious influence on sex education in Australia, particularly in state schools has primarily been led by small fundamentalist lobby groups and not the large religious institutions. The religious school sectors, such as Catholic and Anglican schools, offer sex education that is consistent with their religious teachings. This means that in most Catholic schools students are not taught about condoms although there are exceptions to this in individual schools. In my contact with educators in Catholic schools, some of whom received their training at SHine SA, I found they were able to offer a comprehensive approach to sex education as long as the teachings on Catholic sexuality were also included. Generally however the larger religious institutions have not been active in overtly trying to influence curriculum in state schools.

One influence that is evident in Australia is the US abstinence movement. I have included a detailed discussion of this movement because it has exerted so much influence on the terms of discussion on sex education in Australia. Even in countries where the abstinence movement is not strong, such as in Australia and the UK, arguments take place in the shadow of the conflicts over sex education in America. In 2001 Simon Blake and Gill Frances from the UK based Sex Education Forum undertook a study tour in America to look at abstinence education because they are often asked to talk about it in media interviews and public meetings (Blake and Frances 2001). As I also show in Chapter Four, the opponents to the SHARE project used materials and tactics developed by the abstinence movement in the United States and this then created a situation in South Australia that mirrored one of the localized community conflicts identified by Irvine (2002).

Abstinence education in the United States sits alongside opposition to gay rights and abortion as the key mobilizing forces of the Christian Right. In the next chapter I explore the literature on the Christian Right movement and politics in Australia and the United States in order to provide a context for understanding how debates on sex education are implicated in the wider issues of morality and power. This will include discussion of the way the 'family values' movement has created a global movement which extends also to Australia.

*I think people can joke about whether or not Kevin [Rudd] is a God botherer. But I think what Kevin's trying to do is he's trying to deal with a political issue.*

Julia Gillard<sup>27</sup> on Compass, ABC TV, May 8 2005

## **Chapter 3:**

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### **The struggle for power: religion and politics in Australia**

In his 2009 Australian Day video address to the Australian evangelical group Catch the Fire Ministries, the former Treasurer of Australia, Peter Costello said that, “One of the things that has been absolutely central to the development of Australia and the foundation of our society is that biblical heritage; that heritage we have through the scriptures and the Ten Commandments” (Costello cited in Fitzgerald 2009). Costello is one of many currently serving Australian politicians who publicise their personal Christian beliefs, although not all would be comfortable in being linked to an organisation such as Catch the Fire Ministries<sup>28</sup>.

Costello's overt religiosity, which was further demonstrated through his attendance at the high profile Pentecostal Hillsong Community Church during the 2004 Federal election, reflects a growing visibility of religious beliefs in politics in Australia. It also highlights the links between small evangelical groups such as Catch the Fire Ministries and the broader political system. This is an area of particular relevance to this thesis as the campaign against the SHARE project was organised by small religious lobby groups (para church groups) in partnership with the mainstream conservative political parties.

This chapter takes the tension between religion and the state as a starting point to explore how the issue of morality has become an important strategic site for the pursuit of political influence by both these small para church groups and the formal political parties. It is a strategy that is particularly evident in the role played by Christian Right groups in the rise of the Republican Party in the United States; however in Australia too there has been an emergence of a politics that is linked to a strong articulation of Christian moral

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<sup>27</sup> Julia Gillard was the deputy opposition leader at the time she made this statement and in 2006 became the deputy prime minister of Australia after the election of the Rudd Labor Government in 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Soon after this address the pastor of Catch the Fire Ministries, Danny Nalliah, controversially claimed that the severe bushfires that tore through Victoria in February 2009 were caused by a vengeful God who was angry with Victorians for passing new abortion laws (Fitzgerald 2009).

values. Paul Kelly (2007), a leading political commentator in Australia, believes that “there is a growing revolt against the secularisation of public life” (p.14) and he suggests that one reason for this is dissatisfaction with the perceived failure of a morally neutral state to address complex issues relating to issues such as global poverty, bioethics and the quality of human life (p.16).

This chapter identifies the meanings that have become attached to both secularism and religion within the Australian political environment through outlining the legal status of religion within the Australian Constitution and analyzing some of the key clashes between religion and politics during the ten years of the Howard Government. Applying the Foucaultian conceptualization of power outlined in Chapter One, it is my contention that religion and secularism are an intrinsic part of the power struggles that shape the discourses relating to sexuality and human rights and that neither exists in isolation nor is inherently oppressive or liberating. I also note that it is impossible to attach a stable identity to either religion or secularism and that “both are interdependent” (Asad 2003, p.24). This approach is consistent with that taken by Correa, Petchesky and Parker (2008) in their global study of sexuality and human rights. They argue that it is “precisely because religion has become so intensely politicized in the post-Cold War world that secularity has taken on an aura of either a lost golden age, or the demonic and godless opposite of religious virtue” (p.221). They point to the danger of assuming that secularism automatically leads to the greater protection of sexual rights while at the same time highlighting the negative impact religious extremism has had on these rights.

One issue on which religion and secularism have collided is gay marriage. This has produced dilemmas for the gay and lesbian movement which is divided over whether recognition of same sex relationships through marriage reflects “assimilation or liberation” (Rimmerman 2008). Opposition to gay marriage has become a central platform of the family values movement both in Australia and internationally and has been exploited to create moral panic and political opportunity. One of the effects of the strategic deployment of this values discourse is on the way in which sexuality is governed and in Chapter Six I explore this further through analysing the South Australian Government response to the campaign against the SHARE project.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of the small para church groups, such as the Festival of Light, in the political process in Australia. In the previous chapter I

outlined how many of these small religious groups were active in either opposing sex education or advocating the inclusion of ‘moral guidance’ within sex education. While there is extensive literature on mainstream religion and politics in Australia the role of these small groups in influencing social policy is often ignored. I draw on international literature on this issue and an Australian case study on gay law reform in Tasmania to explore how these groups contribute to the framing of issues for media and political attention and create opportunities to further their own cause.

### **3.1 The church and the state in Australia**

The role of religion in Australian life has been an important subject for debate since the colonization of Australia in the late eighteenth century. The European settlers of Australia brought diverse religious affiliations. While the Anglican Church was dominant due to its status as the official church of England, there were also Presbyterians from Scotland, Catholics from Ireland and a number of smaller dissenting denominations such as Quakers, Lutherans, Baptists and Congregationalists. This caused some conflict as the different denominations sought to establish their own constituencies and also raised the issue of the relationship that should exist between the state and the church in Australia (Thompson 2002, p.2).

In the United States the relationship between the church and the state was constructed to be completely separate. The 1788 US Constitution does not mention God at all which reflected the overwhelmingly secular nature of the society at that time and a strong desire to let religion determine its own course without being tied to a political process (Kramnick and Moore 1997, p.24). Ten amendments to the Constitution were added and the first of these says that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof... [No] religious test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or Public Trust under the United States”.

In Australia the preamble to the Australian Constitution, which came into effect in 1901, included the invocation of “humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God”. It also included a clause that is similar to the United States’ First Amendment that guarantees religious freedom:

116. The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any

religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth (Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act).<sup>29</sup>

In both the United States and Australia the terms of the relationship between the state and the church have been contested, both through formal legal means and through debates over issues such as values in education. In Chapter Two I described one example of this in the United States where a successful challenge was made to the provision of state funding for abstinence education on the grounds that it violated the so called ‘wall of separation’ between the church and state by including religious teachings in the curriculum. In Australia section 116 of the Constitution was tested in 1981 when a challenge was made to the use of government funding for non-government schools which were primarily Catholic. Frame (2006) comments that:

...known widely as the DOGS (Defence of Government Schools) Case, the subsequent legal argument highlighted the significant differences between the US First Amendment and section 116 and the widely held but mistaken belief that the Australian constitution provided a “wall of separation”. (Frame 2006, p.54)

The crucial issue in the ‘DOGS’ case was whether as a result of this government funding one religion was being set up or ‘established’ as a national religion and the High Court found this not to be the case. Galligan (2003) suggests that this decision reflects the Australian commitment to a form of liberalism which allows multiple voices to be heard and he argues that one of these voices needs to be religious in order to provide a civilizing influence in public and political life (p.32).

Other religious writers on the role of religion in Australian political life also believe that liberalism requires a religious presence in order to guard against a potentially despotic state and to provide a stabilizing influence through inculcating appropriate moral behaviours. One of the most outspoken people in Australia on this issue is the current Catholic Archbishop, Cardinal George Pell (2007), who wrote a series of essays on the relationship between religion, politics and society. In these essays he asserts that:

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<sup>29</sup> Available at <http://www.apf.gov.au/Senate/general/constitution/chapter5.htm>

The age of terror in which we now live has followed a brief decade of unchallenged secular liberalism, a decade that, in turn, followed the eventual collapse of the Communist nightmare in 1989. We do not know how events will now unfold, but it seems that for many, Christian voices will be important, prophetic, necessary. The issues at stake today are large, and secular liberalism now looks rather smaller, rather more confused, less able to deal with the new, vast political realities. (Pell 2007, p.63)

Cardinal Pell's advocacy for a Christian religious position within public policy is to be expected given the influential role played by the Catholic Church on many social issues, including those relating to sexuality. However Pell's quote reveals a dangerous tendency towards constructing an Australian nationalism that is essentially 'white' as it ignores the role of multicultural and multi-faith communities in Australia (Hage 2003). This perception is reinforced through his reference to terrorism which evokes a fear that is often associated with Islamic religion.

Other Christian leaders such as the Reverend Fred Nile from the Christian Democratic Party in NSW have exploited anti-Muslim sentiment in order to secure their political futures. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, David Marr describes how Nile "raised the perils of Islam in his 2004 Senate campaign and the centerpiece of his state campaign last year was the call for an immediate moratorium on Islamic immigration. His vote rose to 4.4 per cent" (Marr 2008a). One of the implications of creating fear of non-Christian religions such as Islam and also Aboriginal spiritual beliefs<sup>30</sup>, is that pluralism as advocated by Christian leaders appears to extend only to their own religious perspectives. It is their voice only that assumes the authority to provide the necessary moral guidance. However even within the different Christian traditions, different voices and beliefs struggle for power and influence. This is particularly evident in the history of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants within the mainstream political parties in Australia.

The role of Catholics in Australian politics has gained greater prominence in recent years due to the visibility of a number of outspoken Catholic Members of Parliament within the Howard Government. This is an unusual occurrence as traditionally Catholicism has

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<sup>30</sup> For an example of this see the discussion by Marion Maddox (2005) of the way Aboriginal women's spiritual beliefs relating to Hindmarsh Island in South Australia were ridiculed and discounted by Liberal politicians and conservative media commentators.

been associated with the Australian Labor Party and has in fact been a contributing factor in major upheavals within that party (Warhurst 2007, p.21). One key figure in the Catholic Church in Australia was BA Santamaria. He was a member of the Labor Party and actively involved in the Catholic Worker Movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Santamaria was also anti-communist and this brought him into conflict with the far left of the Labor Party. These tensions between the left and right of the party led to the a split that took place in 1955 with the far right mostly Catholic members leaving to create a party known as the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) (Thompson 2002).

Santamaria was not only active against communism; he also held staunchly conservative views on women's rights and homosexuality and created the organisation called the National Civic Council to advocate for conservative Catholicism. In the 1980s the National Civic Council formed the Australian Family Association to specifically lobby on a pro-family platform. At Santamaria's funeral in 2007 eulogies were given by Cardinal George Pell and also the former Health Minister in the Howard Government, Tony Abbott. Abbott (2007) has described Santamaria as "a key figure in two of the most important cultural shifts in Australian politics, the secular humanist takeover of the Labor Party and the growing influence of Catholics inside the Coalition".

Political scientist John Warhurst (2007) has analysed the relationship between religion and politics during the ten years of the Howard Government (1996-2006). He identifies three key areas where religion and politics intersect. The first is where church groups advocate on policy areas; the second is the way the religious beliefs of politicians influence their policy decisions and public representation of issues and the third is the impact of the religious beliefs of voters on the outcome of elections (p.19). I use these three areas to summarise some of the key issues and events that have influenced recent debates on the relationship between the church and the state in Australia.

### **3.1.1 Political advocacy by churches**

During the Howard years different church groups actively lobbied both for and against various governmental policies. Generally the areas which attracted most mainstream religious support related to the financial support of private schools, taxation policies that supported two parent families with the male as main wage earner and the legal

recognition of marriage as an institution only for heterosexual couples (Thompson 2002, p.155; Maddox 2005).

However the Howard Government also attracted significant criticism from some church leaders. Warhurst (2007) identifies that overall the relationship between the Howard Government and the major Christian leaders “has been strained to breaking point. According to the government, they have been speaking out of turn” (p.28). The areas of most contention were the war in Iraq, the mandatory detention of asylum seekers and the failure of the Government to apologise to the Aboriginal people known as the ‘stolen generation’ who had been forcibly removed from their families (Thompson 2002; Warhurst 2007). This criticism was not always well received by the Howard Government with one senior Minister, Alexander Downer, commenting that:

The greatest challenge today for leaders of all religions is to forgo the opportunity to be amateur commentators on all manner of secular issues on which they inevitably lack expertise, and instead to find the spark of inspiration to give our lives greater moral and spiritual meaning. (Downer cited in Warhurst 2007, p.29)

While public advocacy by religious leaders is a legitimate part of the democratic process there have also been instances in Australia where religious groups covertly lobby for political outcomes. One example of this was the campaign by the fundamentalist Christian sect the Exclusive Brethren which secretly funded advertising in support of the Liberal party in the 2004 election. While this sect does not allow its members to vote they have an interest in the election of a conservative party which shares its values on the traditional family and on whom they hope to exert influence to protect their interests, particularly in the financial support of their schools (Lohrey 2006, p.52).

### **3.1.2 Religious affiliation and political representation**

The issue of religious influence in the Australian parliament is one of the main areas of investigation in Marion Maddox’s book, *God Under Howard, The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* (2005). Maddox traces John Howard’s personal religious trajectory from a Methodist upbringing to a publicly worshipping Anglican and argues that despite his professed Christianity, Howard sought to implement policies that in fact run counter to much Christian teaching. Maddox’s primary criticism of Howard is that

he embraced neo-liberalist social policies that eroded the human rights of the most vulnerable people in Australian society, such as refugees and Aboriginal people (p.260).

In contrast to Maddox, Paul Kelly (2007) disputes any direct religious influence on Howard's policies, particularly that which could be linked to the Christian Right. He argues that in fact, "Howard is a secularist who believes governments should reflect values but not embrace any religion.[...] He neither seeks to replicate American Christian revival in this country nor does he believe it is likely to happen" (p.15). Kelly's observation of Howard's religious beliefs does not contradict Maddox's claim that Howard embraced an American style economic and social conservatism inflected with religious extremism. Further evidence for this can be seen in the award John Howard received from the conservative American think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, in March 2008. In accepting this award Howard (2008) aligned himself with two leading neo-liberal leaders and one conservative religious leader:

In his book "The President, the Pope and the Prime Minister" John O'Sullivan wrote of Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II and Margaret Thatcher "all three were handicapped by being too sharp, clear and definite in an age of increasingly fluid identities and sophisticated doubts. Put simply that Wojtyla was too Catholic, Thatcher too conservative and Reagan too American". O'Sullivan was speaking of a time when the views of all three were still largely unheeded. Instead of bending they remained resolute and, as we gratefully know, their subsequent leadership permanently changed the world for the better.

One of the interesting aspects of Maddox's research is its explication of the role of religious pressure groups and networks within Federal Parliament. These include the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship (of which Kevin Rudd was one of the few Labor attendees during the Howard period) and the National Prayer Breakfasts. Prayer Breakfasts are a concept that have been imported from the United States and also provide an opportunity for other meetings often organised by the Australian Christian Lobby group. Another significant pressure group is the Lyons Forum which was formed in 1992. During the Howard years the Forum had sixty members, including high profile Ministers such as Peter Costello, Kevin Andrews and Tony Abbott. Its aim is to promote and preserve the natural family unit (Pike 1997, p.35). Maddox (2005) notes that the Lyons Forum deliberately uses the 'family values' language of conservative Christians

but is careful to avoid identifying itself as a religious group so as to maintain an appearance of secularity. She posits that “the right’s God is most powerful just below the surface” (p.39).

One example of the illegitimate way one politician’s religious views shaped public policy is the concessions made by the Howard Government to gain the political support of the Catholic Independent Senator Brian Harradine from Tasmania. In return for his vote on issues such as the privatisation of Australia’s telecommunications company the Government agreed to exclude the availability of funding for contraception and abortion advice in reproductive health programs in developing countries (Marr 1999, p.101).

### **3.1.3 Religious beliefs of voters**

The increase in the visible religiosity of Australian politicians has taken place at the same time that there has been a decline in religious observance by Australians. The 2001 National Church Life Survey in Australia shows that approximately 9% of the Australian population attends church on at least a weekly basis (cited in Simons 2007, p.14). This compares to the United States where the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reports that 39% of Americans are weekly church goers (Pew Research Centre 2008).

The most common religious affiliations reported in the 2006 Census in Australia continue to be Catholic (26%) and Anglican (19%). The proportion of the population that state they have no religion increased to 19%, from 16% in 2001. Interestingly South Australia, which is often known as the city of churches, has an even higher proportion of people saying they have no religion (24.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). The fastest growing Christian churches are the pentocostal churches, although Lohrey (2006) notes that “For all the razzamatazz, the Pentecostalists represent a congregation of between 160,000 and 194,000 out of a population of 20 million” (p.43). This is far less than the number of people who identify as Buddhist or atheist.

As in the United States where the evangelical Christian vote is strongly linked to the Republican Party, religious beliefs are also an indicator of voting behaviour in Australia. The Coalition is the party of choice for those who attend church regularly and also now receives more support from Catholic voters than the Labor Party does (Warhurst 2007, p.21). It was this link between the Christian voter and the conservative Liberal and

National parties which governed as a Coalition that Kevin Rudd successfully challenged in the defeat of the Howard government in the 2007 election (Religion Report 2008).

Simons (2007) posits that the revival of Christianity in Australian politics can be explained by a change in attitude rather than an actual increase in those people who actively embrace Christianity (p.16). Faith has become a public rather than a private matter and politicians need to signal that they are part of this. In the United States religious language is common in political speeches (Domke and Coe 2008). Australian politicians have generally avoided overtly religious references, however a recent study of Australian political speeches between 2000 and 2006, found that “the use of Christian terminology and ideas in Australian political discourse has become more normalized” (Crabbe 2009, p.272). However Australian politicians still walk a careful line between appealing to key Christian constituencies while at the same time not alienating the secular majority (Maddox 2005, p.98). In an opinion piece published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the former Federal Labor Member of Parliament, Carmen Lawrence, suggests that:

Many of those espousing religious codes to justify their stances have only the haziest notions about scripture and theology. No matter - few others have a clue either. What is important is that the MP appears principled and upright, yet not so devout as to arouse suspicion in a largely secular society. (Lawrence 2009)

I argue in the next section that one area where this is especially evident is in the adoption of a family values discourse which serves to both appease fundamentalist Christians and drive a wedge between conservative and progressive Labor voters.

### **3.2 The family values movement and gay marriage**

In the previous chapter I argued that the abstinence until marriage movement is part of a globalised family values movement that gained unprecedented power and influence through support from the Bush Administration in the United States. The histories of sex education reveal that the promotion of the traditional family structure has been central to Christian advocacy on the content of sex education programs. However the discourse of ‘family values’ assumes a different status when deployed by the Christian Right within highly politicized contexts. It is this active involvement in political processes that makes

these organisations different from other evangelical groups that hold socially conservative beliefs (Diamond 1995, p.161).

‘Family values’ covers a wide area of conservative social policy. It encompasses a privileging of one family structure (husband, wife and their biological children) as well as essentialist notions of gender and opposition to abortion. It blames changes to family structure such as single parenting and serial relationships as being responsible for eroding social cohesion (Stacey 1996). Standing in the centre of the family values discourse is the ‘innocent child’ who must be protected. Corruption of the innocence of children is one of the key anxieties raised in relation to sex education, however it is also evoked in debates on gay marriage. Butler (2004) argues that debates over marriage are:

...not only fueled by homophobia sentiment but often focus on fears about reproductive relations, whether they are natural or “artificial”. What happens to the child, the child, the poor child, the martyred figure of an ostensibly selfish or dogged social progressivism? (Butler 2004, p.110)

The gay marriage debate in Australia was initiated by the Prime Minister John Howard rather than by gay and lesbian activists whose interest at this time was focussed on trying to reform Commonwealth laws affecting same sex couples but not on redefining marriage itself. Howard justified his decision in 2004 to put a Bill to parliament to amend the *Marriage Act* to specifically exclude same sex couples as being necessary for the “survival of the species” because by his definition “marriage, as we understand it in our society, is about children, having children” (Howard cited in Wade 2003). Both Howard and the then Health Minister Tony Abbott referenced marriage to Australia’s Christian heritage (Maddox 2005, p.96).

In taking this action Howard was responding to the legalization of gay marriage in some (mainly European) countries, action taken in the United States which prohibited such marriages and to concerted lobbying by the Christian Right groups in Australia. In 1996 President Clinton had signed a law introduced by the Republican Party called the *Defense of Marriage Act*. This Act prohibits Federal recognition of same-sex marriages and also allows a state to ignore gay marriages performed outside its borders. However this Act was open to constitutional challenge and so in 2004 a constitutional amendment was proposed by the Republicans to make marriage a union of only a man and a woman.

Despite being publicly supported by President Bush the amendment did not receive the necessary support from the Senate and was not passed (Rimmerman 2008).

One of the actions taken by President Bush was to proclaim one week in October 2003 as 'Marriage Protection Week' (Rimmerman 2008, p.111). The Australian version of this was the National Marriage Forum which took place on August 4<sup>th</sup> 2004 in the Great Hall of Parliament House. It was organised by the Australian Christian Lobby, the Australian Family Association and the Fatherhood Foundation and was addressed by Christian leaders and politicians from the major political parties. All indicated their support for the *Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill* to the 1,000 plus crowd. This Bill was passed by Federal Parliament on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2004 with only the minor progressive parties voting against it. The Labor Party, who voted for the Bill, tried to differentiate itself from the Coalition Government by making a commitment to audit and amend all Commonwealth legislation that discriminated against same sex couples.

In a press release put out by the Christian Democratic Party to celebrate the passing of the *Marriage Amendment Legislation Bill*, the Reverend Gordon Moyes (2004) commented that "on this day, after three tries, the Federal Parliament finally affirmed what we all know: marriage is about one man and one woman only. Not three men and a goldfish, not a football team. One man and one woman". This debate therefore not only allowed Christian Right groups in Australia to promote their homophobic views but also indicates the way these groups understand themselves to be in an ideological cultural war. In South Australia, the president of the Australian Family Association, Paul Russell (2005) wrote:

In Australia, we need look no further than the recent debate about homosexual marriage for an example of the culture wars being fought in our own backyard. [...]. When the history of this period is written, the Marriage debate will either be seen as the last great win of the social conservatives [...] or it may be seen as the point in time when the majority stood up and said 'enough' and the tide was effectively turned.

This phrase 'turning of the tide' reflects a belief that secularism has intruded too far into what the Christian Right believe should be a Christian nation. Burack and Josephson (2003) argue that Christian Right leaders actively promote the concept that it is the Christians "who are denied tolerance by a society whose descent into cultural evil is

increasingly apparent and aggressive” (p.337). As I outlined in the previous section, this concept of the state as inherently Christian has less influence within the Australian political system than in the United States, however there are some Christians in Australia who share this belief. This is evident in the following critique of the social changes that took place in South Australia in the 1970s. “South Australian society, which has been founded and nurtured in the tradition of Christian humanism, was now embracing a new social order based on the tenets of secular humanism”<sup>31</sup> (Overduin and Fleming 1980, p.103).

There are in fact different religious and philosophical positions that drive the actions of the Christian Right. While there is general consensus that there will be a second coming of Christ who will rule the earth, there are differences in how this event will occur. Those who follow the pre-millennialism schema as outlined in the biblical Revelation of John in the New Testament, believe that for Christ to reappear, the Gospel must be preached around the world to spread God’s word and then the ‘true believers’ will be ‘raptured’ and ascend to heaven to be with Christ. There will then be a time of tribulation and great disasters such as floods and fires (of apocalyptic proportions) and the emergence of the anti-Christ who fights for global supremacy. Eventually this anti-Christ will be defeated, all non believers will be killed and Christ will return to rule the world for a thousand years. A further successful fight will then take place against Satan and after this the earth will be destroyed and only heaven will remain (Herman 1997; Buss and Herman 2003; Unger 2007). In this schema, those who are considered ‘ungodly’ such as gay people or supporters of abortion are constructed as manifestations of the work of the anti-Christ.

Those that follow post-millennialism believe that God’s kingdom must be established on earth before Christ will return. While the majority of Christian Right leaders in the United States such as Pat Robertson and James Dobson are pre-millennialists (Burack 2003), the post-millennialist view has become more prominent recently. Buss and Herman (2003) suggest that this possibly explains the increase in Christian Right activism:

Theologically, postmillennialism makes more sense of religious activism: if Christ’s return is almost in some way conditional on the establishment of the Christian world,

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<sup>31</sup> One of the authors of this book, *Wake Up Luck Country*, is Father John Fleming, who in 2003 used his Sunday night religious radio program to oppose the SHARE project.

rather than its inauguration, contemporary Christian activism, particularly its global dimension, is fully vindicated and indeed a rational choice. (2003, p.15)

The influence of the Christian Right and their family values discourse extends politically to the international level. Buss and Herman (2003) identify the emergence of a Christian Right agenda at United Nations forums and conferences. These conservative groups were mobilised after the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women where it was perceived that ‘anti family’ social activists were having a dangerous impact on global social policies. Austin Ruse, President of one of these US groups, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-Fam) argues that Christian Right groups need to be prepared for a long fight to counter the corrupting influence of what he calls “enemies of the family” within the United Nations. He describes how since the Cairo meeting the pro-family movement has worked actively on strategies to both frustrate progressive gains on sexual and reproductive rights and further the inclusion of pro-family priorities (Ruse 1999).

For many conservatives the United Nations is seen as an example of a large out of control governing mechanism that threatens to trample on the private rights of citizens within sovereign states. It is also characterized as being inefficient and incompetent which poses a contradiction for Christian Right groups as if it is really incompetent then there should be no reason to have concerns about the influence it may have on family related policies. However Buss and Herman (2003) posit that Christian Right groups believe that the disorganized nature of the UN actually increases the susceptibility of the UN to corrupting influences such as feminism and gay rights. Therefore the UN is seen as being in distress “and in need of rescue by the forces of good” (p. 47).

While the United States dominates in this international effort to promote the Christian Right agenda there are other strong actors with shared interest in family values. One of these is the Vatican and the others are those that represent the Islamic States at the United Nations. These religious actors come together through their common values on the roles of women and opposition to homosexuality and have developed a network that shares information and tactics (Chappell 2004).

There have been a number of different United Nations conferences where religious networking and advocacy on family values has been evident. These include the five

yearly follow up conferences to the 1994 Cairo Population Conference and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. At the Beijing +5 Conference, religious groups were vehemently opposed to paragraph 96 from the *Beijing Platform for Action* which “includes the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters relating to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health”. The Vatican argued that one of the reasons it could not accept this statement is that control of sexuality may be interpreted as endorsement of homosexuality (Chappell 2004, p.16).

The ten year follow up to Beijing took place at the 2005 UN meetings on the Commission for the Status of Women and included a declaration that affirmed the platform agreed 10 years earlier. However the United States led an attack on this document, which they saw as failing to support the traditional family structure, and this resulted in long and exhausting debates and little progress on consolidating a position on sexual rights. Collet (2006), in a paper prepared for the advocacy group Sexuality Policy Watch, argues that part of the problem at this conference was that progressive groups were split on what they sought under the heading of ‘sexual rights’ while conservative groups were united in their opposition to any sexual rights at all and articulated these in simple moral messages.

In 1997 Christian Right groups took international networking on family values to a higher level when they organised their own conference in Prague called the World Congress on Families. It was convened by two American organisations: the Howard Centre for Family, Religion and Society and NGO Family Voice (now known as World Family Policy Centre). Invitations to the conference were sent only to conservative Christian, Islamic and Jewish organisations and the overwhelming majority of those who attended came from the United States (Buss and Herman 2003). There have been four follow up conferences and Australians have been represented at each of them.

Five Australians have been speakers at the different conferences. One of these was Kevin Andrews, a Minister in the Howard Government and active member of the Lyons Forum. Andrews and his wife Margaret, who is a marriage therapist, presented a paper on policies to support stronger marriages and families, some of which were being actively pursued by the Howard Government. BA Santamaria from the National Civic Council was one of the co-chairs for the first conference and also spoke on economic policy that can support traditional marriage.

The other Australian delegates were women from two well known Australian Christian Right groups. Rita Joseph represented the Australian Family Association and Babette Francis represented the Endeavour Forum, a group formerly known as 'Women who want to be Women'. As the original name suggests, Francis is most concerned with challenging a social construction of gender. In a speech at the 2007 World Congress on Families Francis (2007) argued that the purpose of the "unholy alliance of gender feminists and homosexual lobbyists [...] is the deconstruction of gender itself". Joseph was one of the speakers at the second conference who spoke out most vehemently against the threat that homosexuality poses to the natural family (Buss and Herman 2003, p.85). Joseph (1999) argued that "what is happening is that powerful forces within the United Nations are conducting a form of globalized biological warfare. This is a war against the natural sexual order and against the natural patterns of family formation".

These international conservative conferences and the actions of the religious groups within UN forums reflect the organised and politicized nature of the struggles over human rights relating to sexuality. It is a struggle that is mirrored in the localized battles that take place within different states, communities and even schools. The family values rhetoric is used as a tactic to counter the perceived corrupting influence of secularism and is also a reflection of the heteronormative construction of the state. The state has great difficulty engaging with the citizen as a sexual subject, particularly if the sexuality of that subject is not heterosexual. Carol Johnson (2003) notes that even feminist analyses of the gendered nature of citizenship fail to also acknowledge the heteronormative nature of that citizenship, that is *heterosexual* male as the head of the household who is married to a *heterosexual* woman with children within this heterosexual context (italics in original p.46).

Gay marriage has been used as one of the wedge issues in these struggles over who should be able to claim full entitlements as a citizen. It is an issue that splits those with progressive politics as well as being a marker of difference between those with conservative and progressive views. The issue of gay marriage is also divisive within the gay and lesbian movement. This relates to differences of opinions about seeking legitimacy for relationships from the very state that causes the injustice in the first place through failing to protect gay and lesbian people. Judith Butler (2004) explores this dilemma by examining the different forms of kinship systems that exist outside of

marriage and asks the question “are there not other ways of feeling possible, intelligible, even real, apart from the sphere of state recognition?” (p.114).

Some gay activists worry that gay marriage will lead to a domestication of gay and lesbian people that will hinder the pursuit for broader social change such as universal access to health care in the United States. Lesbian feminists are wary of accepting the institution of marriage which has traditionally been defined as a place of oppression for women (Rimmerman 2008). In Australia one gay activist argues against seeking state recognition of same sex relationships because it would be colluding with a state that has denied recognition of the sovereignty of Australia’s Indigenous people. Damien Riggs (2006) outlines this dilemma in the following terms: “Should our primary responsibility as white queers be first to an ethical engagement with Indigenous sovereignty, and only then to securing rights for groups of people who are also currently disenfranchised within the national space?” (p.81).

Family values and gay marriage are therefore highly contested political and cultural spaces that provoke passion and sometimes moral panic and anxiety. In the following section I explore some of the literature on the nature of these emotional responses and their role in shaping the political response.

### **3.3 Para church groups and moral panics**

This chapter began with a discussion of the intersections between the formal political system in Australia and religious institutions such as the Catholic and Anglican churches. I then explored the role of religious groups in advocating for their version of family values within international forums. Some of these groups are linked to formal churches but most exist as non denominational lobby groups. Hunter (1991) argues that these non-denominational para church groups, some of which are specifically pro-life or antigay, became the backbone of Christian Right political advocacy and organisation. In the United States some of the groups established during the 1970s included Focus on the Family formed by Dr James Dobson in 1977 and Concerned Women for America (CWA) established in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye. Sometimes these groups linked up under umbrella groups such as the Coalition on Revival formed in the early 1980s (Herman 1997; Luker 2006).

Sara Diamond (1989; 1998) in her comprehensive analysis of the rise of the Christian Right in the US identifies that the experience of fighting political battles against abortion and gay rights in the 1970s, often at a local level but connected to a wider national network, set up the Christian Right for the political gains it was able to make in the 1990s. One significant example of their success in political organizing was the fact that Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, which was founded in 1979, was able to register two million new voters prior to the 1980 election. In a country where voting is voluntary this is an important strategy in trying to achieve electoral victory and indeed it greatly assisted with getting the Republican candidate Ronald Reagan elected.

The other significant movement in the US in the late 1980s was when Dr James Dobson merged his Focus on the Family with the Family Research Council and set up a series of local state based think tanks which played an important role in lobbying at a state level. This also scaled up the dissemination of 'scientific' literature on topics such as the psychological harm of sex outside marriage that became important in the Christian Right's international activism on sex education and gay rights (Irvine 2002; Kaplan 2004).

Christian Right groups in Australia share the rhetoric and tactics of the groups in the United States but not the political influence or resource base. An Australian website dedicated to providing information on religious right groups in Australia identifies 22 organisations.<sup>32</sup> These include three political parties (Family First Party, Christian Democratic Party and the Democratic Labor Party), the Australian Christian Lobby and the Australian Family Association (which is linked to the National Civic Council) and the Festival of Light. There are a number of groups which have affiliations with American organisations such as Focus on the Family Australia, Exodus, Right to Life Australia and Creation Ministries Australia. There are also smaller but very active groups such as Endeavour Forum (Babette Francis) and Saltshakers and Catch the Fire Ministries (all based in Melbourne). The unbelief website estimates that membership of the groups range from less than 100 for small groups to a maximum of a few thousand for the Australian Christian Lobby.

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<sup>32</sup> [www.unbelief.org](http://www.unbelief.org)

All these groups network with each other and even sometimes represent each other. For example the founder of Saltshakers represented the Festival of Light before the Senate Committee inquiring into superannuation entitlements for same sex couples in March 2000. A search of the websites of the different groups also reveals that they all link to primarily American based resource materials and to each others' websites. One of the most prolific Australian authors of Christian Right materials is Bill Muehlenberg, former National Secretary of the Australian Family Association, who maintains his own website dedicated to what he calls 'culture watch'<sup>33</sup>. A significant proportion of his material is analysis of materials produced by progressive groups and commentators and it routinely condemns the actions of the so called 'homosexual lobby'.

The language of threat and warning is part of the Christian Right's strategy of trying to create fear and panic to stimulate attention and political action. Stanley Cohen (1972) is credited as the sociologist who introduced the term 'moral panic' to describe the way in which incidents and issues can be perceived as a threat to social values. He particularly highlighted the role of the media in amplifying this threat. Cohen's research was based on the public reaction to outbreaks of violence between youth groups known as the Mods and the Rockers in England in the 1960s. The term 'moral panic' has since been applied to a range of events where the behaviours or actions of a group or category of people leads to increased hostility towards that group that is disproportionate to the actual threat (Thompson 1998, p.9).

There are different views on when an event should actually be called a 'moral panic' and on the role of the media in its creation (Cricher 2003). Cohen's original analysis was that moral panics are "generated by the media or by particular interest groups using the media to publicize their concerns" (Hunt 1997, p.631) and that in this process certain groups get constructed as the deviants or what Cohen calls 'folk devils'. However the media itself is now much more diversified and groups that were once the object of this panic discourse now have greater access to challenging and mobilizing against those who are creating this panic (McRobbie and Thornton 1995, p.572). One example of this is gay media and the gay rights movement who present counter discourses to that put forward by the Christian Right groups.

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<sup>33</sup> [www.billmuehlenberg.com](http://www.billmuehlenberg.com)

Hunter (1991) argues that the strategic use of the media is one of the key features of the culture wars as it is in this public space that debates take place. He identifies that this is a space that is largely occupied by elites who struggle to “monopolize the symbols of legitimacy” (p147). Theorists of social movements describe this as part of a process of ‘strategic framing’ where groups identify the form in which they will present their concerns to maximize attention and leverage. Framing also takes account of the current political context as some issues become ‘hot topics’ for both gaining maximum media attention and mobilizing those who may not be members of the actual social movement but are sympathetic to what it is trying to achieve (Zald 1996).

One strategy for increasing political opportunity is to deliberately create controversy to shift media attention onto your issue. A variety of tactics may be used for this but Gamson and Meyer (1996) warn that:

Winning media attention requires strategies and tactics exactly opposite to those needed to win political standing within established political institutions. The media rewards novelty, polemic and confrontation, but institutional politics prizes predictability, moderation, and compromise. Seeking both media attention and institutional influence, activists confront a difficult dilemma of balance. (Gamson and Meyer 1996, p.288)

Strategic framing of issues is evident in debates over sex education and family values by both those with progressive and conservative positions. The creation of controversy which is a critical part of the moral panic process can be viewed in Foucaultian terms as “signs of struggle over rival discourses and regulatory practices” (Thompson 1998, p.25). That is, they are part of the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that Foucault argues needs to be interrogated to reveal who is allowed to speak and the institutional legitimacy they can claim in making these statements (Foucault 1978, p.11).

Para church organisations play a key role in creating controversy to achieve political ends. There is little published Australian literature on these small religious activist organisations although histories of sex education, gay rights and abortion law reform in Australia often refer to their activities (Jose 1999; Mendelsohn 1983; Angelides 2005). One of the most detailed accounts is that by Miranda Morris (1995) in her book *The Pink Triangle* which traces the events of the struggle for gay law reform in the Australian state of Tasmania during the years 1988 to 1994.

Morris (1995) explores not only what happened in Tasmania at that time but also the conditions which made it possible. There are striking similarities between the controversy over the SHARE project and the events in Tasmania. Both included activism by small religious groups who worked in tandem with members of the mainstream conservative parties. Another common feature is that related to political opportunity. At the time the controversies took place both states had Labor governments that did not have an outright majority. This made them very cautious of supporting something that appeared to be unpopular in the electorate. The main approach to law reform in Tasmania at the time was to try and decriminalize homosexuality as part of an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy. It was felt that this would be an option that may be more acceptable as it moved the issue of homosexuality towards discourses of public health and away from moral arguments over what is a legitimate relationship or sexual activity.

However this strategy was not successful despite the Bill progressing eventually through the Lower House to the Upper House where it eventually stalled. Morris (1995) identifies that the issue of homosexual law reform became enmeshed in other issues that dominated Tasmanian politics. “Antipathy towards homosexuality was often interlinked with an antipathy towards a loosely identified green movement, and was informed by the much earlier confrontations over conservation issues” (p.81). That is, the genealogy of conflicts between progressives and conservatives in Tasmania became part of the debates on homosexuality in Tasmania.

The moral panic created in Tasmania was intense and very public. It became an emotionally volatile battle with the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group (TGLRG) on one side and conservative religious groups and politicians on the other. It also involved state apparatuses, with the Hobart City Council banning the TGLRG from having a stall in a market to collect signatures in favour of gay law reform. On the third weekend of the ban the Tasmanian Government sent in police to the market and nine people from TGLRG were arrested for trespass (p.17). The issue of gay law reform was debated in parliament, through the media and at community rallies.

One community rally organised to oppose the decriminalization was organised in Ulverstone on Tasmania’s north-west coast and was attended by 700 people. The keynote speaker at the rally was Chris Miles, a Federal Liberal politician and Baptist lay

preacher.<sup>34</sup> Miles linked reform of Tasmania's laws against homosexuality to infiltration by homosexual activists of the education system. He said, "if we give in on this one the rot will continue. This will just be the tip of the iceberg" (p.35). Morris records that the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group attended this rally and were subjected to people chanting, "Kill them, kill them"<sup>35</sup>.

One of the key roles of para church groups is to orchestrate these events where emotion can be displayed. In her analysis of sex education panics in the United States, Irvine (2007) suggests that emotions should not be considered as simply an expression of a private feeling. Instead she argues that they need to be understood as a political act and that "unbraiding the twists of emotion in specific sex panics helps us ground transient feelings in local social context and recognize them as products of specific political strategies" (Irvine 2007, p.15).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Marion Maddox (2001) argues that "Australia's well known secularism holds a number of hazards. One is that religious incursions into public policy and discussion may go unrecognized" (p.285). This chapter has presented some of the complex ways that religion operates within the Australian political context and highlights the need to critically interrogate religious influence in Australia. This influence comes from the religious beliefs of individual politicians as well as from advocacy by institutional churches and the smaller para church groups.

The Christian Right is active in Australia although in a form that differs significantly from groups in the United States. A significant difference is that religious discourse in Australia is more muted and political victories much rarer. This can be seen in the liberalization of laws which made RU486<sup>36</sup> available in Australia through majority support of the Federal Parliament which at that time had a majority conservative

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<sup>34</sup> Chris Miles has been one of the most active politicians in the antigay movement in Australia. Maddox also refers to some of his activity at Federal level which included getting up a petition against the television broadcast of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. He was also an active member of the Lyons Forum (Maddox 2005).

<sup>35</sup> These groups had considerable success in delaying the law reform and dividing the Tasmanian community, including the religious community as there were some church groups in favour of the reform. Ultimately law reform was achieved in 1997 but only after one member of the gay community, Nick Toonan took his case to the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

<sup>36</sup> A drug that is used for medical abortions.

Coalition Government. However when it comes to a reconceptualisation of relationships in Australia, the issue of gay marriage continues to be a site of division and resistance, for progressive as well as conservative groups.

There is clear evidence however of common vision and purpose between Christian Right groups in different countries. While gains in the rights of women and gay men and lesbians are often identified as one of the mobilizing forces for the Christian Right in both Australia and the United States (Diamond 1998), their actions need to be understood as exceeding that which could simply be described as a 'backlash'. Instead these Christian Right groups are engaged in an active process to insert conservative religious values within state and international institutions and to recreate sexuality and gender in accordance with biblical teachings (Herman 1997, p.69).

One tactic that is used to do this is to create controversy. In the next chapter I describe the controversy created about the SHARE project through describing the strategies that were used, the groups that were involved and the impact this had on both the project and those of us working on the project. I reveal the discursive battles that took place and the challenges we faced in responding to the opponents' claims about the project in a way that destabilized the 'family values' discourse rather than reinforced it through entrenching predictable binary positions.

*New Sex Education Program, Is it really for our young people?  
There are plans to introduce this program into all State High Schools.  
But why haven't parents been properly informed about the program?  
What is really in the program? What has been omitted?  
What values are being taught?*

Introduction to leaflet advertising a community forum opposing the SHARE project

## **Chapter 4:**

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### **The story of the SHARE project**

This chapter moves the focus away from the global ‘culture wars’ over sexuality and the family and back to the local discursive battles over sex education that took place in South Australia in 2003. While this local conflict has many similarities with these global clashes it also has its own unique dynamics that will be explored in the next three chapters. This chapter describes the circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in 2003, the way this was managed by the government and the effect this had on those of us implementing the project. In doing this I give details of the organisations, political parties and individuals who actively opposed the project and the tactics they used to create controversy.

In the previous chapter I outlined literature on the role of the media in fuelling a moral panic. I explore this issue further in this chapter through describing how the media became an influential actor shaping the terms of the ideological battle over the SHARE project. With both sides trying to attract coverage that supported their position it was not possible to speak about sex education from outside the dominant discourses that shape talk about sex and young people.

One example of this constraint can be seen in the television story aired on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2003 by the local ABC current affairs program *Stateline* in which I was interviewed along with Trevor Grace, who played a key organizing role in the campaign against the SHARE project. In the interview Grace reads out the following words from one of the exercises in the teacher manual: “Inserting fingers into partner’s vagina, oral sex using your tongue to stimulate a partner’s genital area, and look over here, 11 plus years of age. I don’t think that’s appropriate”. I then respond by saying, “Most of the

program deals with relationships, communication, basic puberty, body changes and a small proportion of the program deals with sexual issues, like contraception, diseases, safe sex. So it's been blown out of all proportion". In my response I do not speak of the sexual pleasure that is implicit in the material referred to by Trevor Grace and why this might be included. The conservative opposition to the program has made discussion of pleasure outside of the acceptable limits of the purpose of sex education.

As I have previously outlined, there is little analysis of the political struggles that have taken place over sex education in Australia and one of the aims of this chapter is to redress this gap to some extent by producing an account of the campaign against the SHARE project. The descriptive material in this chapter will also be drawn upon in the next chapter where I discuss this campaign in the context of the response to other sex education programs in Australia.

The primary sources of information for this chapter are the public records relating to the SHARE project. These include media releases, transcripts and press clippings, parliamentary records and correspondence held by SHine SA. The time period covered is March 2003 – May 2004 when the oppositional campaign was at its most intense. I also use my own experience of working at SHine SA and of being an active contributor to the public representation of the project.

In Chapter One I discussed my own genealogy in relation to sexuality, education and religion that informs how I experienced the controversy created about the SHARE project. I include these experiences to highlight the pervasive effects of heteronormative discourses, not only on sex education itself but also on how public debates about sexuality take place and the impact this has for lesbians and gay men as well as for heterosexual people. This is an important point as the project team for the SHARE project included people of diverse sexualities and religious beliefs but all felt challenged and personally threatened by the homophobic panic created by the opponents. For some of the team this was their first experience of being constructed as a sexually deviant 'other' (through their association with the project) and while this was an uncomfortable position it also served to increase their commitment to the work they were doing on the SHARE project.

#### **4.1 The launch of SHARE and first signs of opposition**

In March 2003 the SHARE project was officially launched at Smithfield Plains High School, a disadvantaged school in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. The launch had been organised to symbolically mark the beginning of the three year project and to stimulate publicity for the project. The desire for publicity was aimed at providing information to the community about the need to improve sexual health education in schools and also to highlight the work being done by SHine SA. As a non-government agency dependent on government funding there is often pressure not only to do the work that the agency is funded for but also to be seen to be doing that work. A public launch requires invitations to be sent to a large number of people including senior public servants and politicians and also enables media attention on a piece of work.

SHine SA's media officer had talked with Adelaide's daily newspaper *The Advertiser* about doing a story on the SHARE project. This appeared on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2003 with the heading, "Schools Lift Taboo on Teaching Students about Sex" (Oakley 2003). This was a full page article and included a photo of young women. It also included a box with the curriculum topics for Years 8, 9 and 10. Those of us working on the project were pleased to have such positive coverage. However one of the outcomes of this coverage was that the project drew the attention of Andrew Evans, a South Australian Member of Parliament from the Family First Party, who requested a copy of the teacher resource manual. Activities relating to homosexuality and sexual activity from the manual were then photocopied by his office and distributed through his church networks in South Australia. This was the beginning of the year long campaign against the project.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003 a media report appeared in the South Australian weekly tabloid newspaper, the *Sunday Mail*, with the headline "Angry backlash over sex course" (Holmes 2003). It quoted Andrew Evans as saying that parents had not been adequately informed about the program. This news story was taken up by the talkback radio station 5AA the next day. Both Andrew Evans and I were interviewed about the project by Leon Byner a well known Adelaide broadcaster. In the interview Byner asked me if there was reference to sex toys and anal intercourse. I responded by saying there were references to these in the teacher manual in the activity that clarifies what is safe and unsafe sex and then quickly moved to emphasize that the course had a large focus on relationships. Evans described the horror that one parent had experienced when she received the letter from the school telling her that a new sex education program was to be implemented.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003 a caller phoned the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) morning show in Adelaide. This radio station is part of the national broadcast network and is considered the ‘quality’ end of radio journalism in Australia. As David Bevan, one of the announcers on this morning show commented the next day, “This particular caller was worried because the sex education program explicitly mentioned homosexuality and sexual contact”. On the 4<sup>th</sup> April on their morning show Bevan and fellow announcer Matthew Abraham provided in-depth coverage of the SHARE project. They interviewed the Chief Executive Officer and Coordinator of Teacher Education at SHine SA as well as four politicians: Andrew Evans, Vicki Chapman the Shadow Education Minister, Bob Such<sup>37</sup> an Independent politician and Trish White the Minister for Education in the Labor Government.

The ABC announcer, Matthew Abraham, began by getting the background of the program from the SHine SA representatives and the evidence for the need for such a program. Clarification then took place over how one of the activities in the teacher manual known as ‘Intimacy cards’ is implemented in the classroom. They finished by interviewing the then Minister for Education, Trish White<sup>38</sup>, who was asked whether she thought SHARE was a good program. The following is a transcript of part of this interview:

Abraham: Trish White, do you think it’s a good program?

White: Well firstly, I do support sexual health and relationship education. It’s very ...

Abraham: Well I think we all think that Trish... [...] Do you think this is a good program?

White: Well, well let me state that not everybody is of that view.

Abraham: What not everyone supports sexual health?

White: That it should be taught in schools.

Abraham: Oh okay

White: Some parents and those parents...

Abraham: Well most reasonable people do

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<sup>37</sup> Bob Such is also a former Education Minister in a previous Liberal Government.

<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting the familiarity that is evident between the announcers and the Minister as indicated by calling her ‘Trish’. Adelaide is a small city and people comment on everyone knowing each other.

White: ... have the option to ...well I don't comment on the views of all parents. Some parents don't feel comfortable with that and they do have the right to withdraw their children.

Abraham; All right. You... okay, but you think it's a good thing?

White: Parents are asked to sign permission slips where they indicate that they know what's going to be taught and that if they have concerns they'll contact the school.

Abraham: Okay, Trish.

Bevan: Do you like the program Trish White? Do you think it's a good program?

White: Well from what I've seen given that there is a choice for parents in school communities to say we're comfortable with that, and I expect those schools to take notice of that, feedback from parents. There is a range of materials that teachers can use. The controversy seems...

Abraham: Trish White, do you think it's a good program?

White: ... to be... with a couple of references in the teacher's resources. The resources given to teachers.

Presenter: [Sighs]

White: And, I think it will be a good program. It's piloted. Any things that need to be adjusted or changed, there's plenty of opportunity for that before it gets rolled out into schools across the state.

Abraham; So that's a ...is that a yes? It's very...

White: Well look, quite frankly, it's up to school communities....

Presenter: [Sighs]

As the manager of the SHARE project listening to this interview I also sighed. Although in later interviews the Education Minister gave unconditional support to the project and put out a written statement to that effect, this first interview gave the impression that there was indeed something 'controversial' being 'piloted' in schools which some parents may reasonably object to.

This emphasis on the parental right to withdraw their child led the Minister for Education to change the way parental consent was given for the SHARE project. Previously in other sexual health programs in state schools (and indeed for other programs considered 'sensitive') consent is presumed unless parents 'opt out'. This was changed so that the consent process for the SHARE project became 'opt in' which meant students could only participate in the SHARE lesson if their parents provided written consent.

This change was made after the project had begun and some lessons had already been held. This caused considerable difficulty for the schools that were expected to offer the SHARE curriculum to all year 8, 9 and 10 students but students could not participate until a signed consent form had been returned. SHine SA data on participation rates in the SHARE program following the active 'opt in' policy indicate that in 2003, 5,229 students participated in the program and 237 students or 4.53% were excluded either because their parents had actively withdrawn their child or had failed to return a consent form (SHine SA 2003a). The active consent process was labour intensive and the pleasingly high participation rate was only achieved by some schools following up parents by phone or a visit to get the necessary signature. Schools reported that it was often those students who were most disadvantaged who were at risk of missing the SHARE lessons due to difficulties in obtaining signed parental consent.

#### **4.2 The opposition players**

On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003 SHine SA was invited to discuss the SHARE project on the 5AA radio Sunday night religious program hosted by Father John Fleming, a conservative Catholic priest. The program was to include the same two political opponents of the SHARE project who had been interviewed four days earlier on ABC radio; Andrew Evans and Vicki Chapman. It was from this time it became apparent that an organised campaign was being mounted against the project and that it was to be conducted through the media and in the political arena. SHine SA declined to be part of the radio program.

A transcript of this radio program reveals the terms on which the opponents based their campaign and also highlights some of the key players who were to lead this opposition. The first of these as mentioned previously was Andrew Evans, the former head of the Assemblies of God Church in Australia, former member of the World Executive of the Pentcostal movement, and pastor at the church in Paradise, Adelaide, known as Paradise Community Church. Evans notes in his maiden speech that he entered politics after semi retiring at the age of 65 and being involved in some political activism against poker machines, the decriminalisation of prostitution and the legalisation of marijuana. This led him to form the Family First Party based on 'family values' (Evans 2002).

In contrast to the religious approach brought by Evans, Vicki Chapman, the Liberal MP, brought her training as a lawyer as well as her position as Shadow Minister for

Education. From 1979 to 2001 Chapman acted as a barrister and solicitor, and in 2001 was pre-selected by the Liberal Party as their candidate for the seat of Bragg. She was elected to the South Australian parliament on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

During the radio program on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003 almost all of the seven callers who phoned in proved to be key people involved in organising the campaign against the SHARE project. The first person to call in was Bishop John Hepworth who is described in the radio transcript as a ‘political commentator’. He is a regular on the Fr John Fleming Sunday night program. Bishop Hepworth is a former Roman Catholic priest who is now the Archbishop of the Traditional Anglican Church. This is a group of Anglicans who formed a breakaway Anglican Church based on their rejection of the ordination of women<sup>39</sup>. This church is also sometimes known as the Anglican Catholic Church.

The next caller who phoned in to this radio program was Dr Toni Turnbull who is a medical doctor and also a member of the Festival of Light. Dr Turnbull is regularly quoted on the ‘dangers’ of emergency contraception and contraception in general. She works in general practice but was employed by the Family Planning Association in the 1980s and often uses this to establish herself as an authority to comment on matters relating to women’s health and/or sexual health. Dr Turnbull later stood unsuccessfully as a Senate candidate for the Family First Party in the Federal election held in October 2004.

The final callers to phone the program were Robyn and Trevor Grace (called simply Trevor and Robyn in the radio transcript). Trevor Grace became one of the strongest opponents of the SHARE project and organised community forums and took out paid advertisements. He usually described himself as being from the ‘Hills Parents and Friends group’, who spoke from a ‘parents’ point of view’ but he also often used his background as a teacher when he rang talk back radio. Trevor Grace also subsequently joined the Family First Party and stood unsuccessfully for election in the Lower House in the Federal election in 2004<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Fr John Fleming is also vehemently opposed to the ordination of women and it was in response to this issue that he left the Anglican Church and joined the Catholic Church as a married priest.

<sup>40</sup> In a paid advertisement published in *The Advertiser* on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2002 which promoted the Right To Life organization and featured a photograph of a foetus, Trevor Grace is listed as the contact person for South Australia. The Right To Life is a national organisation but is strongest in Victoria. It is linked to the US Right To Life movement and is primarily concerned with opposing abortion and euthanasia.

Therefore in this one radio program it is possible to hear the major voices and arguments of those who actively opposed the SHARE project. As each of these key players phones in Fr Fleming responds as if he does not know who they are (with the exception of Bishop Hepworth) although it is likely that he has met them many times before, given their common areas of interest. It is also likely that their calls have been pre-arranged. The next section provides some of the content from the radio transcript. I have included the main comments made by each person and also left in one caller who made a brief and unsuccessful challenge to their views.

### **5AA Sunday Night Talkback 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003<sup>41</sup>**

Fleming: ...it would appear that there is a new program ...to be trialled in schools ...produced by SHine SA ...which is the old Family Planning Association...co-ordinating the project in collaboration with the Department of Education and Children's Services and the Department of Human Services...there have been criticisms made at this program ...I wanted tonight to have somebody to respond to these criticisms from SHINE but they have politely declined to participate in any discussion on this....be that as it may but I have in the studio with me the Honourable Andrew Evans...also Vicki Chapman MP...As Shadow Minister for Education & Children's Services you've released to the media a statement...you are calling for a halt to this new sex education program; why is that?

Chapman: ...the disappointing aspect of this whole program is that of course it's been released as a trial pilot without consultation with parents...parents have been kept in the dark...we have very sensitive controversial aspects in relation to this program which have been proposed to be a manual for teachers...we now have a problem...and what needs to be done now is put a hold on the program, go back to the schools...consult with the parent community...do this properly.

Fleming: ...parents kept in the dark...that's an issue in itself...how did that occur?

Chapman: ...my first concern was raised when I read the letter to parents. This didn't alert them at all for the opportunity to withdraw...[...] ...I think that that was the first mistake...the disappointing aspect to all of this is that what would otherwise may have

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<sup>41</sup> This transcript had already been edited by the media monitoring company (marked by ...). I have inserted the symbol [...] where I removed additional words.

had very good aspects of the program...is now at risk because of this foolish approach...a process of concealment which is now causing these problems.

Fleming: Mr Evans. You've looked at this...it raised problems for you; are they similar?

Evans: Yes they are – the letter that went out to the parents certainly didn't have an opt out clause...the motherhood statement in the letter doesn't really highlight that a large amount of the course talks about homosexuality...[...]

Fleming: ...beyond the question of parents...[...] would you agree there's a mistake made in trying to confuse relationship issues with the sexual issues they raised?

Evans: ...I think so...they're putting in the minds of young people things that perhaps their parents wouldn't like at all...one of the activities asks a series of questions...they're given scenario cards...they have to say 'imagine you're a young gay Asian person' or a 'gay captain of senior football team' [...] why do we need to have students think about those things in that kind of way...give their minds over to how they'd react if they were that kind of person? A lot of parents wouldn't be happy with that. [...]

Fleming: Nothing is raised about the nature of the sexual act and its meaning within...marriage and those kind of permanent relationships as distinct from casual sexual relationships...this is written from an ideological stand point..

Chapman: Let's use another example...the considerable detail in here about children...learning about ...sex toys, acts of sexual activity...generally people would accept these were in the adult range [...] the level and extent of this sort of instruction or activity is being discussed...there appears to be no boundaries being set [...]

Evans: The assumption that between 8 and 11% are either gay or homosexual...that's a big assumption...the year 2000 Census came out that South Australians are point eight percent...[...] ...the intimacy cards...arranged on the floor...they'd teach children...how two people can be intimate without having penetrative sex...including licking body parts, sucking breasts, masturbating each other...I'm sure many parents would object to that being taught.

Fleming:...Vicki Chapman, what can be done about this?

Chapman: At this stage the Minister has indicated there'll now be a second letter going out indicating that the parents have an opportunity to opt out...that's totally inadequate...an opt out clause unless...[...] unless the school community has accepted this program.

Evans: [...] I think they should pull back to a more conservative stand...in countries where they've done that the statistics are indicating there is a drop in pregnancy.

Fleming: ...I think there is a lot of room for public discussion of the materials...parents of any of the schools involved in all this I would strongly recommend that you ask to see the materials...remember we're talking about 11 to 15 year old kids.[...] Welcome John...

Hepworth:...I'm absolutely livered...the last two weeks I've become more and more aware of this...I eventually got hold of a copy...it's pretty hard to get hold of the damn thing I might add...it's being piloted mostly in country schools which is another matter all over again.

Fleming: ...secret education business<sup>42</sup>

Hepworth: ...I might add...this sort of discussion would have you hauled up before the thought police...because you're not allowed in NSW for instance to have a conversation which is in any way considered to have diminished the homosexual lifestyle...for Christians that means your conversations have to go behind closed doors [...] I'm delighted in SA we can have these conversations...I'm not so delighted we can have this sex course.[...]

Fleming: Dr Turnbull has rung in ...hello

Turnbull: [...] it seems to be a social experiment...seems to accept that our teenagers are sexually active and we can't do anything about that.[...] I've been involved in sex education in schools...it seems crazy to think you can reduce pregnancies...by increasing sex of a different kind [...] I feel very saddened by this course...I don't know how we put a course like this in.

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<sup>42</sup> The statement 'secret education business' deliberately evokes the conflict that occurred in South Australia in 1993 when Aboriginal women from the south coast cited their traditional beliefs which became known in the media as 'secret women's business' in order to prevent physical desecration of their traditional lands by developers. This was subject to many court cases and resulted in an inquiry by the then SA Liberal Government which ultimately resulted in a decision in favour of the developers. The term 'secret women's business' subsequently came to be used in an ironic jesting way by those who didn't believe the Aboriginal women.

Fleming: (Reads out intimacy cards again). ..why would you want 11 year olds to know this?

Turnbull: Oh goodness

Hepworth: ...I'm aware of at least two occasions where teachers and clergy have been prosecuted in SA for doing precisely this sort of thing in youth groups...where the courts have decided it is quite illegal and taken strong action against the perpetrators... here we have the same sort of sexually suggestive and provocative behaviour going on in our classrooms...which in fact, if an aberrant clergy person did it, would be illegal.

Fleming: That's an interesting thought isn't it Dr Turnbull?

Turnbull: It certainly is an interesting thought...especially the boys of 13,14,15...their testosterone levels are going up aren't they? Like a skyrocket...the powers of suggestion...I can't imagine anyone attending a session like that and not being affected by it in a negative way...How on earth anyone could think that is actually going to reduce the pregnancy rate and STD rate.

Hepworth: Or the rape rate...the whole sexual behaviour rate.

Caller David: I can't believe what I'm hearing...you two are a pair of old drama queens...trying to whip up some good old fundamentalist fervour I think...I don't believe what you are saying about giving this stuff to 11 year olds...I think you're just lying.

Fleming: [...] be very careful what you say David...that is pathetic. [...]

Caller Trevor: [...] If SHINE have been doing these course for so long...as Dr Turnbull said...have they been rigorously scrutinised in regards to these courses...particularly when I've heard SA has the highest rate of pregnancies and abortion...

Hepworth: ...Seems to have been a love-in between SHINE and the curriculum dept of the Education Dept...but the other side to this...its fascinating that this should have come up in the middle of the war and there is a link because [...] I can't think of anything more calculated to drive a wedge between our society and the teachings of Islam ... than a full-on brutal, amoral course on libertarian Western sexuality.

Fleming: [...] This is the most un-multicultural exercise I've seen for years. [...]

Caller Robyn: [...] what we are all wondering is what can we actually do to get the message out. We know it's starting next term. We've been contacting churches and other groups but its really hard to contact parents themselves in school areas...[...] we can't just run off copies of the curriculum<sup>43</sup> (sic) for all these parents to read.

Hepworth: Why not? Crucial pages you certainly could...

Robyn: I have run off the curriculum (sic) itself which was obtained from the Family First Party...that's how we ended up getting the curriculum itself. [...] Did you notice the inside said we weren't allowed to distribute it.

Hepworth:...I believe it's been tabled in Parliament now...it's a public document...that's what Andrew Evans did in Question Time...gives us the legal right to discuss it here.

Fleming: Looks like SHINE has been overcrowded by the darkness.

This radio segment captures the main criticisms of the SHARE project. These were that it failed to fully inform parents of its content and that it had an inappropriate focus on homosexuality and explicit sexual activity. It also reveals the strong Christian fundamentalist ideology that underpins these concerns and the construction of SHine SA in particular as the embodiment of secular values ('the darkness') that are a threat to this Christianity.

The commentators presume that this discussion of sex education is occurring in a context that is sympathetic to Christian Right ideology. The hostility to homosexuals evident in Hepworth's comments is justified by a call to 'free speech' which in South Australia allows his views to be expressed openly and not behind closed doors as in New South Wales where anti-vilification legislation on the basis of sexuality would prevent their publication.

Bishop Hepworth's comment on criminal acts by priests against children insidiously suggests that in fact this sex education is child sexual abuse in another guise, a claim that is repeated later by others who oppose the SHARE project. The reference to a 'secret

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<sup>43</sup> While Robyn Grace uses the term 'curriculum' she is in fact referring to the teacher resource manual called *Teach It Like It Is*.

arrangement' between SHine SA and the SA Education Department also evokes the image of abuse of children taking place under the nose of unwitting parents. Religious groups are then constructed as the protector of children against a state that is failing in its role.

It is also interesting to note the reference made by Hepworth to war and Islamic culture and amoral Western values. This linking of the rise of secularism to the 'threat from Islamic terrorists' is one which has also been made by Christian right leaders in the United States. Burack (2003) analyses a speech made by Jerry Falwell in which he links the terrorist bombing in America on September 11<sup>th</sup> to the support the USA gives to such people as "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians" (p.1). Fr Fleming takes a different approach by criticizing the project for failing to take into account the views of Muslims in the development of the project. His use of the term 'un-multicultural' cynically deploys a progressive policy discourse to serve his conservative interests.

The radio program not only reveals the discourses that are drawn on to create panic about the SHARE project but also highlights some of the tactics that will be used to oppose the implementation of the project. For example the program finishes with a call for action by the audience which is presumed to be Christian. Robyn Grace tells of her dilemma in not being able to reach parents to warn them but does say she has alerted people through her church networks. Bishop Hepworth also encourages the distribution of more copies of the teacher resource materials, referred to as 'the curriculum'.

The discourses and tactics evident in this radio program are similar to those used by the Christian Right groups in opposing comprehensive sex education in the United States. Janice Irvine (2002) describes these as 'oppositional strategies' and summarises them as:

...the repetition of evocative sexual language (calling a health education text "pornography"); establishing sex educators as targets for blame (they have been called everything from Communists to dirty old women to paedophiles); the invention of depravity narratives (circulating fictive tales to scare parents and discredit sex educators); the claim that sex education speech is performative (that talking about sex enacts sex); and the secularization of religious arguments (using medical claims that may be misleading or inaccurate to advance religious morality). (Irvine 2002, p.73)

In the next section I take each of Irvine's strategies and explore the way the opponent groups applied these strategies to create controversy over the SHARE project.

### **4.3 'Oppositional strategies' used in the campaign against the SHARE project**

#### **4.3.1 The repetition of evocative sexual language**

In the introduction to this chapter I described how Trevor Grace would read out sexual words from the teacher resource manual. These words came from an activity called the 'Intimacy Cards' which were used with students to discuss the range of activities that may be part of an intimate relationship. The teaching notes for this activity say that the purpose of this activity is to explore "how young people can have close intimate relationships without having penetrative sex". Young people are presented with different dating scenarios and are asked to discuss the factors that would influence the type of sexual activity that might take place at different stages in a relationship. For example one question is "what form of intimacy would be OK on a first date?"

The Intimacy Cards became the subject of constant scrutiny because options relating to sexual practices were written and therefore visible in the teacher manual. While most of these were not sexual activities some included non-penetrative sexual practices such as oral sex and mutual masturbation. Another exercise in the teacher manual, known as the safe sex card game, included a list of sexual practices that carry the risk of HIV transmission. This exercise enabled the opponents to have an even greater smorgasbord of sexual terms to draw on and they often highlighted words from both exercises. One of the sexual practices in the safe sex card game referred to a sex toy and this became a favourite area of attention not only for those being interviewed but also the interviewers.

For example Andrew Reimer a radio announcer on the commercial station 5AA began one question to Vicki Chapman with:

Now you've obviously seen the manual. And that's where you've got this information from about these intimacy cards. They canvas issues such as licking body parts, sucking breasts, masturbating each other using sex toys and devices for sexual arousal (5AA, Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2003).

The opponents to the SHARE project used these sexual related words out of context and emphasised that innocent children were being exposed to these shocking sexual terms. In Port Lincoln the opponents produced a brochure which suggested that there is something pornographic about the sex education materials through categorising it as suitable for adults only. The brochure was distributed at a community forum held in Port Lincoln in April 2003 and said:

“Teach It Like It is” AO, Warning, This program contains explicit sexual references. This flier is produced for Parental use only. (If you shouldn’t show this to your child why should it be taught in the classroom?)

This brochure identified that it was produced by ‘Parents Protecting Children’, a group whose membership and affiliation was not stated. It also included the following statement:

Let’s be frank. This program encourages sexual promiscuity. You don’t give a person a gun and show them how it works unless you intend that they use it – this sex course is exactly the same!

The danger of the project is exaggerated through likening sex education to using a gun. Interestingly (and possibly not coincidentally) this gun analogy is also one used by those who opposed a curriculum in the USA called the *Rainbow, HIV K-6 Curricula*. Irvine (2000) quotes Dolores Ayling from Concerned Parents for Educational Accountability as saying “would you like your child to take a gun and put one bullet in and play Russian roulette?” (p.71).

As I discuss in the last section of this chapter, one of the changes that took place in the editing of the teacher manual was to remove the intimacy cards which reduced the number of sexual words in the teacher resource manual. This did not actually change the type of discussion that could take place in the classroom but did alleviate the capacity of the opponents to read out the sexual words on some of the cards. The sex toy card was also removed from the *Safe Sex Exercise*.

#### **4.3.2 Establishing sex educators as targets for blame**

As can be seen in the comments made in the radio transcript, SHine SA was singled out as being to blame for the dangerous and secular nature of the project. One press release put out by the Hills Parents and Friends Group (2003) said “Danger, SHine SA at work”. While the Education Minister and Department were condemned as failing in their legal responsibilities towards children and families it was SHine SA which was targeted for being out of touch with community standards on appropriate content for a sex education program. The criticism of SHine SA reflects past conflicts between conservative religious groups and family planning organisations over issues such as access to contraception and abortion (Siedlecky and Wyndham 1990).

One strategy to locate blame with SHine SA and the Education Minister was to hold community forums where the opponents presented their concerns about the project and criticised those implementing the project. Trevor Grace organized seven forums in South Australia in the regions where schools were implementing the project. Supporters of the SHARE project who attended these forums found them to be stage managed events aimed at creating fear and anxiety among the mainly older church going attendees. SHine SA, the Education Minister, school principals and supportive politicians all declined the invitation to be part of these forums

The usual format of the community forums was that Bishop Hepworth would stand before the audience replete with flowing purple robes and a large carved wooden cross around his neck. He would condemn the failure of the proponents of the SHARE project to attend the meeting and point to the empty chairs carrying signs with the names of the agencies who had been invited. Andrew Evans, Vicki Chapman and Trevor Grace would then usually speak, covering the terrain that they also covered in their media interviews. Evans and Grace would read out the activities that included homosexuality or sexual activity and Chapman would talk about the betrayal of parents. Sometimes guest speakers would be invited from agencies such as the Family First Party or the Australian Family Association. The forums usually finished with a request for audience donations to cover costs and to write to politicians to condemn the SHARE project. Occasionally supporters of the SHARE project would speak up such as in the case of the Independent MP Bob Such but reasoned and thoughtful debate was impossible in this emotionally volatile context.

The forum held at a Lutheran School in the suburb of Highgate on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003, was chaired by Christopher Pearson, a columnist for *The Australian* newspaper and a former speechwriter to the Australian Prime Minister John Howard. While the speakers on that night said they were not opposed to homosexuals as such, members of the audience were not as reticent and statements were made that SHine SA was using the SHARE project to 'recruit' for the gay and lesbian cause and it was suggested that SHine SA should be called 'Filth SA'. Intriguingly, Christopher Pearson both declared his own homosexuality at this forum and reiterated his public condemnation of the so called 'gay lobby'. However the latter was not enough for some members of the audience who shouted that homosexuality is a perversion (Vaughan 2003).

Information distributed by the opponents at the Port Lincoln community forum and through the media in Port Lincoln did not just try to provoke fear around the sexual explicitness of the SHARE project, it also alleged that the rights of parents were being undermined by the SA Education Department. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2003 an anonymous advertisement was placed in the local newspaper, the *Port Lincoln Times*. This said:

THEFT OF CHILDREN? Some government educators want to steal your children's values and thinking away from you. HOW? The new SHARE SEX EDUCATION course deliberately seeks to NORMALISE AND POPULARISE HOMOSEXUALITY & BISEXUALITY. Don't let the Education Department STEAL your children's innocence or your family's values.

This accusation that the state education system was 'stealing your children's values' promotes a perception of a state not only devoid of values but predatory of those held by caring parents. As I previously outlined, the assertion by the opponents that parental authority was being undermined resulted in the then Education Minister changing the parental consent process to one of 'opt in', which placed the SHARE project as the only education program which insisted on this approach. By comparison, religious instruction within state schools continues to be offered on an 'opt out' basis. The need for a parent signature for participation in the SHARE project confirmed that young people do not have agency when it comes to sexual issues and that decisions on sexuality belong in the private realm of familial control. The irony of this situation of course is that for many

children the family is a place of danger due to sexual abuse from their own family members (Haaken and Lamb 2003).

Some people responded to the fear created about the project by writing threatening letters to SHine SA, to school principals and also some politicians who supported the program. While these were overall small in number (SHine SA received approximately twenty letters and emails of this type) it did signal that for some people the issues raised by the SHARE project required drastic action or at least drastic words. Whilst some of these letters and emails were sent anonymously some were signed. One person wrote:

You want every child to have sex to cover your own sin and to normalize sexual behaviour in young children. I am disgusted. Just because you sinned and had sex outside of marriage you want everybody else to do it too!

Another wrote a letter to SHine SA but crossed out the agency name and replaced it with 'Satan's Den'. This person then wrote a diatribe about SHine SA staff being the enemies of God and that "You'll be crushed and destroyed by God's almighty power". Another person drew on her own experience of sexual abuse to argue that "I had my innocence stripped from me when I was 12 years old when I was raped and now you are proposing to rape 12 year olds on mass of their innocence".

Teachers working on the project within the schools were also targeted. One teacher described how the negative publicity about the project led some community members to make accusations that this teacher was corrupting their children:

I played local football and stuff and I'd sort of be pulled up at the bar by parents who'd had a couple of grogs, you know 'What's going on, what do I hear about this, you pushing homosexuality on my kids?' or you know, 'I don't want them to be a poof' and all that sort of stuff and it was all twisted (Key Teacher School B, cited in Johnson 2006, p.23).

Others took a less confronting approach and invited SHine SA staff to Christian education sessions on sex education. One of these was a presentation by the US evangelical speaker Pam Stenzel from the organization *Straight Talk* who gave a lecture on "The Price Tag of Sex" in Adelaide in May 2003. Stenzel was not brought to

Adelaide by those opposing the SHARE project but her presence in Adelaide was used by them to promote sex education based on abstinence until marriage. I was later given a video of one of Stenzel's talks in Australia by an opponent of the SHARE project and a copy of her book, a critique of which I include in the next chapter as part of the analysis of discourses underpinning abstinence until marriage education.

### **4.3.3 The invention of depravity narratives**

The suggestion that a sex education program is too sexually explicit creates anxiety but does not necessarily lead to outright horror. This sometimes requires even more shocking allegations to be made. Irvine records that Christian Right groups in the United States claimed that the organisation Planned Parenthood promoted sexual practices such as bestiality (Irvine 2002, p.76). The SHARE project also had some incredible claims made about it, most of which drew on a disgust of anything to do with the anus and by association, sex between men.

In one talkback radio session on the SHARE project a caller phoned into the commercial radio station 5DN and said that they had heard that a student had been made to stand naked in a class and put his 'finger up his bum'. Jeremy Cordeaux, the announcer on this program, did not cut this caller off or express disbelief as to the veracity of what she was saying. The caller named the school in which this activity allegedly had taken place and I quickly phoned the principal who called the radio station and refuted this claim.

Roslyn Phillips from the Festival of Light was particularly upset that the diagram of the reproductive system in the teacher manual included a label for the anus. For Phillips this meant that the anus was mistakenly being associated with sexual activity and she repeatedly asked for this to be corrected through removal of the label. Phillips included this concern in information sheets distributed at the community forums and as a result the SA Education Department received many letters on the issue. SHine SA was then asked by the Department to prepare a briefing on how many times the anus was mentioned and in what context.

As I discuss in the next chapter Phillips presented her own version of a sex education curriculum to the SA Education Department in which the opening lesson emphasised that the anus is part of the digestive system and not the reproductive system. Phillips'

preoccupation with the anus appears to be linked to her complete abhorrence of male homosexuality. In another briefing sheet dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 2003, sent to every Member of Parliament Phillips writes:

SHARE's use of the term "homophobia" is ideologically motivated and inappropriate. The word was coined by the homosexual lobby. Its literal meaning is "irrational fear of homosexuality", yet "homophobia" is widely and wrongly used by homosexual activists as a term of abuse against those who, for good reasons, oppose some of their political agenda.

The attention by the opponents on the anus in the campaign against the SHARE project can be understood as a deliberate deployment of a depravity narrative which "aims to saturate the image of the "homosexual" with the traditional connotations of depraved sexual acts" (Watney 1991, p.400).

#### **4.3.4 Sex education speech as performance**

One of the main areas of contention about the SHARE project was the suggestion that the education process would harm the students and therefore should be considered a form of child abuse. The Shadow Minister for Education, Vicki Chapman focussed on the potential for psychological harm for young children exposed to confronting sexual imagery. The consumer group Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA) went even further than this when they suggested that the education lessons themselves constituted sexual abuse. In September 2003 ASCA put out a press release that said:

This [SHARE] program is leading children to the slaughter. We demand that it be withdrawn immediately. We have already received countless letters and phone calls by students and parents who have been intimidated, disgusted, humiliated by the very nature of what they are hearing in the classroom. [...] They have wilfully encouraged the reckless independence and endangerment of children as young as 11. This program is pure 'grooming'. (ASCA 2003a)

ASCA likened discussion of sexual matters in the classroom by teachers to the 'grooming' done by paedophiles. This talk was perceived as performative, as just hearing sexual words was considered a form of sexual seduction. ASCA also suggested that these words may inappropriately stimulate sexual arousal in students and presumably

also in teachers. This then increased the sexual vulnerability of the students. A similar point was made by Dr Toni Turnbull in the 5AA radio program when she claimed that young men would not be able to control their sexual urges after participating in the SHARE lessons. ASCA (2003b) followed up these media statements with paid advertisements in *The Advertiser* which asked people to contact them if they had been “adversely affected by school sex education curriculums (past or present)”.

One interesting aspect of this focus on child sexual abuse was that the opponent groups cited Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs, a South Australian expert on child sexual abuse. Freda Briggs was formerly Professor of Child Development at the University of South Australia where she particularly focused on researching the link between being a victim of sexual abuse and becoming a perpetrator. In her retirement Briggs continues to do consultancy work in the child abuse area and expanded her national profile as a member of a committee that reviewed allegations of child abuse in the Anglican Church in Queensland.

Briggs has links to organisations including ASCA and positions herself as a strong advocate for the rights of sexual abuse victims. SHine SA was aware of Briggs’ interest in the SHARE project after she sent an email requesting further information. Briggs had previously worked collaboratively with SHine SA on resource materials on child protection. I attended a briefing with her on the project at which she said she was planning to do a critique of the teacher manual. She told us that ‘unknown people’ had delivered to her photocopied versions of the *Teach It Like It Is* manual and the *Talking Sexual Health* manual developed by La Trobe University.

Briggs did provide her critique to SHine SA which was positive about some areas of the content and critical of others. Briggs also made the comment that she thought it would be better to not have a teacher manual at all as then people wouldn’t be able to misinterpret and cite from it. While Briggs maintained that she was not providing this critique to those opposing the project her name continued to be used by the opponents to provide legitimacy to their claims that the curriculum was not appropriate for the age of the students. Briggs and I did a radio interview on the ABC on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2003 where she said she hadn’t been asked to do an assessment but then went on to say she thought some parts of the program were not age appropriate. This comment was then quoted by Vicki Chapman in a speech in Parliament.

The media also picked up on Briggs' profile as a 'child development expert' as seen in the following statement from the 5AA announcer Leon Byner:

Byner: ...what concerns me is the child protection activist, Freda Briggs of her volition has decided to get interested in this...when somebody of such stature weighs into a debate like this and describes the information that she has seen and knows of in this course to be a lesson in child abuse, you have to worry (5AA, 24/4/03).

#### **4.3.5 Secularization of religious arguments**

The opponent groups, with the exception of the Liberal Party, were all linked to religious organisations. This includes the Family First Party which Andrew Evans, a former Assemblies of God pastor, represents in the South Australian Parliament. However the opponents strategically used scientific arguments to try and discredit the materials used in the SHARE project, presumably in the belief that this would be less easily dismissed by the predominately secular South Australian community, politicians and media organisations.

One of the most widely circulated information sheets was headed "SHARE Sex Education Program Issues of Concern"<sup>44</sup>. It contains the following information that was then picked up and used by the opponents in other briefing sheets:

Are these sex ed teachers aware that the Teach It Like It Is resource manual contains dangerous assertions. For example it states that;

- Gender is a social construct (p3etc) [It is widely accepted by the scientific and social science communities that gender is a biological and social construct]
- Anal intercourse is simply another option of sexual activity (pg 167 etc) [Even though there are many anal reconstructions performed each year in Australia]
- Homosexual relationships are equally valid as heterosexual relationships [Even though 92% of people diagnosed with HIV infection are male. And that the overwhelming majority of these have acquired HIV through homosexual/bisexual contact.
- Condoms are 98-99% effective to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. [Even though many infections, such as genital herpes and the human papilloma virus. Which spread not only by bodily fluids (as with HIV) but are shed from

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<sup>44</sup> This is dated May 12<sup>th</sup> 2003 and is identified as being produced by Trevor Grace.

the genital region. Condoms are estimated to only reduce their rate of transmission by around 50%]

This information sheet contains similar misleading statements to those used by the Christian Right groups in the United States, particularly in regard to the failure rate of condoms (US House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform 2004). It also disputes the treatment of gender and homosexuality in the curriculum and again tries to do this through the use of scientific rather than moral arguments.

The briefing sheets then asked people to write to the Education Minister and the Premier of South Australia with their concerns about the project but warned against people identifying themselves as Christians. “We believe letters may be more effective if you don’t mention that you are a Christian or go to Church. But this is entirely up to you!”

#### **4.4 Fuelling the controversy: the role of the media and politicians**

In the previous chapter I described Stanley Cohen’s conceptual framework of a moral panic which included an analysis of the role of the media in amplifying the perceived threat to the community. Using Cohen’s framework, Thompson (1998) summarises the key elements of a moral panic as:

1. Something or someone is defined as a threat to values, or interest
2. The threat is depicted in an easily recognizable form by the media
3. There is a rapid build up of public concern
4. There is a response from authorities or opinion-makers
5. The panic recedes or results in social changes (p.8).

These elements were present in the panic created about the SHARE project. The opponents successfully framed the SHARE project as something that was potentially dangerous and controversial through using the oppositional strategies described above. The media picked up on these issues and while both ‘sides’ were represented, the extent of coverage reinforced the perception that there was considerable opposition to the project in schools, which in fact was not the case. The public concern that was expressed came primarily from the religious groups linked to the Paradise Community Church and the Family First party. These were the people who wrote to the newspapers and politicians, often following the guidelines provided by Trevor Grace’s information sheets

and concealing that they did not in fact have children at the schools participating in the project.

The media was particularly attracted to stories that included outrage about exposing children to explicit sexual images and information. In May 2003 the high profile national television program *60 Minutes* came to South Australia and interviewed staff and students from schools involved with the SHARE project. In the introduction to this program the presenter Tara Brown warned that “there’s explicit language ahead but nothing many 10 or 12 year olds won’t have heard in the classroom” (Sixty Minutes 2003).

Local television also focused on the SHARE project when on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003 the tabloid TV current affairs program *Today Tonight*, the highest rating program in the 6.30 pm timeslot, ran a story on the SHARE project. This story contained visual footage of a community forum organised by those campaigning against the project. It showed people yelling at the Independent MP Bob Such who attended the forum which was held in his electorate. The program did not clarify that those attending this forum were not parents of students participating in the SHARE project.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, religious opposition to sex education in Australia is not new. However one of the unique aspects of the religious opposition to the SHARE project was the strong support it received from a mainstream political party in South Australia. Vicki Chapman, the Shadow Minister for Education, enabled the opponents to achieve greater media attention through the constant release of media statements and raising the issue in the South Australian Parliament. Most radio media was initiated in response to press releases put out by Chapman.

The headlines of Chapman’s 2003 media releases provide a snapshot of the criticism she made about the program: “Call for Halt to New Sex Education Program” (April 4<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Back to the Drawing Board” (April 8<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Opposition Calls for Commitment from Education Minister” (April 10<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Parents Rights Ignored: Call for Release of Sex Education Curriculum” (April 30<sup>th</sup> 2003); “Call on Premier to Intervene on Child Abuse” (June 18<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Schools Say No to Labor’s Sex Education Program” (July 28<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Labor Prying into School Kids’ Sex Lives” (September 17<sup>th</sup> 2003), “Professional Assessment Reveals Sex Education Program Flaws “ (October 1<sup>st</sup> 2003), “Government

on Back Foot over Sex Ed Program” (13<sup>th</sup> November 2003), “White Aims to Save Face – Not Quality of Sex Ed” (1<sup>st</sup> December 2003).

Following each media release Vicki Chapman would typically be interviewed on the commercial talk-back radio programs on 5AA and 5DN and less frequently on the ABC other than at the beginning of the campaign. These interviews sometimes also included a response from SHine SA, the SA Education Department or Minister for Education and would usually be followed by opportunities for people to express their opinion. Callers were mainly opposed to the SHARE program and Trevor Grace and others linked to the Family First Party rang in regularly.

To counteract the negative press releases being put out by Vickie Chapman in her role of Shadow Minister for Education and Children’s Services, positive releases were put out by SHine SA (2003b), the Minister for Education (2003), and the progressive political party, the Australian Democrats (2003). These sought to ensure that the vocal opposition from a few minority groups did not get constructed as the dominant community perception of the program. The peak non-government youth organisation, Youth Affairs Council of SA (2003), also put out a press release strongly supportive of the SHARE project.

Chapman did not just use the media to raise concerns about the SHARE project she also took her views into the South Australian Parliament. On July 17<sup>th</sup> 2003 Vicki Chapman made a short speech in which she was not only critical of the SHARE project but also of the government who she accused of gagging the debate she was trying to initiate on the project. Chapman’s brief statement was then answered by the Education Minister Trish White who again emphasised the important role of parents in making decisions about sex education programs:

The whole debate from the Opposition has been quite dada-istic. This whole debate has been an attempt by the Liberal Party to go back to the debates of the 1970s and open up the debate with the controversies of that time. It has fallen short. It has engaged only the same group of people who are naturally from the fundamentalist Christian side of the debate. What it has not engaged is parents of children in our public schools who are actually in the programs....Sex education is not like maths or English; it is the responsibility of parents. It should be left to parents to make that decision, not to the

Liberal party or the members of the opposition. (South Australian Parliament 2003a, p.3763)

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2003 Vicki Chapman had the opportunity to make a longer speech<sup>45</sup> in which she drew on information obtained under a Freedom of Information request made by the Liberal Party and which resulted in them being provided with all records relating to the SHARE project including minutes of meetings, emails, information on funding, held by the Education and Human Services Departments. Chapman raised concerns about whether the project had received appropriate ethics committee approval (although she acknowledged that this was not required for curriculum) and disputed some of the interpretation of statistics on pregnancy and abortion used to support the project. The implication of Chapman's speech was that it was SHine SA's financial self interest that was driving its involvement in the sex education program and that this had over ridden attention to proper research and planning.

Chapman finished by citing information from the briefing sheets prepared by Trevor Grace and Roslyn Phillips with its familiar anxiety about homosexuality, perversion and child abuse:

I suggest to this house that the resource material produced by SHine states that gender is a social construct and that homosexual relationships are as valid as heterosexual relationships. The safe practices section presents anal intercourse as simply another option. Again, I do not propose to traverse those issues. ...Is it not extraordinary that, at a time when we make laws which prohibit having sexual relations with children under the age of 17 years of age and which are stringent in relation to the literature we let them read, the films we let them see and the advertising they are exposed to, there is no similar restriction in relation to protecting children to ensure that they are not exposed to harmful materials in this curriculum? (South Australian Parliament 2003b, p.57)

Chapman's lengthy speech was then followed by a short statement from the Independent Member of Parliament, Bob Such who defended the program. He said:

This program does not advocate sexuality or homosexuality; it is about information awareness and it is about relationships...I should have thought that people who are

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<sup>45</sup> Chapman subsequently sent copies of the Hansard reporting of this speech to every Governing Council of the schools participating in the SHARE project.

concerned about abortion and teenage pregnancies would welcome this sort of program, because young people need to be informed and aware and make the right choices. I just cannot comprehend how people can suggest that it encourages child abuse. (South Australian Parliament 2003b, p.67)

In November the campaign against the SHARE project undertook a lot of activity to try and build support for a motion that Chapman was to put to parliament to have the SHARE project withdrawn from schools. On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2003 a rally of over 200 people took place on the steps of Parliament House. Publicity about this rally said, “Its time to stand up for family values and the rights of parents and children!!!” and was sent out by the Family First Party and signed by Trevor Grace and Roslyn Phillips. Speakers at this rally were Vicki Chapman, Andrew Evans, Bishop John Hepworth and Paul Russell from the Australian Family Association. The publicity included information on a pre rally prayer gathering for ‘prayer warriors’.<sup>46</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003 Vicki Chapman finally put a motion to Parliament that read:

That the house urges the government to immediately withdraw the trial Sexual Health and Relationship Education Program developed by SHINE from all 15 participating schools, pending professional assessment and endorsement. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1107)

Chapman then read her speech which contained most of the arguments she had used previously. She made particular reference to what ‘experts’ were saying about the SHARE project. She began by dismissing the opinion of Dr Jon Jureidini, a child psychiatrist who had been asked to assess the program by the Australian Medical Association and who wrote a favourable report on it. Chapman argued that Dr Jureidini’s expertise lay only in medical matters and so he was not able to comment as an expert on the sex education of young people. Chapman then used her own ‘experts’, namely a Dr John Govan, also a psychiatrist but also a member of the Liberal Party and she quoted Professor Freda Briggs’ radio interview:

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<sup>46</sup> It was ironic (or possibly deliberately planned) that the venue chosen for this prayer rally was directly opposite an event taking place as part of the annual gay and lesbian cultural festival.

One of the problems that I see is that SHine has expertise in contraception and family planning...but sex educators are not usually experts in child development nor are secondary teachers (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1108)

Chapman then quoted from another child psychologist to argue that the newly released Western Australian sex education program was superior to the SHARE project. She finished her speech by referring to a report on child protection in South Australia (known as the Layton report) to reinforce her claim that the SHARE project had the potential to harm children. She concluded with:

The government is on notice that it has a legal and moral responsibility for children in schools – and if children suffer as a result of their action or inaction... - they are exposed, and we as a community are exposed as the people who will pick up the liability. This is a recipe for litigation. The message I have for this government is: you might have bypassed parents and dismissed the community, but if you ignore the experts it will be at your peril. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1108)

The Education Minister Trish White then responded and opposed the motion. While she referred to the support for the project from the Australian Medical Association, most of her speech was again taken up with criticism of Vicki Chapman.

It is the old style of politics; just keep going, because you might get a run somewhere and you might get your name in lights. And what is it all about? It is about the leadership ambitions of the member for Bragg. She is trying to show those within the conservative elements inside her party that she is really a conservative, too. Do not let the truth get in the way of a good story. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1109)

Seven other Members of Parliament from the Liberal party rose to make speeches about the SHARE project. Of these all supported Chapman's motion against the SHARE project except for Mark Brindal, the former Minister for Youth Affairs, and a long time supporter of gay rights in South Australia<sup>47</sup>. Brindal's speech makes particular reference to the needs of young people questioning their sexuality.

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<sup>47</sup> Brindal subsequently resigned from politics after a widely publicized relationship with a young man which led to him 'coming out' in the media as bisexual. (ABC The World Today Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2005).

I remind this chamber that this country has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the developed world. Also I remind members who want to contribute to this debate and who might not have looked it up, that most of the academic researchers are saying that a lot of deaths in the country are related to uncertainty about emergent sexuality. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1115)

Brindal was followed by the Independent Member, Bob Such. He began by defending the content of the SHARE curriculum and then moved onto some of his experiences in being a vocal supporter of the SHARE project.

After the [community] meeting, this group (which I suspect consisted of people from a particular section of the community), none of whom had children in the program, called me an “arse”. In a way that is quite humorous, because in my view, many in this group were homophobic – and they called me an ‘arse’...I was threatened by a character at Christies Beach. I know who this person is. He threatened to put a .303 to my head, shove the program down my throat and cut off part of my anatomy. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1116)

Seven Government Members of Parliament spoke in support of the SHARE project. The Health Minister Lea Stevens, made a strong speech where she cited survey data from the national survey of school students which showed that the average age of first sexual intercourse in Australia is 16 years of age. She also cited an article from the British Medical Journal in 2002 that argued that abstinence education is ineffective. The Minister then concluded by affirming the work of SHine SA.

SHine SA has played a role in education with school communities since the early 1970s. I would like to put on record my support, as Minister for Health, for its work over many years right up until now, for the excellence of its work, for its professional approach and the fact that it has been able to reach a wide range of people in our community. (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1112)

The other interesting speech made in defense of the program was by Michael O’Brien, the MP who had attended the launch of the project in March 2003. He started by referring to positive comments from the principal of Smithfield Plains High School, one of the schools participating in the SHARE project. O’Brien condemned what he called the “irrational frenzy” of those opposing the SHARE project and argued against their

approach which he saw as being based on the ‘American Puritan tradition’. He accused them of trying to remove the SHARE project so that it could be replaced with a “US developed sex education program of abstinence” (South Australian Parliament 2003c, p.1114).

The political debate on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003 took approximately two hours but concluded without a vote being taken and the motion then lapsed and was not reintroduced. If a vote had been taken to have the SHARE project withdrawn it is likely that it would have been defeated in the Lower House through the support of the Greens MP, Independent Bob Such and possibly another Independent Member of Parliament. Vicki Chapman would have known that she did not have the numbers to get the motion passed which is a further indication that her primary aim was to signal her support for the religious groups opposing the SHARE project rather than to actually change the program.

SHine SA had acknowledged the importance of political support for the project after the campaign became evident and had offered to brief politicians and their staff about the SHARE project to ensure accurate information was available. In May 2003 the Australian Democrat Members of Parliament had arranged for a briefing of politicians by SHine SA staff and this was attended by approximately 20 parliamentarians or their representatives from all parties, including Vicki Chapman and Andrew Evans.

Following this briefing Andrew Evans phoned me directly to clarify that the Family First Party had not been organizing the community forums (a statement I had made on radio). I took the opportunity to try and discuss his concerns about the project and to try and find the common ground we may have about the wellbeing of young people. He particularly wanted to talk about the Intimacy Card exercise. He argued against this approach as he said that once boys begin to have any form of sexual intimacy they are unable to stop. Evans finished our conversation by inviting me to be part of a debate at the Adelaide Town Hall, which I declined.

Along with Chapman and Evans a third politician active in the campaign opposing the SHARE project was Trish Draper, a Federal Liberal Member of Parliament. This was despite the fact that state schooling was not the responsibility of Federal politicians. Draper’s electorate covers the north east of Adelaide which is the location of the Paradise Community Church and home of the Family First Party. Draper made three speeches to

Federal Parliament opposing the SHARE project where she likened the program to child sexual abuse (Parliament of Australia 2003a; Parliament of Australia 2003b; Parliament of Australia 2003c). In June 2003 she also distributed a two page information sheet titled *Warning to All Parents* to every household in her electorate. This pamphlet reproduced some of the cards from the Intimacy Card exercise and urged people to write to the local Labor MP and the Education Minister.

#### **4.5 Effects of the campaign on the SHARE project**

While this political activity was taking place the SHARE project was being implemented in the 15 schools with overwhelming support from parents and teachers. The only visible opposition came from a small group of parents in Port Lincoln. At a meeting of the key teachers from every school the only concerns about the program related to administrative issues such as the difficulty of fitting in the curriculum requirements of 15 lessons at each year level given other time constraints. A survey of the 200 teachers who had done two days of training showed that they now felt more confident to teach sexual health and relationships and appreciated having a structured program to follow (SHine SA 2003a). More than half of these teachers, most of who were already required to teach sexual health education, had never before received professional development to assist them with this.

This was one of the ironies when dealing with the complaints made about the SHARE project. All other state secondary schools (and also many Catholic and Independent schools) were required to deliver sex education as part of other health or personal development programs. However this usually did not follow any set curriculum and was delivered by teachers who had not received the specialist training offered to the SHARE project teachers. This situation was hidden from the public gaze and instead the risk associated with ‘sex education’ was misleadingly attached only to this ‘new’ project.

The teacher manual contained a series of activities that had been developed for use generally by any teacher in any school system who found them useful. Teachers from state, Catholic and other Independent Schools had been on the reference group for developing the manual and it had been released in a draft form to allow feedback from teachers using it. Most of the campaign against the SHARE project focussed on some activities in the teacher manual and it was decided by the SA Education Department that a formal review process would be needed in order to finalise the resource.

In November 2003 the SA Education Department set up a special review committee called the 'SHARE Curriculum Materials Review Group' that was chaired by the Superintendent of Learning Areas in the SA Education Department and included a teacher and principal from schools participating in the SHARE project, a principal from a non-SHARE project school and representatives from parent and governing council bodies. Jane Flentje, the author of the *Teach It Like It Is* manual at SHine SA was also on this review committee. The terms of reference for this group were to review the SHARE curriculum plan and the teacher manual in the context of the SHARE project's aims and objectives, feedback from SHARE project teachers, school communities and the wider community and the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework.

Most of the discussion at the two meetings that were held focussed on the issues raised by the Christian opponents with their concerns summarized into a table for consideration. The impact of the church-led opposition was evident in the amount of emphasis that the review committee placed on consideration of whether to include the word 'abstinence'. SHine SA was opposed to using this word and preferred to talk instead about different levels of safety depending on different behaviours. The program presents 'no sexual intercourse' as one of the safest options. This approach was described in the teacher manual as 'harm minimisation' thus implicitly positioning sex within a risk discourse.

The 'SHARE Curriculum Materials Review Group' made a number of recommendations for changes to the teacher manual. These included the addition of a set of 10 principles for relationships and sexual health education that explicitly acknowledged the importance of the family, recognized the need to support diversity and identified that sexual health education should encourage young people to delay sexual activity.

The other changes to the manual included:

- removing the cards from the intimacy cards exercise
- removing the words 'harm minimisation'
- removing an activity that explored the different understandings of sexuality from different historical periods (because it made references to Christianity that opponents of the program found offensive)
- removing the 'sex toy' reference from the safe sex exercise

- reducing the number of scenarios that referred to young people who were gay or lesbian
- adding a couple of scenarios that referred to young people who didn't believe in sex before marriage
- adding information on the fragility of the anus and
- adding 'take home messages for parents' at the end of all activities and encouraging these to be discussed at home with family.

The changes were agreed to and included in the SHARE teacher manual however they did not necessarily change the content of the education delivered to young people. As I discussed in relation to the intimacy cards exercise, even though the teachers may not have had a set of cards, discussion could still take place about different forms of intimacy including non-penetrative sexual practices. However the removal of certain words from the teacher manual did achieve the political purpose of indicating to the opponents that their concerns had been heard and action taken. In Chapter Six I explore this response by the SA Education Department as part of my analysis of how sexuality is governed in South Australia.

After completing a final edit on the teacher manual in January 2004 the teacher manual was provided to the SA Education Department. It had been made clear by the Department that the SHARE project could not continue until the Chief Executive had endorsed the manual<sup>48</sup>. As many activities in the manual were used by the SHARE curriculum it was not possible to provide this to the schools until this endorsement had taken place and it was also not possible to update the teachers on any changes.

This endorsement took four months and again became a political exercise. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2004, Vicki Chapman put out a press release headed "Liberals win on sex education". In this release Chapman made the claim that, "While authors of the program, backed by the State Government, defended the program, it was public outrage that forced their hand to exclude aspects of the resource material that were clearly offensive to the community". The release also made mention of the removal of the 'section' (sic) on sex toys (Shadow Minister for Education 2004a).

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<sup>48</sup> The manual was actually funded by the Health Department and the front page included endorsement from the Chief Executives of both Health and Education.

This release prompted the Minister for Education (2004) to provide a counter press release on the same date which was headed “Chapman’s Exit Strategy on Sex Education” and argued that Vicki Chapman now supported the SHARE trial and was trying to save face through claiming some form of victory. These press releases prompted more radio coverage and again I was required to defend the project in radio interviews with the ABC. At this time also there was a shuffle of Ministerial positions which included a change of Education Minister. *Teach It Like It Is* was finally endorsed by the SA Education Department in May 2004, after one whole term of the school year had passed. This caused serious disruptions to the project and for some schools it meant that they could not deliver the curriculum to all students. The delay in the project also gave Vicki Chapman and Andrew Evans the impetus to ask what was happening to the project implying that it was held up because of problems with it.

A briefing paper had been prepared by SHine SA outlining the changes made to the manual and an edited version of this was provided to Andrew Evans and Vicki Chapman by the SA Education Department<sup>49</sup>. This again prompted Chapman to release a media statement (on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2004) which was headed “Major revisions of school sex ed welcome but cost blowout predicted”. In this press release Chapman listed the changes to the manual but also claimed, “We are still waiting for expert advice as to whether the revisions sufficiently remedy issues relating to the inaccuracy and lack of age appropriateness of material in the original program” (Shadow Minister for Education 2004b).

Andrew Evans claimed credit for ‘forcing’ changes to the teacher manual. In an interview with the rural ABC station in Port Pirie on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004, Evans was asked how he lobbied for these changes. He replied:

We were on a campaign right from the beginning. We ran six public meetings and rallies<sup>50</sup>... we sent out a lot of information and we had hundreds of people at these rallies... had a lot of television coverage on several occasions, radio massively and then the people got put to work to action and they began to fax Mr Rann [the Premier] and complain about it.

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<sup>49</sup> Chapman also released a public letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004 to Andrew Evans in which she documented the changes to the manual and then requested his “advice on your views as to whether the revisions have gone far enough”.

<sup>50</sup> This claim was made despite his phone call to me to tell me that he had not organised these forums.

As well as articulating his campaign strategy Evans also outlined his concerns with harm minimisation:

That was the thing that was really the worst of it...anyhow, they've removed it all but it just shows the general direction and the general direction is built on harm minimisation...let's give them condoms...very little mentioned about disease problems....if we don't give them strong boundaries some might jump over the wall to experience it...if you have strong boundaries then there's less will...that's where harm minimisation fails. (ABC Regional Radio, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004)

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

While the campaign against the SHARE project did not result in the withdrawal of the project it was emotionally exhausting for everyone working on the project. It also distracted SHine SA from the complex task of implementing a statewide project and meant that any problems that were encountered had the potential to become part of a media story. This was evident after the Liberal Party made the Freedom of Information request to access all government records on the SHARE project and then used some of this information in the parliamentary debate.

The visible monitoring of our work on the project also extended to a perception of being subject to an uncomfortable level of surveillance; of both our professional integrity and also our personal relationships and activities. My experience of this was that I worried that my own lesbian sexuality, should it become known, would compromise the public statements I made on the importance of affirming same sex relationships in sex education programs. I became very aware that had I been a heterosexual married woman with children that I would have been able to present these credentials to counteract concerns that the project was out of touch with community standards.

As the person primarily responsible for doing the media interviews I experienced this time as both surreal and adrenalin provoking. Sometimes I would wake up to the early morning news only to find that another press release had gone out and the project was again under scrutiny. This would then initiate a round of phone calls between the SHine SA media adviser and those of the Education Minister and SA Education Department as a decision was made as to who would respond. The media became the public place in

which SHine SA, the Education Minister and the opponent groups struggled to define themselves as knowing what is best for young people. While I did not agree with the claims made by the opponents I also became increasingly troubled by how rehearsed the different sides of the arguments became and my own role in producing this. One risk from this is that the terms of this debate become fixed and predictable thereby risking that the conservative discourse becomes solidified and more powerful. Butler (2004) warns that “if we engage the terms that these debates supply, then we ratify the frame at the moment in which we take our stand” (p.129).

Cindy Patton (1993) has analysed how identities are created as a strategy for claiming power. She argues that “gay and new-right identities define each other relationally, by a rhetorical reversal and counterreversal” and that they “invoke parodies of the other” (p.146). Using this analysis, my talk of ‘family values’ and the opponents ‘talk of sex’ can be seen as an attempt to counteract the discourses that we believe have come to define our identities in the public sphere and also to create an identity for our opponents that we believe will limit their appeal to a broad audience.

In emphasizing in my talk the important role of the ‘family’ I am aiming to create an alternative to the opponent’s construction of SHine SA as a promoter of child abuse and also to challenge the Christian Right’s claim to speak for the welfare of families and young people. The opponents attach their identity to being the protector of the innocent child and the educator of the duped parent although their tactic of reading out ‘shocking sexual terms’ as a way of defining the SHARE project risks alienating as well as attracting those who hear them do this sex talk.

The media attention did eventually wane and the project continued to be implemented with more schools becoming part of the program. The opponents also shifted their attention from sex education to other key areas of social change in South Australia, notably gay law reform. The political dynamics also changed after the state election held in March 2006 when the less conservative Labor Party won by a comfortable majority. However the Family First Party contested all seats in the House of Assembly and managed to win two seats in the Legislative Council, thereby sharing the balance of power with the Greens Party and Independents. This success, which followed the election of a Family First Senator to the Federal Parliament in 2004, demonstrates that

the rhetoric of ‘family values’ has the capacity to exert influence within politics in Australia (Anderson and Manning 2006).

In the next chapter I report on interviews that I conducted with other educators in Australia who have been involved in developing and implementing some of the key sex education texts used in Australia over the last 20 years. These interviews provide a context for the campaign that took place against the SHARE project in South Australia. I also explore the discourses that shape this education and the impact they have on the actual education young people receive in schools.

*There must be no more placating of the New Right with 'opt-out' clauses disguised as democracy; no more treatment of homosexuality as a 'sensitive issue'; no more troping of homosexuality with AIDS; no more slipping homophobia under the mat of 'violence in schools'; no more consideration of bisexual, gay and lesbian sexualities as chosen and specific sexual behaviours; no more wasted energies on the so-called origins of homosexuality; and no more treating bisexual, lesbian and gay sexual identities as though they have nothing to do with constructions of heterosexuality.*

(Eyre 1997, p.201)

## **Chapter 5:**

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### **Talking sex (carefully): Australian sex educator experiences of designing and implementing sex education programs**

This chapter analyses the different ways the campaign against SHARE can be understood in relation to responses to other sex education programs in Australia. This will be done through reference to interviews conducted with educators in other states of Australia and through an analysis of progressive and conservative sex education texts. In doing this I identify the primary discourses that frame sex education and argue that in order to understand the campaign against the SHARE project it is necessary to understand the different ways these discourses have been deployed in the development of sex education.

As I discussed in Chapter Two on the history of sex education, two separate but converging genealogies for sex education exist in Australia (Jose 1995; Scott 2005). One relates to the concepts of 'relationships' and 'families' and emerged out of the human relations origins of sex education which emphasised education as preparation for marriage (Moran 2000). This approach has been reworked in contemporary sex education, primarily through recognition of other forms of relationships. This has not taken place without resistance from conservative critics who have successfully established discussion of relationships within this morality discourse.

The other approach sits more strongly within a public health and medical discourse and attaches the concept of sex education to 'risk' and 'safety'. This discursive approach was consolidated through the introduction of HIV education in the mid 1980s, although it also has a longer history in that it draws on sex education as a response to venereal diseases (Logan 1980). As will be described in the accounts of other sex education programs and

resources in Australia, those programs that are identified most strongly with this public health discourse appear to attract less opposition, largely through being able to draw on the authority of medical and scientific ‘experts’ and the power of the ‘risk minimisation’ discourse which gives individuals the responsibility to regulate their own behaviours “in line with prescribed norms of conduct for ‘healthy living’” (Petersen and Lupton 1996, p.203).

In exploring sex education in Australia through the lenses of these two discourses I identify their impact on shaping not only the actual sex education that young people receive in Australia but also the implication this has for the sexual subjectivities of young people. As I have argued previously, all forms of sex education contribute to the regulation of adolescent sexuality through their premise that adolescents require instruction on how to manage their changing (and desiring and /or risky) bodies. Sex education is therefore not just a pedagogical process it also contributes to the regimes of power that govern sexuality (Foucault 1978).

In discussing other sex education programs in Australia I illustrate that in fact there are a multiplicity of discourses that contribute to the ways in which programs are constructed and implemented. However I argue that the crucial factor that influences the acceptance or resistance to these programs lies in how they are publicly represented and it is in this domain that the two discourses of ‘morality’ and ‘risk and safety’ compete for strategic advantage. The SHARE project was positioned by its opponents, through their focus on the failure of the project to promote heterosexual marriage and abstinence, as primarily within the realm of moral discourses. This was despite attempts by SHine SA and the SA Education Department to emphasise the risk and safety aspects of the program. One outcome from this engagement of a morality discourse was that it enabled the opponents to draw on a wider global discourse relating to ‘family values’ which gave it a greater intensity and appeal. The reasons why this occurred in South Australia at this time are explored further in Chapters Six and Seven.

## **5.1 Results of key informant interviews**

In 2005 I interviewed nine educators who had been involved in developing sexual health and relationships education programs and materials in Australia during the last 20 years. (See Appendix 1 for a list of those interviewed). Those interviewed came from different states in Australia and they had devised programs at different times which meant

interviewing some people about how they had applied existing programs rather than how they had developed and implemented new resource materials or programs.

There are broad curriculum frameworks for sex education developed by Departments of Education in each state of Australia however most resource materials are developed by agencies outside of state government departments. This involvement of the non-government sector is reflected in the key informants selected for interview who were either linked to organisations such as Family Planning Organisations or to universities. I approached two people who worked within state departments but they declined to be interviewed due to concerns that they would be acting outside of guidelines for public servants should they comment publicly on state government programs.

The interviews were conducted either face to face or by telephone and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The aim of these interviews was not to document the different structures and processes for sex education that exist around Australia, although considerable information on this was captured. Instead it was to look for experiences that could inform an analysis of the responses to the SHARE project. This aim shaped my interview questions. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of these questions). I sought information on the impetus for the development of the resources, the funding and evaluation of them and any constraints in their development or implementation. Questions were also asked about any organised opposition to their particular resource or program and the context in which this occurred. The interview concluded with the opportunity for the informant to give a personal opinion as to why they thought a campaign against sex education took place in South Australia in 2003.

As outlined in Chapter One, five different sex education texts and programs were discussed in the interviews. These were *Taught Not Caught* (Clarity Collective 1983), *High Talk* (Family Planning Queensland 1997), *Talking Sexual Health* (ANCHARD 2001), *Catching On* (Department of Education & Training, Victoria 2004) and *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* (Government of Western Australia 2003). In addition, reference was made in the interviews to two other education resources that specifically address the issue of homophobia. These were *Out With Homophobia* (Family Planning Queensland 1999) and *Pride and Prejudice* (Daniel Witthaus 2001).

It is significant that none of these resources were funded by State or Commonwealth Education Departments. This reflects the fact that sex education is held to be the responsibility of health agencies despite being part of the formal education curriculum in all jurisdictions. Some of the key informants reported that the impetus for Health Departments' provision of funds for programs was concern about health issues such as HIV and sexually transmitted infections. This was the case for the *Talking Sexual Health* materials, which were funded by the Commonwealth Health Department through the Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases (ANCHARD)<sup>51</sup>. State Health Departments provided funding for *Catching On* in Victoria and *Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* in Western Australia while Family Planning Queensland produced *High Talk* from its existing budget.

The earliest sex education text discussed in the interviews was *Taught Not Caught*, published in 1983. It is different from the other resources in that it was developed collectively by a small group of women and was self-funded. I interviewed Sue Dyson, one of the authors, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005.

*Taught Not Caught* arose out of work done by a newly created education unit at Family Planning Victoria. This unit employed sessional educators, including Sue, and their experience of conducting education sessions led to their decision to write all the activities into a resource book. Although not linked in any formal way with Family Planning Victoria, the need for it and the content was informed by the work done by that organisation at the time (in the late 1970s) and also by Sue's previous experience in working with Planned Parenthood in Toronto as a pregnancy counsellor. It was also shaped by a consciously feminist ideology and engagement with current feminist issues such as access to abortion which had been made legal in Victoria in 1969.

Sue reported that the process of writing the manual was based both on the personal and the professional experiences of the women who wrote it.

Five of us used to get together in our own time and as we wrote it down we developed it and as we were still doing the work we'd take it back and test it out. Lots of it we'd make up as we went.

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<sup>51</sup> Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases (ANCHARD) was the main advisory committee on HIV and AIDS to the Federal government during the late 1990s.

At this time there was no formal sex education curriculum in Victorian schools. The only education that was available was parent/child nights through an organisation called Family Life and the *ad hoc* sessions conducted by Family Planning Victoria. *Taught Not Caught* was eventually published by a woman in Melbourne who owned a bookshop. It was distributed by the publisher to schools and libraries and was well received. It was also published in the United Kingdom and reprinted four times.

*Taught Not Caught* is an influential text as it was one of the earliest resource books on sex education in Australia that took an approach to sex education that included a critique of gender roles, was inclusive of sexual diversity and discussed sexual activity as a positive rather than negative experience. These are all factors that have come to be associated with a ‘comprehensive’ approach to sex education and all the other texts discussed are also consistent with this educational approach. However despite their similarities in content there were differences in their processes of development and implementation and also in how the texts were positioned discursively. I explore these differences through analysing the way discourses relating to ‘risk and safety’ and ‘morality’ were utilised in the public representations of these texts and the effect this had on any constraints or opposition to the materials.

### **5.1.1 Discourses of ‘risk and safety’**

*Talking Sexual Health* was developed in response to the 1997 National Schools Survey conducted by La Trobe University for the Commonwealth Liberal Government. This survey, which was a repeat of one conducted in 1992, revealed that young people had poor knowledge on many sexual health issues and that a significant number were taking sexual risks. In response to this survey, representatives from all Education Departments were invited to a meeting in Canberra to discuss the research and to plan action that could be taken to address some of the issues.

*Talking Sexual Health* is the resource that has had the most influence on sexual health programs across Australia, given its status as a national framework. Two interviews were conducted with people who worked on this resource: Anne Mitchell, the project manager and Debbie Ollis one of the main authors of the resource materials.

The first action was to develop a national policy framework and this was followed by the development of a parents' booklet, professional development materials and classroom resources. Debbie Ollis was seconded to La Trobe University from the Victorian Education Department to write the national policy framework and the professional education materials. As mentioned previously the funding for this came from the Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases (ANCHARD) who was the body responsible for endorsing the materials. In addition there was a reference group which included officers from every Education Department.

*Talking Sexual Health* was clearly positioned within a public health discourse and this was used strategically by both those funding and developing the materials. It makes explicit links with the *National HIV/AIDS Strategy* through statements such as, "The HIV/AIDS Strategy also identified school-based education programs as a priority area for further development" (ANCHARD 2001, p.11).

At the time of its release *Talking Sexual Health* did not receive any negative attention<sup>52</sup>. One reason for this may have been the lack of visibility of the resource outside of the confines of state education systems. Implementation of the resource relied on professional development of teachers who were then given the resources to use in their schools. Unlike the SHARE project there were no individual schools which were publicly identified as trialling the resources and parents were not notified about them.

A further contributing factor to the low community awareness about *Talking Sexual Health* was the lack of publicity about the new framework. Despite the support that existed for *Talking Sexual Health*, the Federal Health Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, at the time chose not to launch it publicly. Anne Mitchell commented that this appeared to be a political decision:

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<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that because the SHARE project also used materials from *Talking Sexual Health* it did subsequently attract some negative attention. For example in her 2004 resource paper Phillips writes:

This book [*Talking Sexual Health*] continues to provide misleading information – particularly on condom effectiveness, homosexuality and "gender as a social construct". This manual is shaping sex education around Australia, even though evidence suggests its unbalanced approach will seriously mislead Australian teens (Phillips 2003).

When we'd done it everyone on the reference group felt great about it and really wanted a launch but the Commonwealth Government wouldn't go for it. A letter went up to the Minister but he wasn't up for launching it at all. There's no political mileage in this so just get it out. Made this very explicit. Don't want the newspapers to find out about it. That was a limit in a way as it did mean that lots of schools didn't know about it.

It is interesting to compare this approach to that taken with the SHARE project which was launched publicly and had positive initial media coverage as a result. This served to inform the community about a new educational resource but it also alerted opponent groups about the new materials and triggered their campaign. While it may be argued therefore that a low key approach to publicity is warranted, this also continues to position sex education outside of acceptable public discourse and as something that is to be hidden, which actually works counter to educational initiatives.

Anne Mitchell's comments reveal that political leaders view sex education programs as politically dangerous and in need of careful management. She believes that this political management was achieved for *Talking Sexual Health* and says that one reason for this was that:

We managed to protect ourselves, to stay out of notice. [We referred to] the research base at every point, constant referring to research and being supported by ANCHARD. There were some high flyers on ANCHARD. This kept the government out of trouble and kind of helped us as there was high level support beyond us.

This close link to a government committee of 'experts' also contributed to a lack of constraint in the content that was included in the materials. Anne Mitchell reported that:

As far as ANCHARD was concerned it could be as radical as anything. They wanted full-on stuff out there and in fact they made us put in the transgender case study in the classroom resource. We didn't put in anything on transgender in the early stuff as we thought it was so great getting stuff about same sex attraction. It wasn't actual censorship as such but you just didn't have any expectation that that's where you'd go.

Debbie Ollis also reported that there was no overt opposition or constraints in the development of the Victorian resource, *Catching On*. This resource, again funded with HIV funds, was begun in 1995 but after Debbie was seconded to work on the *Talking*

*Sexual Health* materials it remained unreleased by the Victorian Education Department until 2004. The delay in its release she attributed primarily to changes in the government and Education Ministers as well as bureaucratic blockages that were influenced by some nervousness about being seen to be publicly endorsing a resource that included sexual diversity.

There were a couple of times that I had to talk to my manager about why things needed to be there. It was an educative process and one of the things that really worked was to have the General Manager heading the reference group so they became advocates in the end. The other thing I should say is when I wrote the position paper the Department wouldn't let it be published as a Departmental document. I had to go and see our Secretary, and he said in the end, it had to go out under my name. So it was able to be released but it had to go out under my name. There's that nervousness about it.

This comment by Debbie Ollis is further evidence that it is not only political leaders that are nervous about sex education programs. The bureaucracy also constructs this education as something which requires action to minimise any risk of negative attention. Again this was very evident in the SA Education Department's response to the SHARE project, particularly in the careful editing of the teacher manual that took place as a result of the opposition campaign.

Both Anne Mitchell and Debbie Ollis commented that it was the issue of sexual diversity that caused particular anxiety for Education Departments. This led to one activity, the heterosexual questionnaire<sup>53</sup>, to be taken out of the *Talking Sexual Health* resource used in classrooms. To overcome anxiety about sexual diversity the discourse 'safety' was used strategically. Debbie commented that:

The other thing is that I'm very experienced now in terms of writing sensitive issues so I've made sure they are in comprehensive frameworks, they're linked to both curriculum and student welfare and wellbeing, that they're trialled and based on research, and also

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<sup>53</sup> This questionnaire is used in the professional development package for teachers and aims to explore beliefs about sexuality through reworking assumptions commonly applied to gay and lesbian people. In 2003 a trainee teacher in Victoria used this questionnaire with students, a fact that subsequently came to the attention of Victorian Christian Right groups such as "Saltshakers". This led to some sensationalist media reporting including an article that appeared in a rural paper that said "I think parents ought to be up in arms and demanding the State Government get rid of those within the education system advocating the use of schools as avenues for bringing about their programs for social reform, including changes to sexual values and promiscuity" (Daryl McLure, *Geelong Advertiser*, Nov 3, 2004).

that they're framed - particularly issues around sexual diversity which is probably the most sensitive after injecting drug use - around student safety. That notion of safety, that's how we've used *Talking Sexual Health*; developed the safe schools program.

While Debbie Ollis and Anne Mitchell report that the materials they produced were not censored in any way and they didn't experience any overt opposition, their responses do indicate that the materials were produced within an environment of self-regulation that takes into account the perception of opposition referred to previously by Jose (1995). This perception of hostility, particularly to issues such as sexual diversity, leads to the deployment of discourses that seek to frame 'sensitive' issues within the paradigm that will attract the least attention. It is for this reason that same sex desire and sexual practices are constructed around the safety of young people rather than other discourses such as human rights or indeed pleasure. I discuss the implications of this for young people in the next section.

The other text on which I gained information was *High Talk*. This is the main sex education resource document used in Queensland. Two educators involved in producing this resource were interviewed. Judy Rose was one of the original authors and worked at that time for Family Planning Queensland (FPQ). It was released in 1997 and is now in the process of being updated. Cecelia Gore is the current Education Manager at FPQ and she discussed how *High Talk* is currently being implemented and the review process that is being used.

The Education Department of Queensland has a policy of not endorsing particular curriculum resource materials and this also applied to *High Talk*. It was seen as a resource that could be used by schools but had no official status. Neither Judy nor Cecelia was aware of any constraints in developing or implementing *High Talk*. Cecelia described some of the work the organisation has done with progressive religious groups as one of the factors that contributed to the lack of opposition. Judy attributed the lack of any opposition to the materials to the fact that "FPQ has a fairly good reputation and it's quite interesting how conservative groups thought we were too radical and radical groups thought we were too conservative".

This acceptance was not the case with another resource developed by FPQ. This was called *Out With Homophobia* and specifically addressed the issue of homophobia in

schools. Judy commented that the original *High Talk* did not have much content on sexual diversity and homophobia and this led to the development of a manual for teachers and a professional development program. It was released in 2000 and Judy recalled:

I don't know how it got into the public arena but there was a big hue and cry especially with One Nation<sup>54</sup>. We were really bad mouthed in Parliament, really awful things were said and so we invited Pauline Hanson and Bill Feldman (from One Nation) to come to FPQ and explained it was about anti-discrimination. The problem was to do with the title as Pauline interpreted it as "Out with homosexuality". She didn't understand what homophobia was.

Cecelia commented that while there may not have been obvious constraints on the particular content that could be included in the revised *High Talk* there remains a barrier to sexual health education in Queensland due to the lack of a dedicated position within the Education Department with responsibility for sexual health education. This means it is left to individual schools as to how they implement curriculum and there is great variation across the state and between schools, a situation that also applies generally across Australia.

Three of the texts, *Talking Sexual Health*, *Catching On* and *High Talk* all make reference to the importance of values (including those based on religious beliefs) in contributing to the sexual decision making of young people but do not make recommendations on sexual activity other than to provide strategies to reduce risk and to promote safety. *Talking Sexual Health* encourages a broad understanding of safe sex so that non penetrative sexual practices are included and to ensure that "school-based programs will also affirm the experiences of many young people who are not engaging in penetrative sex as well as those students choosing to delay sexual activity" (ANCHARD 2001, p.33).

These sex education texts draw on a strong bio-medical discourse produced through Australia's successful response to HIV and AIDS. The relatively trouble free introduction of these materials, particularly *Talking Sexual Health*, reflects the successful public framing of these materials within this discourse. Critcher (2003) argues that the

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<sup>54</sup> One Nation was a political party formed in Queensland by Pauline Hanson, who was ejected from the Federal Liberal party for her 'racist' views. Hanson was elected to the Australian Federal Parliament in 1996 where she represented herself, representing the 'ordinary' person. Hanson subsequently became a minor celebrity, largely due to being imprisoned for electoral fraud and then being acquitted of this crime (Kingston 1999).

reaction to AIDS in countries like Australia did not take the form of a moral panic because “AIDS became a known quantity, medically and politically. The safe option was to defer to the experts. If there is a single reason why AIDS did not become a moral panic in any developed nation this was it” (p.46).

I agree with Critcher that the response to AIDS in Australia relied on leadership from medical experts and that this proved to be an effective strategy in minimising moral panic. However I do not agree that this approach completely eliminated all panic. One example of a moral panic in Australia occurred in 1984 after three babies died after receiving infected blood from a gay blood donor. The infection of these babies attracted considerable political and media attention, much of it focussed on the threat that homosexuals pose to the general population (Ballard 1992).

This incident illustrates that keeping debates within the confines of medical and scientific knowledge can be hard to achieve at all times. Once the focus moves from the medical to the moral the notion of ‘expert’ is more problematic and instead an appeal to some generic ‘community’ view is often made to establish the boundaries of acceptability. In this moral discourse it is possible to evoke panic through rhetorical devices that exaggerate threat to families, children and community cohesion. Education that is interpreted to be about families and relationships is measured by conservative groups against their own religious values and medical opinion has less relevance. I now discuss other sex education programs in Australia where a moral discourse has been evoked with some limiting consequences.

### **5.1.2 Evoking a moral discourse**

While the current state Education Department in Queensland does not take an active role in implementing sex education programs this has not always been the case. Judy Rose described a five year project conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s which aimed at implementing the new Human Relationship Education (HRE) policy across Queensland state schools. Thirty HRE Coordinators were employed at a district level and their role was “to consult with the community about what was relevant in their particular community”. A committee was set up in each school to identify the content that would be included in the curriculum. Judy commented that this initiative:

Worked absolutely brilliantly in some places and was an abject failure in others. For different reasons. Some areas tried to play it safe by having a committee that they knew would agree with each other, others were more realistic and said if we don't have everyone involved we'll get to the end of the process and it will all fall apart so they included people who would be anti in their committees as well. Made it hard work but they got there and got some spectacular results.

In an evaluation of this HRE Program commissioned by the Queensland Department of Education it was found that strong parental support existed generally for HRE education but was not consistent across all topics. Topics which had less support included human sexuality and body changes in males and females. Gibson et al (1992) reported that a minority of parents also indicated their desire to exclude any discussion of homosexuality. He quotes one parent as saying, "I wish all these discussions to be purely on the heterosexual line" (p.6). In addition some parents argued that any teachers involved in HRE education should be "in possession of high moral values and living an exemplary lifestyle as a model for students" (p.10).

This approach of devolving power to the community fits within the ideology of communitarianism. Under this approach it is not the state that knows what is best for its citizens but each local community. In his analysis of 'Third Way' politics Nikolas Rose (1999) also discusses communitarianism which he associates with the American New Right. He argues that "Communitarianism thus promises a new moral contract, a partnership between an enabling state and responsible citizens, based upon the strengthening of the natural bonds of community" (p.479). The appeal to religious conservatives of this approach is the perception that it involves less intervention of the secular state, leaving moral regulation to individuals, families and communities.

It is significant that this rhetoric was used in Queensland in the late 1980s as it reflects the struggles that took place over the introduction of sex education in the 1970s and early 1980s. One way to manage potential opposition to sex education is to give responsibility to local communities as it can then be argued that this creates the circumstances for education that is appropriate and relevant to each individual community's needs. However a severe limitation of this approach is the tendency for communities to move towards conformity and common ground as seen in some of the comments reported

above by Gibson. Mayo (2004), reporting on the American experience of this approach, similarly argues that:

Community, in practice, often comes to have a circular definition in which diversity is defined as outside of community [...] for instance the Christian Right, in its attempt to have information about sexuality and particularly homosexuality removed from public school curricula, cite “community values” as its ground for action. (Mayo 2004, p.15)

This approach whereby ‘communities’ decide content of educational programs entrenches curriculum content within the realm of the ‘moral’ as it links decisions about this content to the values of parents who comprise these communities. These values are given greater importance than ensuring all young people have access to accurate and comprehensive information about the different topics included in sex education.

It is interesting that this approach to developing and implementing sex education curriculum content is no longer used formally in state schools in Australia. While all programs refer to the importance of partnerships with parents, ultimate authority for decisions about content does not lie with parent groups. Instead parents have the right to withdraw their child from any lessons they deem inappropriate rather than trying to change curriculum content for all students within a school.

As I described in the previous chapter, the campaign against the SHARE project included an active group of parents from the Port Lincoln High School. They argued that schools should respond to the needs of all parents and were not happy with the only option being the withdrawal of their child. Their actions generated considerable tension in the small rural town, particularly as they made regular use of local radio and newspapers to criticise the school and its teachers as well as the SA Education Department and SHine SA.

However whilst the Port Lincoln experience caused conflict between people in one community, the authority held by the SA Education Department to determine curriculum ensured that the comprehensive sex education program remained in Port Lincoln. Over time the concerned parents dropped their lobbying and the most vehement opponent left the town to take up work in a church in a different state, leaving the program to run successfully over the full three years.

One effect of organised protests against comprehensive sex education by groups such as those in Port Lincoln is to further consolidate the perception that this education has to be carefully (and preferably quietly) managed by state bureaucracies. In the discussion of the next educational resource package it is possible to see how anxiety about what is acceptable to the community can influence the decisions state departments make about the content of sex education programs.

*Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships* (GDHR) is a resource developed for Western Australian state schools and unlike some of the other resources which only have a secondary school focus, is a framework and resource to guide relationships and sexual health education from Reception to Year 10. It was released in 2003, the same year of the SHARE project. The resource was again funded by the state Health Department which had identified the need to have up to date materials, particularly about sexually transmitted infections.

GDHR is similar to the other sex education resources in positioning itself as a response to public health issues. For example its stated aim is “To provide a guiding reference for the conduct of effective education about STIs including HIV/AIDS and other BBVs, and the prevention of unplanned pregnancies in community and schools settings in WA” (WA Department of Health 2003, p.8). While it was released without any opposition its actual development included some contest over content.

Lorel Mayberry, a private education consultant and university lecturer, was one of the authors of the resource and I interviewed her in April 2005. The resource was produced by a writing group which included representatives from the Health Department and a university along with additional input from the Department of Education. The final sign-off for the resource lay with the Education and Health Departments and the resource also had to go to the Curriculum Council which is a body in Western Australia who formulates the outcomes for education across all school sectors. This had representation from the Western Australian Education Department, Catholic Education and Independent Schools. Lorel Mayberry reported that in the process of developing the resource some important changes were made due to apparent concerns with material deemed to be ‘sensitive’.

One of the major changes was to remove all links to *Talking Sexual Health* developed by La Trobe University. The final title reflects what the Education Department wanted – a tamer version mentioning relationships. The whole process took 3 years with a lot of to-ing and fro-ing in the last year before the Education Department was happy with it.

The exact reason behind the removal of references to *Talking Sexual Health* was unclear however it is another example of state agencies making symbolic gestures to appease some interests but which in fact change little about the practical delivery of sex education in schools. For example teachers in Western Australia have undergone professional development based on the *Talking Sexual Health* materials and continue to do so. They also have access to the materials themselves either through having hard copies or through accessing the La Trobe University website.

The effect of removing the formal link to *Talking Sexual Health* was to reduce the specific references to sexual diversity. At the time this decision was made the Western Australian Labor Government was putting through some of the most progressive reforms relating to same sex relationships in Australia. Unlike some other jurisdictions these reforms included allowing same sex couples access to adoption and assisted reproductive technology<sup>55</sup>. In reference to this issue Lorel Mayberry commented that:

As it [the GDHR Resource] was being finished the legislation relating to same sex relationships was going through and the release of the resource was delayed to allow information on this legislation to be included but unfortunately our links to the excellent *Talking Sexual Health* resource were removed and this area would have been covered much more inclusively if we could have kept those links.

The other change initiated by the Western Australian Education Department was the refusal to grant permission for a Western Australian video to be used in schools. This video had been funded by the Health Department and the project was coordinated by Curtin University and an independent film maker. After gaining student and parental consent young people had been interviewed on a range of issues that young people might

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<sup>55</sup> Anne Mitchell suggests that it may be that the gains made in relation to same sex reform triggered conservative groups to be more active and to politicize sexuality related issues thus placing pressure on the WA Government. Certainly in the Western Australian election held in 2003 the opposition Liberal Party included reversing the rights given to same sex couples as part of their election platform. This party eventually won government in WA in 2008.

find hard to talk about. The aim of the video was to have a resource for teachers to use to stimulate discussion with students. Lorel Mayberry found this frustrating as:

A lot of money had been spent on this video and in the end it was only allowed to be used in the training of teachers which is not very useful as the teachers then want to be able to use it in the classroom. Teachers have been really positive about the resource so it is a real waste that the video was never able to be distributed. Frustrating for all concerned especially because the young people spoke so honestly and were amazing- so forthright.

Lorel did not attribute the changes required by the Education Department to be a reflection of the influence of particular conservative groups and reported no obvious sign of backlash or opposition. Instead it appeared that some Education Department senior staff had opinions about the acceptability of some of the material but whether this was because of their personal belief systems or for some other reason was unclear.

Those of us working on the SHARE project were very aware of the Western Australian materials which were being held up by conservative groups in South Australia as superior to the SHARE materials. For example in a parliamentary speech Vicki Chapman, the shadow Minister for Education, informed the parliament that she had asked a clinical psychologist to review materials used by both SHARE and GDHR and reported that “Ms O’Neill [the psychologist] goes on to provide a comprehensive assessment of what is operating in Western Australia, and she is very complimentary of that program and asked that it be considered when we look at what we do here in South Australia” (South Australian Parliament 2003b, p.1108).

Importantly GDHR also included the word ‘abstinence’ in all discussions of sexual activity. This inclusion was also highlighted by conservative groups in South Australia. However Lorel explained that the word ‘abstinence’ was included to be consistent with the language of the drug education strategy but was not intended to signify that abstinence from sex was the preferred option for young people, despite how this might be read by conservative groups.

The use of the word abstinence was not like using abstinence in the US context where only abstinence is taught and nothing much else. It seemed easier to use abstinence given how the government responded to the drug education. This wasn’t a big issue for

discussion in the steering committee and hasn't been an issue in training either. I really do focus on the harm minimisation approach.

### 5.1.3 Summary of key informant interviews

The interviews with key informants provide insight into the way sex education resource materials are produced in Australia. In particular they illustrate how educators draw on dominant public health discourses to steer their materials away from any perceived controversy. While there had not been any other significant experiences of backlash, all framed their work within a context that anticipated some opposition. They also had to negotiate with bureaucratic and political systems who define sex education as outside of the issues that are desirable to publicly promote and support.

It would appear that a concerted campaign similar to that run against the SHARE project had not occurred in other states of Australia in the last 20 years. Some educators had experienced public opposition but this generally was a one off complaint or a few letters to the editor. For example Sue Dyson reported that there had been negative media attention for *Taught Not Caught* which included an editorial in *The Age* newspaper in Melbourne saying that the women were pushing their own agendas. I conducted a search of the print media on *Taught Not Caught* which revealed a prominent article in the *Sunday Mirror* published in Sydney on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1985. This article, written by Alan Jones<sup>56</sup>, has a prominent heading which says, "Not in front of the children, Sick! Outrage at sex book". It quotes a Mrs Riches, from an organisation called Family and Youth Concern, who says:

We have consigned the book to our chamber of horrors because of its do-as-you-please sex approach. We believe it is grossly irresponsible for FPA to be promoting this book at a time when public concern is mounting over the rapid increase in the sexual abuse of children. (Jones 1985)

Overall however, educators spoke positively about the sex education programs with which they had been involved. Two educators<sup>57</sup> were interviewed from the family planning organisation (fpahealth) in NSW who had worked collaboratively with their Department of Education to implement the *Talking Sexual Health* framework. One of

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Jones is now one of the leading commercial radio announcers in Sydney and is noted for his forthright conservative comments.

<sup>57</sup> The other educator was Sue Williams whose main focus is on primary school education.

these educators, Liz Hammond, believed that this had been done relatively effectively due to it being supported by mandated curriculum:

When we're working with schools we always check out is it OK for us to do a condom demonstration. Normally in State schools its pretty much OK. They really like it as the kids enjoy it and it's in the curriculum. It's written in there. So those documents and our feedback on them to the Board of Studies were really important.

One common experience across all the interviews was how issues relating to sexual diversity became the focus for anxiety by Education Departments. The inclusion of education on homophobia and same sex relationships within formal school education programs is still relatively new and, as Debbie Ollis articulated, only possible if placed within a context of safety for all students within schools. Similar comments were also made by Liz Hammond. She believed that legal action taken by a young gay man against the NSW Education Department for failing to provide him with a safe and supportive environment had consolidated the need for schools to respond to the issue of homophobia:

I think there's been a bit of work under the banner of mental health and creating safe and supportive environments for all students. It's given particularly focus on sexual diversity and also reproductive and sexual health and a bit more of a platform under the welfare, safe and supportive schools framework and everybody benefits from this.

Jonathan Pare in Tasmania also described his experience of implementing some of the activities from *Talking Sexual Health* with little opposition. This is despite Tasmania's history of conflict in reforming laws on homosexuality as discussed in Chapter Three. Jonathan Pare had also worked on the anti-homophobia program *Pride and Prejudice* in Tasmania. This program addresses diversity and difference generally and then moves to addressing homophobia directly. It was originally produced in Victoria where it has been implemented and evaluated. A gay and lesbian community based organisation 'Work It Out' received funding from youth suicide funds to trial the program in three Tasmanian schools. Again this work was not funded by the Tasmanian Education Department and after the conclusion of the two year specially funded trial it was not refunded.

Part of the program involved the use of young people who identify as gay and lesbian on a panel discussing their sexuality. Jonathan identified this session as the only area where there were some constraints about what form of sexuality could be represented. While the polite and vulnerable young queer person could be present in the classroom the presence of an openly sexually adventurous one proved more problematic. Jonathan recalled that:

We had a couple of experiences with panel members in which there was controversy. One young guy came in one day with a red T shirt with white coca cola writing but it didn't say "Enjoy coke" it said "enjoy cock". I didn't notice and the teacher made a sign at me. It rubbed some of the boys up the wrong way, it was at the boy's school and we did have a conversation about it later and the school said can you tell him not wear that sort of stuff in school.

There were differences amongst the informants as to their views on why a campaign against sex education took place in South Australia and what this may represent for comprehensive sex education generally in Australia. Sue Dyson felt that *Taught Not Caught* emerged at a particular time of social history in Australia and that the environment in 2005 was very different to the one that existed in the early 1980s.

Basically we had no constraints on us, except we acted ethically and responsibly. Today we wouldn't have that freedom. Now we are locked into having things funded. At that time we all worked sessionally and had no fixed income. We were in a flush of we can do anything and feminism can change the world. I don't think any of us feel quite like that anymore (laughs).

Judy Rose thought that currently there was more support for sex education compared to when she started in the 1980s. She also believed that parents were more likely to challenge each other's views which she saw as a positive thing. Anne Mitchell believed the current climate is a bit different and attributes some of this difference to the gains made around same sex law reform. "All the advocacy around same sex law reform has worked against us in the sense that those inclined to moral panic are more panicked as they see an agenda going forward and things that are quite hard to undo". She also thought that "any one of us could have a campaign like the one in South Australia mounted".

The informants are all people with considerable training and experience in sex education. They have produced documents and resources that provide an excellent framework for teachers to use if they have the skills, confidence and support to do this. However the nervousness attached to young people and sex education that the informants referred to in their interviews also impacts on the teachers who have the responsibility to actually implement the education in the classroom. The majority of teachers who currently teach sex education come from the physical education and health faculties and many of them have never received any training in sexual health education. For example, of those teachers trained as part of the SHARE project almost half had never previously received any professional development on the topic (SHine SA 2003a).

The perception of community opposition combined with a lack of experience and training in teaching sex education often leads teachers to avoid topics that they feel are 'sensitive'. Debbie Ollis, one of the authors of *Talking Sexual Health*, has conducted research where she observed teacher practice after participating in the professional development program for *Talking Sexual Health*. While teachers report that teaching about issues relating to gender and power are difficult, it is the issues relating to sexual diversity that are often omitted in the classroom or are covered very briefly. Debbie Ollis (2004) found that:

The teachers voice concerns about student readiness and relevance, parental and community backlash and disapproval, the practicalities of inclusive teaching and learning strategies, skills and lack of confidence to carry out classroom discussion and deal with potential homophobia from the students, as reasons why sexual diversity is only included at the discretion of individual teachers. (Ollis 2004, p.15)

Therefore the actual education received by a student will depend on the commitment the school has to the program (allowing teachers to be released for training, ensuring timetabling of lessons) as well as the level of interest and skills of the teachers. Louisa Allen (2005) conducted research in New Zealand where she interviewed young people about the sex education they had received at school and found that, "Participants' comments highlighted that some teachers are not well trained or prepared as sexuality educators and that young people are adept at sensing their apprehension, which in turn is inhibitive to learning" (p.401). A recent research study with same sex attracted young

people in Australia found that 80% thought the sex education they received at school to be 'useless' or 'fairly useless' due to the lack of recognition of diverse sexualities (Hillier, Turner and Mitchell 2005).

The identified limitation of teacher led sex education has resulted in some schools choosing to deliver this education in other ways. Typically, this often includes external health agencies such as Family Planning Organisations delivering education sessions or sometimes older students being trained as peer leaders to deliver education to younger students (Strange, Oakley and Forrest 2003). Douglas Kirby (2002) argues that an effective sexual health response for young people requires more than just education sessions. It also needs interventions such as addressing issues of poverty and disadvantage that lead to disconnection from education and increasing access to youth friendly health services such as school based clinics.

Kirby's (2002) research reflects the fact that it is public health outcomes such as reduction in sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy that dominate the research objectives for sex education. This again is often due to the fact that the funding for such research comes from health agencies. However it has been argued that these indicators provide a limited way of capturing outcomes of sex education and indeed young peoples' knowledge and understanding of sexuality issues (Morris 2005; Ingham 2005). Kippax and Stephenson (2005) suggest that evaluation of the effectiveness of school based sex education programs often reveals mixed results due to the complexities involved in identifying the 'object being researched' and the range of influences outside of school based education on young people's sexuality and sexual behaviour.

It is my contention that a major contributing factor to the sometimes limited usefulness of school based sex education for young people is the constraints produced by the competing discourses that shape this education. I have particularly focussed on the two dominant discourses of 'risk and safety' and 'morality' although as I discuss in the next section, others are also influential. I will now analyse these discourses in terms of the implications they have for both the sex education young people receive in schools and their influence on the sexual subjectivities of young people.

## 5.2 Discourses shaping sex education programs in Australia

Research with parents in Australia finds general support for school based sex education (Berne et al. 2000; SHine SA 2001). Indeed in the campaign against the SHARE project the opponents stated that they were supportive of sex education as long as it was ‘appropriate’. The issue of what is adequate and indeed appropriate sex education is the main point of contention between those with conservative and progressive views. Differences are most pronounced in the treatment of issues relating to gender, sexuality and sexual practice and reflect the different ideological positions of those involved with sex education.

In describing the different approaches as ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ I am not suggesting that there are only two positions or that these can easily be defined. In reality people may hold different views on a variety of issues and not see these beliefs necessarily leading to identification with either of the two positions. However, drawing on the analysis of the culture wars in the United States by James Davison Hunter I argue that the conflict over sex education reflects different systems of moral understanding. As Hunter (1991) explains, these moral visions get expressed as “polarising tendencies” which are “sharpest in the organizations and spokespeople who have an interest in promoting a particular position on a social issue”. Hunter argues that the “cleavages at the heart of the contemporary culture war are created by what I would like to call the *impulse towards orthodoxy* and the *impulse towards progressivism*” (italics in original) (p.43).

Those who tend towards either impulse often do so because of the different beliefs they hold about what constitutes truth. Those with orthodox beliefs seek truth from transcendent authority and believe that it “Tells us what is true, how we should live, and who we are” (Hunter 1991, p.44). They also are cultural conservatives. In contrast, those with progressive views find their moral authority through drawing on contemporary discourses that privilege “a spirit of rationalism and subjectivism. From this standpoint truth tends to be viewed as a process, as a reality that is ever unfolding” (Hunter 1991, p. 45). Progressives also usually are secularists.

Therefore in using the terms ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ in relation to sex education I am referring to a conservative view as one where orthodox religious beliefs are applied to decisions about what should be included in sex education. In particular this includes

beliefs that oppose homosexuality and abortion and endorse sex only within a heterosexual marriage. Those with a progressive view accept that a plurality of beliefs exist in relation to sexuality and should be included within sex education. Among those who may tend towards progressive views there is likely to be a greater diversity in beliefs than found among those who are conservative.

Despite the differences between those who hold different beliefs there is also some convergence between ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’ due to the fact that both discursively construct the ‘adolescent’ identity as one in need of control (Bay-Cheng 2003, p.63). Rasmussen’s (2003) analysis of the production of sexualities in high schools found that there was an overlap of discourses used by both conservatives and progressives about sexuality education. She argues that without a consciousness of the effect of these discourses it is possible to re-inscribe rather than challenge the heteronormative practices that currently operate in schools in Australia (Rasmussen 2003).

So far in this chapter I have drawn on sex education texts and programs that fall within the progressive category. I will continue to draw on these texts in the analysis that follows and also on the materials developed for the SHARE project. I did not interview the conservative opponents as I was interested in programs actually used in state schools and the constraints they experienced from conservative influences<sup>58</sup>. However in order to include the perspectives of those with conservative views and to enable a more extensive analysis of the discourses that underpin their position I discuss two conservative sex education programs that have had some presence in South Australia, albeit not formally within state schools.

The first of these conservative sex education programs is that developed by Roslyn Phillips from the Festival of Light. As I have mentioned previously, Phillips has been a long time campaigner against comprehensive sex education in South Australia, being cited in histories of sex education since the 1970s (Jose 1995). During the campaign against the SHARE project she distributed her own program for quality sex education and also did a comprehensive critique of the *Teach It Like It Is* manual. These materials

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<sup>58</sup> I was also of the view that given my high profile role as the manager of the SHARE project (which included some personal targeting by the opponents) that it would be difficult to obtain interviews. I therefore decided to draw on their written materials.

provide useful information on the ideological and pedagogical approach favoured by Phillips and the Festival of Light.

The other conservative sex education program is one developed in the United States but offered in Australia. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, I became aware of this program when I was sent a friendly letter from someone I didn't know, inviting me to hear a talk in Adelaide by a touring American educator. This educator, Pam Stenzel belongs to the American organisation Straight Talk which also has a branch in Australia and has written a book for young people called *Sex Has A Price Tag* (Stenzel 2003). While I didn't attend her public talk in Adelaide I was again provided with information about her program at a meeting with two religious ministers held with the Department of Education. They had requested a meeting to express their concerns with the SHARE project and in the process of doing this strongly recommended that I read Stenzel's book and view her video as an example of the sort of education that met their approval. They provided me with copies and I incorporate an analysis of these in exploring how discourses relating to gender, sexual diversity and sexual practices get constructed and deployed through the progressive and conservative texts.

### **5.2.1 The treatment of gender**

Part of the evolution of sex education in Australia has been in its treatment of gender. This reflects the fact that many of the texts are informed by a feminist ideology and actively seek to challenge traditional gender roles which are seen as a barrier to relationships where both males and females can be active participants and equally responsible. The conservative opponents rightly identify that both *Talking Sexual Health* and the materials for the SHARE project are underpinned by an understanding of gender as a social construct. For example the *Teach It Like It Is* manual produced by SHine SA states:

The concepts of diversity, gender as a social construction, and power relations run through the resource, acknowledging the impact of social dynamics on decisions young people make in relation to sexual health (SHine SA 2004, p.4).

The need to challenge essentialist understandings of gender in Australia drew on evidence of a stereotyped construction of femininity through sex education documented by Tricia Szirom, another of the authors of *Taught Not Caught*. She released a book in

1988 called *Teaching Gender? Sex Education and Sexual Stereotypes* in which she discussed her research on sex education in Australia. Szirom (1988) interviewed 246 young women and 211 young men in Melbourne about their sex education experiences and concluded that:

Sex education programmes do not challenge, and may actively support, the social construction of sex role stereotypes which is maintained throughout the school curriculum. These programmes construct a *male* view of sexuality and females are not comfortable with this; young women are shown to have different needs, and want a different emphasis in the teaching (for both sexes) compared to males. (Szirom 1988, p.xv)

It is common for this essentialist understanding of gender that privileges male power to be problematized by progressive educators through the deployment of public health discourses. These discourses often link gender with 'risk and safety' as seen in the following statement:

Safe sex education in schools often rests on the notion that heterosexual encounters are being played out on a level playing field with young men and young women occupying seamless positions of equal power with equal access to resources. [...] Young women are often disadvantaged by being situated within dominant constructions of feminine sexuality. This disadvantage can take many forms, one of which is sexual safety. (Hillier, Harrison and Bowditch 1999, p.70)

However other discourses also intersect with this public health one. Michelle Fine (1988) in her influential analysis of the *Missing Discourse of Desire* argues that:

Within today's standards sex education curricula and many public school classrooms, we find: 1) the authorised suppression of a discourse of sexual desire; 2) the promotion of a discourse of female sexual victimization; and 3) the explicit privileging of married heterosexuality over other practices of sexuality. (Fine 1988, p.30)

Fine's (1988) analysis was applied in an Australian context by Mitchell and Peart (1996) who suggest that a positive discourse of desire for young women can assist to counterbalance discourses which construct women as victims. However while progressive sex education texts include some activities that affirm female sexual agency

and pleasure, analysis of sex education programs continue to be critical of the absence of these discourses actually implemented in school based education (Hirst 2004; Allen 2005).

Analysis of gender in relation to sex education has also focussed on the treatment of masculinity. Ingham (2005) argues that Fine's (1988) critique should also be extended to male desire as "it is relatively ignored: it appears to be taken for granted as a constant threat to women, and one that they must develop the skills to resist" (p.380). Connell's work on masculinities also has been influential in identifying a 'hegemonic' masculinity which is formed as a defence of patriarchy and against other forms of sublimated masculinities such as those embodied in homosexual or non-white men (Connell 1995).

Schools are one place where the formation and disciplining of both the male and female subject take place. A study in the UK found:

...verbal abuse as a central part of teenage sexual morality. Homophobic and misogynistic discourses were key resources used by boys for the collective construction and policing of heterosexual masculinity to ensure the reproduction of male power. (Chambers et al 2004, p.411)

Feedback from students involved in the SHARE project included comments from female students asking that the classes be delivered in single sex groups to get away from the disrupting and harassing behaviour of some of the young men in their class (SHine SA 2003a).

Progressive sex education texts include exploration of the links between gender and power and in particular try to affirm a greater range of male and female subjectivities. Conservative texts seek to consolidate essential forms of masculinities and femininities which are formed through the construction of narrow identities of 'husband' and 'wife'. It is interesting also that in terms of masculinity a common view promulgated by the Christian Right is that men have had their "identities undermined by feminist critiques of male privilege" (Singleton 2004, p.154) and need to strongly assert the hegemonic ideals of masculinity in order to live a Godly life.

In Pam Stenzel's (2003) sex education text treatment of gender takes place within the context of warnings against sex outside of marriage. "If you have sex outside of marriage, no matter who it's with, no matter how careful you are, *you will pay*" (italics in original) (Stenzel 2003, p.10). Her book is written in colloquial language and directed at 'girls and guys'. She says that the aim of her book is to:

Offer you good advice about sex (based on my own personal belief that God is the creator of the entire universe and everything in it, including sex) and solid information to back it up (based on the latest statistics to come out of the medical community). (Stenzel 2003, p.7)

This aim captures the tone of the book which sets out to establish the authority of her beliefs by both appealing to religious authority and 'scientific' fact. Stenzel (2003) also uses her own life as a narrative from which young people should learn. In the video of her talk to young people she discusses the fact that she was conceived when her mother was raped and then also draws on her own experience in a pregnancy counselling centre in the United States.

The discourses evoked by Stenzel (2003) focus extensively on the risk associated with the female body (rape, pregnancy and disease) but through constant repetition of these risks produce a discourse of danger. Stenzel sees danger everywhere. Whether it is sex itself, abortion, masturbation, condoms that break or lies told by sex educators. As I discuss further in the section on sexual practice, according to Stenzel the only time sex is great and pleasurable is when it's within the context of marriage and then she claims that "Christian women are having the best sex" (2003, p.34).

When Stenzel (2003) refers to dangers to men as well these are usually discussed in terms of economic consequences such as being forced to pay child support. It is clear that Stenzel's concerns are with the dangers to (white) young women. The discourse is racialised through the image used on the front cover which shows a young woman of Asian appearance dressed in a tight halter top and jeans staring suggestively at the camera. She is placed in an urban street setting with other young people in the background and she is surrounded by text that says "Sex Has a Price Tag". The picture references to images of street sex workers and through this reference links to other discourses of danger such as those associated with HIV and AIDS.

As Patton (1996) argues in her analysis of HIV, safe sex and young people in the United States “although considered geographically separate from the white mainstream, youth of color presented a more terrifying prospect than the potentially proximate gay youth” (p.57). In this one picture the mixed messages of conservative discourses are encapsulated. Women are to be protected in their role of wife, mother or virgin but some forms of female sexuality (those of the non-white or sexually promiscuous) are dangerous.

It is possible to identify a shift in how discourses relating to gender are deployed in relation to progressive sex education particularly after the 1990s. This reflects the reconceptualisation of gender by feminist and queer theorists. In particular Judith Butler’s theories outlined in her book *Gender Trouble* which link gender identity to heterosexual coherence have had a major influence (Butler 1990). Haraway (1991) describes the theoretical shifts to be about “feminist deconstructions of the subject” (p.147) thus moving debates on gender away from the binaries of biological and socially defined imperatives.

While activities included in texts produced in the 1980s such as *Taught Not Caught* focus on challenging the stereotyped binary gender roles of males and females, the *Talking Sexual Health* materials include some content which can be interpreted as destabilising a unified concept of gender. This is evident in the inclusion of scenarios involving transgender young people and in instructions to teachers which state:

It is important that transgender young people are not confused with gay and lesbian young people as the issues and experiences are quite different for each group. In terms of meeting the needs of any young people in school who might be experiencing gender dysphoria a teacher can do two things...first is to redress their invisibility by referring to the existence of transgender people in appropriate contexts. The second, in teaching about gender, and the extent to which it is socially constructed, all young people can be assisted to find gender expectations less oppressive and to support those who challenge them in any way. (ANCHARD 2001, p.59)

In this ‘progressive’ approach to gender it is also possible to see contradictory discourses. An explicit reference is made to gender as a social construction however the introductory

statement evokes an essentialist understanding of gender and sexual identity by implying that young people occupy one or the other fixed category of identity. Rasmussen (2003) also observes this contradiction at play in her interviews with educators engaged in anti-homophobia work both in Australia and the United States. She found that gay and lesbian identities were strategically essentialised by educators in order to legitimate education aimed at ‘existing’ marginalised young gay and lesbian students in schools who need to be kept ‘safe’. These educators argued that this strategy was necessary due to the heteronormative space in which sex education takes place.

In the next section I explore the implications of sex education and also schooling for the non-heterosexual student. I use the terms ‘same sex attracted’ and ‘non-heterosexual’ to acknowledge the range of different sexual identity categories that exist in addition to ‘heterosexual’ and to recognise that young people experience sexual desires without necessarily adopting a particular identity (gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer,) to describe themselves<sup>59</sup>.

### **5.2.2 Same sex desire and relationships**

As the interviews with the key informants showed it was the issue of sexual diversity that caused the most difficulty. Schools are generally understood to be heterosexual spaces despite the existence of same sex desires and practices. This should not be a surprising statement given that society generally is structured through the systematic privileging of heterosexuality with schooling forming an important part of the governmental processes that entrench this heteronormativity (Foucault 1978; Weeks 1985). Schools construct themselves as a heterosexual space in formal ways such as through policies on dress codes or education that fail to address non-heterosexual sexual identities and through informal ways such as tolerance of bullying based on non conforming gender appearance or behaviour (Luschen and Bogad 2003).

All of the progressive sex education texts that I examined aim to be inclusive of young people who are same sex attracted and do this under the umbrella of ensuring their ‘safety’ or as a strategy to reduce the ‘risk’ of youth suicide rather than liberating and affirming same sex desire in its own right. The conservatives take a different approach. Stenzel (2003) does not mention homosexuality or same sex relationships anywhere in

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<sup>59</sup> See Hillier, Turner and Mitchell (2005) and Dilley (2002) for further discussion on young people’s perceptions of the relationship between sexual identities and sexual behaviours.

either her book or video. Her preoccupation with heterosexual hegemony elides the possibility of other sexual desires. As I discussed in Chapter Four, Roslyn Phillips from the Festival of Light however takes every opportunity to construct a homosexuality of perversion and danger. She does this through a metaphoric use of the anus and its fragile rectal walls.

In the first lesson of her 'human sexuality' program she draws a picture of the 'plumbing' and then:

...discusses why anal sex is so dangerous (the rectal wall is always damaged) so faecal particles including bacteria, fungi and viruses always enter the bloodstream, stressing the immune system. This leads to a brief discussion on HIV and AIDS and its main method of spread in Australia. (Phillips 2004, p.2)

In linking HIV only to anal intercourse Phillips ignores other transmission risks for HIV and the fact that sexual practices do not define sexual identity. Phillips also gives advice that those who are homosexual can change and suggests the website of the US group Exodus International who are a non profit, interdenominational Christian organisation promoting the message of "Freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ".<sup>60</sup>

The campaign against the SHARE project in South Australia particularly drew on anxieties relating to 'homosexuality' through alleging that the project was deliberately supporting its promotion to young people within state secondary schools. It was claimed that possible outcomes of this would include confusion over gender and sexual identity and even the possibility that some young people would 'wrongly' self identify themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

There are two main ways that conservative critics assert that this promotion of non-heterosexuality takes place. The first is through the actual curriculum itself which they see as failing to reinforce the primacy of heterosexual marriage and validating same sex relationships. The second way is through concerns that 'openly' gay or lesbian teachers inappropriately flaunt their sexuality thereby providing legitimacy and even encouragement for non-heterosexual sexual identities.

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.exodus.to/about.exodus.html> accessed 9/01 2006

In her critique of the teacher manual used as part of the SHARE project Roslyn Phillips is especially critical of the 'Stepping Out' exercise. In this exercise students form a line in the middle of the room and are given a card with an identity category (such as young gay Asian man, young woman in a wheelchair, Aboriginal young man) and the teacher asks a series of questions. If the students think they can answer 'yes' to that question from the perspective of the person on their card then they take a step forward, if they answer 'no' they take a step backwards. The questions cover areas such as, "Can you take your partner to the school dance?" "Do you feel safe walking around the streets?" After all the questions are read out the teacher leads a discussion on why people are standing in different positions and what this says about how power is exercised and experienced in Australian society.

Phillips (2003) argues that, "Given the serious physiological and emotional risks of male homosexuality, it is very unwise to suggest to any student to act out a 'gay boy' role, even in the mind" (p.1). Similar statements were also made about an exercise used recently in a school in NSW. The Sydney newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* reported that "students as young as 14 have been asked at school to place themselves in an imaginary world dominated by homosexuals and lesbians.[...] The controversial lesson has been branded as "brainwashing and social engineering" by education experts", and "the Education Minister stepped in to ban its future use" (McDougall 2005).

These responses lend support for Judith Butler's theory about the performative nature of identity. Butler (1990) argues that all identities are constructed through performance, including heterosexuality. It is possible therefore to read conservative concerns about the use of role play to be not about 'homosexuality' but rather about the anxieties that exist in relation to the 'heterosexual' identity and its vulnerability particularly in 'formative' stages.

The other interesting aspect of the Stepping Out exercise is that it does not require students to openly engage with the issues from their own subject positions, particularly if that is a non-heterosexual one. This is true generally for all sex education where the training of teachers emphasizes that they should ensure that there is no disclosure of personal information (such as sexual experiences or desires) and this applies as strongly

(if not more) to the teacher themselves as to the students. This is seen as a protective strategy so that personal information is not then available to be ‘used’ inappropriately.<sup>61</sup>

This demarcation between private and public within schools is significant. In their discussion of the sacking of a transgender teacher in the United States, Luschen and Bogad (2003) argue that:

The Center Unified School Board voted to dismiss Dana Rivers not because her body (gender, sex, voice etc) changed, but because she spoke about it. In doing so, her embodied talk made her private matters public. The separation between public and private is integral to cultural myths of teachers. (Luschen and Bogad 2003, p.149)

There is a perception of danger and/or inappropriateness if teachers are open about their (non-heterosexual) sexuality. And yet research in Australia reveals that the current situation for non-heterosexual teachers is far from one of power and influence in most schools. It is instead generally one where they occupy a disembodied and subjected position (Ferfolja 2009; Holmes 1999). They are usually not able to be ‘out’ about their sexual identity within a classroom environment and rarely even within the confines of the staff room. In a study of lesbian teachers in Sydney by Ferfolja (1998) it was reported that homophobic harassment was a common experience although it differed in form and impact, ranging from graffiti to public statements and complaints from parents.

The fact that few teachers talk openly of their sexual identity does not of course mean that their sexuality is not ever present for students, other staff, and especially for themselves. This accounts for harassment even of teachers who are not ‘out’. Rofes (2005), in his description of the experiences of gay teachers, notes that:

We become conscious of the semiotics of clothing, commodities and bodily appearance. ...Are my pants too tight? Can I wear these sunglasses around schools or will they give me away? One friend who coaches women’s basketball told me that she wonders each day whether anyone has noticed that she never wears “women’s clothing”. (Rofes 2005, p.92)

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<sup>61</sup> Teachers are advised to talk to students on an individual basis should it appear they have issues they want to talk about (such as sexual abuse) and refer them to the school counsellor if necessary.

It is also interesting to consider the issue of ‘coming out’ by gay and lesbian teachers in the context of how discussion on sex actually takes place in schools. A declaration of non-heterosexual sexuality into a dominantly heterosexual school environment unsettles this environment and can also be interpreted to be a ‘sexual’ act. This construction of ‘speech’ as ‘sex’ is one of the oppositional strategies used by the Christian Right discussed in the previous chapter. It creates ‘the phantasm of the innocent child being dangerously stimulated by sexual talk’ (Irvine 2000, p.58) thereby linking sex education with child sexual abuse and paedophilia.

I want to now consider what the impact of this schooling environment has on the sexual subjectivity of young people, particularly those who experience same sex desire. By sexual subjectivity I am referring to what Rofes (2005) calls the “landscape of ones sexuality” (p.122). Within this landscape, shaped by the different forces of biology, culture and discourse, lie desire, bodily sensations, and a sense of place.

The notion of subjectivity has been theorised extensively and, as I discussed in Chapter One, perhaps the greatest influence on this has been the work of Michel Foucault who proposed three modes of objectification of subjects. These are dividing practices, scientific classification and ‘subjectification’ which concerns “the way a human being turns him or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p.208). Unlike the first two practices which are essentially ones of domination, ‘subjectification’ implicates the subject in actively contributing to their own subjection but as Butler (1997) comments this process is also productive.

Judith Butler (1997) argues that “Subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject” (p.2). She then uses theory developed by Foucault as one way to explain the relationship between subjection and sexual identity:

For Foucault, a subject is formed and then invested with a sexuality by a regime of power. [...] In this sense a “sexual identity” is a productive contradiction in terms, for identity is formed through a prohibition on some dimension of the very sexuality it is said to bear. (Butler 1997, p.103)

The important point to make about this theoretical approach is that all young people go through a subjectification process but that this will be experienced in particular ways by those who are attracted to people of the same sex. The discussion in this section has indicated that with few exceptions same sex desire within schools is either made invisible or condemned, despite some inclusion of content about the needs of ‘gay and lesbian’ students within sex education texts. However I’d like to propose, in a perverse way, that it is possible that the subjugation of same sex desire actually creates the possibility for students to claim a non-heterosexual identity for themselves. This is consistent with Butler’s theory that:

Called by an injurious name, I come into social being and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. (Butler 1997, p.104)

Based on this analysis it is not the fully embodied gay or lesbian teacher who ‘recruits’ young people into a gay or lesbian identity. Neither is it the curriculum that speaks about but does not give voice or presence to the same sex attracted young person. Instead it is the very act of silencing and subjection implicit in schools that activates for the student the possibility of an identity that offers resistance to these constraints, however temporary that may be. This can in turn lead to an embracing and naming for themselves of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual identity.

To take this analysis further it is worth speculating about what happens in schools where gay and lesbian teachers can be open about their sexual identities and where diversity is recognized and supported. (I’m not sure such a state secondary school exists but some may be more like this than others). There are certainly examples at university and college level in the United States with one educator describing her approach to pedagogy which includes discussing her own (lesbian) sexual identity with her students as a way of deliberately inviting them to interrogate their own sexual identities (Brueggemann and Modellmog 2002). In this context it may be that students do not form their identities with reference to subjugated identities and instead are able to embrace a plurality of sexual subjectivities.

In applying Butler's (1997) theory in this way my intention is to pose other ways to understand the effect of the silencing of same sex desire within schools and to particularly upset the conservative notion that openly gay and lesbian teachers or discussion of same sex sexual practices represent danger within a school setting. I am also attracted to the idea that within the silent spaces there is in fact a lot going on. However I also agree with Rasmussen (2003) in the caution she expresses about linking non-heterosexual subjectivities too closely to a 'wounded identity'. In her analysis of other possibilities for resistance for subjugated identities Rasmussen advocates a "turn towards pleasure [...] to help inspire an ongoing struggle for greater freedoms for the self and others within the educational context" (Rasmussen 2003:289). Such an approach is consistent with that proposed by McWhorter (1999) who, in her analysis of Foucault's work and sexual subjectivities, asks "What pleasure-developing practices might I cultivate that will enable me to resist, oppose, and counter sexual regimes of power?" (p.192). As I discuss below there is a long way to go before this turn to pleasure is achieved successfully within sex education.

### **5.2.3 Sexual practices and pleasure**

One of the costs of legitimising sex education through a public health discourse is that the focus has to be on 'risk and staying safe' rather than on how to experience sexual pleasure. This point is also made by Harrison, Hillier and Walsh (1996) who identify that "Much of the content of sexuality education curricula, particularly in the age of AIDS, is designed around informing students about what is 'bad' for them - unprotected sex, sex outside a monogamous relationship, and, often in fact, 'sex' *per se*" (p.73).

As noted in my discussion on gender, sex education programs can reinforce a construction of femininity that is sexually passive and yet also responsible for not only their own sexual behaviour but also the behaviour of any male partner. Young men are also constructed as always seeking sex and being unable to control their own sexuality. This view of male sexuality was apparent in the radio transcript included in Chapter Three where Toni Turnbull said the SHARE project would particularly have a negative impact on young men because "their testosterone levels are going up aren't they? Like a skyrocket".

Chris Beasley (2008) argues that there is a need to increase the theoretical focus on heterosexuality in order to provide recognition of the fact that male (hetero) sexuality can be about pleasurable and egalitarian relationships with women. She posits that the dominance of queer and feminist theorizing on sexuality has led to a construction of heterosexual relationships as necessarily being about dominance and danger. Beasley suggests that a greater focus on hetero-pleasure could be to “inform a shift towards positively reconstructing men’s identities in ways that exclude violence against women” (p.159).

Research conducted with young people (Allen 2005; Hirst 2004) finds that while they are familiar with the ‘official’ discourses associated with sex education such as safe sex, they perceive such education to be severely lacking in providing them with the sexual knowledge they need to feel sexually confident with partners. The young people in Allen’s (2008) study rated knowledge gained through their own sexual experiences as making a more important contribution to a positive sexual identity than the knowledge that adults had deemed important to include in education programs in order to be sexually healthy.

Such an approach is in stark contrast to the vision of sexuality offered by Stenzel (2003). In her video and book she vividly portrays young people who are physically and/or emotionally damaged by sexual activity outside of marriage. In case the young people she is speaking to do not understand what she means by sex she advises them that “if you’ve had any genital contact at all you’ve had sex. These are some of the names for different kinds of genital contact –hand job, oral sex, “outercourse”, blow job, etc”. (p. 31). Stenzel’s approach reflects the weaknesses of other abstinence based curriculum which “rely upon fear and shame to control young people’s behaviour” (Kempner 2001, p.7).

Discomfort about the sexuality of young people is evident in the conservative responses to the SHARE project. The opponents particularly condemned activities from the teacher manual that contained sexual activities other than vaginal intercourse. They argued that discussion on such activities, even within a safe sex context, provides endorsement of sexual activity that will start young people on the ‘slippery slope’ towards intercourse.

Parents should be aware that heavy petting to orgasm, oral sex, 'head jobs', are proposed as suitable options to sexual intercourse. [...] What about the emotional and moral implications of such active sexual behaviour? What about the STI risk factors? Sure you mightn't get pregnant that way but there are a host of other issues to consider. How long will it take before a couple is having intercourse if they engage in head jobs and mutual masturbation etc? (Port Lincoln Concerned Parent's Group, Further Issues Paper, August 2003, p. 3)

The above quote is illustrative of the paradox raised by Foucault (1978) in his analysis of the repressive hypothesis. Conservatives want to repress adolescent sexuality but in order to do this find themselves engaged in explicit discussion of sexual practices and desires. Mayo (2004) also finds contradictions in the discursive dimensions of abstinence curricula that promote oaths of virginity (or secondary virginity for those already sexually experienced). She argues that "even as conservatives attempt to stem the tide of adolescent sex, they inadvertently create new spaces and varieties of adolescent sexual identity – varieties produced out of the refusal of sex" (Mayo 2004, p.139). Therefore rather than successfully containing adolescent sexuality a greater range of adolescent sexual subjectivities are produced.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the experiences of people who have designed and delivered comprehensive sex education programs in Australia in the last 20 years and has illustrated that there is little evidence of organised campaigns to create controversy. However the interviews did reveal that anxiety about young people's sexuality fuelled at times the actions of evangelical Christian groups, which contributes to a regulatory environment for sex education in Australia. This regulation takes place at both a school and state policy level and is also seen in comments by some of those interviewed who shaped their education to fit within the dominant public health discourses which have marked Australia's response to HIV and AIDS.

In exploring the discourses surrounding gender, same sex desire and sexual pleasure I have discussed how sex education can be both a liberating and oppressive experience for young people and how it is shaped by a wide range of forces both within and outside of the school environment. I have also discussed how recent progressive education has actively sought to challenge constructions of gender and sexuality that marginalise young

people and have compared this education with conservative approaches that speak only of danger and risk and refuse to acknowledge the sexual agency of young people.

This denial of agency contributes to the construction of young people as innocent and open to victimisation and abuse, not only by sexual acts but also by the very process of sex education. However I would argue that in this process some young people are deemed to be more 'innocent' than others which further explains the fact that some education (such as HIV) has attracted little negative publicity in Australia. Safe sex education in schools has been constructed to be directed at those young people who are 'at risk' of disease or pregnancy and in this process these young people lose their innocence and their need of protection by the conservatives. This is particularly true of 'gay youth' but also of those who are perceived as sexually experienced by virtue of issues such as teen pregnancy or racial stereotyping (Pillow 2003). It is interesting that in all the concerns raised by the 'concerned parents', the possibility that this education may be directed to a child of theirs who is gay or sexually active is never considered. Such a possibility would disrupt the notion of some young people having greater corporeal innocence than others.

In presenting this argument I am mindful of how Cindy Patton (1996) has discussed the construction of adolescent innocence in a US context. She identified that the reorientation towards abstinence education was aimed squarely at the white middle class adolescent to encourage them to avoid 'risky' partners. This shift signified that those considered 'risky' were undeserving of the very education they may need to help them avoid infection (Patton 1996). This is a point of departure from my argument, as in Australia rather than safe sex education being withdrawn, I argue that it attracted little significant opposition due to the fact that it was not perceived as being any threat to genuinely innocent young people.

This does not mean that the accusation of destroying children's innocence has not been used strategically. Indeed it was evoked to support the claims made by the opponents to the SHARE project that the program was a form of child abuse. This accusation implied that teachers implementing the program were abusers and that the State Education Department was failing in its duty of care. No wonder then that State Education Departments are wary of involvement in sex education. In the next section I discuss why this should be so through applying Foucault's concept of governmentality to an analysis

of the response to the moral panic over the SHARE project. I also focus on how discourses relating to 'homosexuality' and 'child abuse' have been constructed and deployed in South Australia and how this has contributed to the creation of panic by the conservative groups.

*Anxieties about children and sex may be nothing new. Historically once children came to be constructed as a special, protected category of being and childhood as a special state, the obverse of adulthood, children and childhood could be constructed as 'at risk' and in need of particular protection and vigilance.*

(Jackson and Scott 1999, p.87)

## **Chapter 6:**

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### **Governing sexuality in South Australia: a risky business**

In Chapter One I outlined Foucault's theory of governmentality which challenges the concept of a state solely exerting power through state laws and regulations on passive citizens. Instead, Foucault argues that power operates through "a multiplicity of agencies in the social body" (Johnson 2000, p.101). This chapter takes the social body of South Australia as its starting point and explores the complex weavings of power that regulate sexual behaviour and sexuality in South Australia. It is a power that draws on juridical authority such as laws that proscribe the age at which a young person can give consent to sexual activity as well as discourses such as 'risk' and 'morality', discussed in the previous chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003. In Chapter Four I described the role of the media and politicians in fuelling the opposition to the project. I also highlighted the way that the opponents drew on existing anxiety about homosexuality and child abuse to create fear about the project and that this strategy is one that has also been used by Christian Right groups in the United States. In this chapter I argue that to fully understand the power of these discourses in South Australia it is necessary to explore their genealogy within a specifically South Australian context and to also look at the impact this has on how sexuality is governed in South Australia.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the performance of the SA Education Department in responding to the campaign against the SHARE project. In undertaking this analysis I draw on Stephen Ball's work which looks at what organisational performance means in a neo-liberal environment. Ball (2004) argues that an ethical approach to the management

of education programs has been replaced by a market driven need to construct “convincing institutional performances” (p.147). In the case of the SHARE project this meant that the Department was required to publicly demonstrate that it was not interfering in the private realm of families and that it acted impartially in its dealings with all interest groups. I argue that one outcome of this was that the state failed to adequately protect the rights of its non-heterosexual citizens when the Department reduced the visibility of same sex relationships within the SHARE teacher resources.

I then explore the discursive construction of homosexuality in South Australia through describing some of the key events that have contributed to this construction. One of these events involved the sacking of a gay drama teacher in 1992 by the then Director General of the SA Education Department. This is a further example of the difficulties that the state has in fully recognising the rights of its gay citizens although in this case another state instrumentality found that this sacking was unlawful and compensation was paid. Other events include the history of gay law reform in South Australia as well as some horrific ‘gay’ murders. While these are very different sorts of events they all form part of the fabric of the way homosexuality is understood in South Australia.

The final section of the chapter explores the discourses associated with child sexual abuse in South Australia through examining some of the dynamics of ‘child politics’ in the state. Feminist scholar Barbara Baird (2008) defines ‘child politics’ as “instances of politics of all kinds which pivot in part or in total, on the discursive figure of ‘the child’”. This child is not always specified in any detail, although it is often laden with racialised, gendered, classed and sexualised cultural assumptions” (p.291).

‘Child politics’ have been a central part of sex education debates. As I discussed in previous chapters, the corruption of the ‘innocent’ child has been a discourse deployed to create panic about sex education programs. The evocative image of a child at risk of abuse in South Australia was especially visible in 2003 when the SHARE project was launched as it was also the year the newly elected Labor Government released its review of child protection legislation and services. I conclude this chapter by discussing the relationship between legitimate concerns over child abuse in South Australia and the panic created about child sexual abuse by those who opposed the SHARE project.

## **6.1 State institutions, young people's sexuality and the SHARE project**

Young people's sexuality is governed in South Australia through laws that set out when they are legally able to consent to sex, get married and also confidentially access sexual health services. The age of consent in South Australia is 17 years for both heterosexual and same sex couples. At 16 years a young person can marry with parental consent and the consent of a court. This can happen only if one person in the couple is over 18 years. It is an offence for a person in a position of care or authority (such as a teacher) to have sex with a person under 18 years even if that person gives consent<sup>62</sup>.

In 1995 the *Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care Act* was passed by the South Australian Parliament. This states that young people have to be 16 years before they can give and refuse consent for medical treatment. Under the age of 16 years parental consent is required and if this is not available then two doctors need to agree that the young person understands the nature of the treatment and it is in the best interest of the young person. When young people reach 16 years, they are entitled to doctor-patient confidentiality.

This Act reinforces parental authority over the bodies of young people. As with the laws on sexual activity, the intention of the Act is to protect young people, however for some young people it in fact increases their vulnerability to harm because it makes it difficult for them to access information and services if they cannot obtain the support of a parent. At SHine SA special steps had to be taken, such as running clinics with two doctors, to ensure that young people under the age of 16 years were able to access sexual health services.

Foucault's notion of bio-power includes an analysis of the way expert knowledge is deployed to manage people's behaviour. Rose (1999) argues that "discipline is bound to the emergence and transformation of new knowledges of the human soul" (p.22). Laws on sexual activity and medical treatment are just one technique of government for managing the risky business of young people's sexual activity. The education system is also expected to provide the necessary knowledge and skills for young people to be able to fulfil the neo-liberal aspiration of self management of their own sexuality. Young people, such as teenage mothers, who are positioned as failing to manage their sexuality

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62 Legal issues for children L-Z (South Australia), Child Youth and Women's Health Service, <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=99&id=1932#4> accessed 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009.

appropriately often experience blame or stigma (Pillow 2004). However as I described in Chapter Five, there are many areas in which knowledge about young people's sexuality is contested. These include the purpose of sex (for procreation or for pleasure) as well as the actual techniques through which self management can be achieved (abstinence or safe sex).

For state institutions such as the SA Education Department the delivery of sex education programs is a complex task because of this contested knowledge base. Ball (2003) and Olssen (2003) apply a Foucaultian analysis of power to the administration of the education system which they suggest is shaped by the neo-liberal imperative of market forces. Ball describes the techniques of government used in the education field as "the new management panopticism (of quality and excellence) and the new forms of entrepreneurial control (through marketing and competition)" (p.219). He argues that "it is a mis-recognition to see these reform processes as simply a strategy of de-regulation, they are processes of *re-regulation*" (p.218 original italics). The process of "re-regulation" produces something else, something that Ball refers to as 'fabricating' a 'performativity'.

In using this term Ball (2003) is drawing on Butler's (1990) concept of performativity which describes how a "stylized repetition of acts" (p.33) contributes to the public appearance of conforming to a particular role. While Butler describes this process in relation to gender, Ball is using the notion of performativity to highlight the way organisations construct their management performance through repeated demonstrations of certain public management functions such as 'risk assessments'. Ball also argues that there is a moral element to this organisational performativity:

This is part of a larger process of ethical retooling in the public sector which is replacing concern for client need and professional judgement with commercial decision-making. The space for the operation of autonomous ethical codes based on a shared moral language is colonised or closed down. (Ball 2003, p.152)

The SA Education Department and the Minister for Education responded to the campaign against the SHARE project through positioning themselves as neutral players in a conflict that was publicly represented as being between the 'radical' sex organisation SHine SA and conservative religious organisations. Departmental officers met with representatives

of those opposing the SHARE project and invited them to contribute their own critiques of the sex education materials thereby suggesting that they too could be considered experts in sexual health education. In the final evaluation of the SHARE project a senior official from the Department of Education was interviewed. He is quoted as saying:

We dealt systematically with letters of concern and complaint that came in from the community. Every letter...the vast majority of those letters were 'form' letters but we really tried not to have a 'form' response. One [DECS] officer wrote hundreds of letters, and nearly every letter was slightly different as people would send the 'form' letter and then they would write something on it as well. We always tried to conscientiously address every concern. (Johnson 2006, p.22)

This response is indicative of the way institutions in a neo-liberal environment balance the claims of opposing individuals who are all supposedly 'equal'. No one view should be heard above the other regardless of what it may be. It is interesting to consider how the SA Education Department could 'conscientiously address' concerns which primarily focussed on asking that the curriculum be changed to promote abstinence and which condemned any positive mention of homosexuality. Such a position on homosexuality is counter to other state regulations (such as Equal Opportunity legislation) which aims to protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination.

As discussed in Chapter Four, one action taken by the SA Education Department was to establish the 'SHARE Curriculum Materials Review Group' to review the SHARE curriculum plan and the teacher manual in the context of the SHARE project's aims and objectives, feedback from SHARE teachers, school communities and the wider community and the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. This Committee also spent considerable time discussing the concerns of the opponent groups and exploring ways to 'address their concerns'. This led to the modification of the program to reduce the number of scenarios that included same sex couples and the removal of cards that referred to sexual activities. The visibility of parental involvement in sex education was also increased.

These changes constitute the 'convincing institutional performances' of the administration of education referred to by Ball (2004, p.147). It was the appearance of impartiality that was important. However such actions are also part of the power

relations that shape the relationship between the state and the sexuality of its citizens. Any erasure of the experiences of some people in society to placate others signifies how power operates in that society and which lives are considered of value. Judith Butler (2004) argues that:

On the level of discourse, certain lives are not considered lives at all, they cannot be humanized; they fit no dominant frame for the human, and their dehumanization occurs first at this level. This level then gives rise to a physical violence that in some sense delivers the message of dehumanization which is already at work in culture. (Butler 2004, p.25)

Butler (2004) locates this process of dehumanization within a culture that actively subjugates some of its citizens on the basis of their sexuality. One effect of this is to limit the freedom of those individuals which contradicts one of the key tenets of liberalism which is about promoting freedom for its citizens through minimising state control. Olssen (2003) also analyses the impact of neo-liberalism on the practices of freedom in the education sector. He argues that:

In relation to education, it [neo-liberalism] has been able to effect its changes through new *indirect forms of control via the use of markets* and through various other *new techniques of government*. It involves a reorganization of the spaces in terms of which freedom can be practiced and in terms of which rights can be exercised. Because it refuses to extend power or authority to groups of people who claim professionalism by virtue of a shared competence, but represents such groups solely as aggregates of self-interested individuals, it replaces networks of delegated power which characterises the professional mode of organization, with hierarchical chains-of-line management which disempowers and ‘de-authorizes’ the labour of the teacher and the intellectual, effecting de-professionalization of education labour in the neo-liberal state. (Olssen 2003, p.200)

In the campaign against the SHARE project it is possible to see evidence of the ‘de-professionalisation’ of teachers referred to by Olssen (2003). Claims by the opponents that children were being harmed and that parents were being duped by schools gives no professional credit to the knowledge and authority of the teachers and school administrators who were implementing the SHARE project in schools. The ‘caring’ teacher who provides guidance to young people was constructed to be the ‘dangerous’ teacher who leads young people astray through misguided sexual instruction. SHine SA

workers were particularly accused of operating from a basis of economic vested interest rather than a professional commitment to the sexual health of young people, due to the funding received by SHine SA to implement the project.

The role of the education bureaucrat becomes one of managing processes to give the ‘appearance’ of avoiding any public attention on sex education rather than actively contributing to strategies that enhance delivery of sex education in schools. I say ‘appear’ as in reality the SA Education Department has no formal authority over SHine SA (funded as it is by the Health Department), and is also not able to control the activities of conservative groups. This means that the only action the Department can take is to ensure that steps taken to minimise risk are documented thereby demonstrating that the managerial role of the Department has been fulfilled.

One of the biggest ‘risks’ to be managed by education bureaucracies is negative media stories. However the relationship between government and the media is often driven by competing interests. Drawing on his own experience as a senior education bureaucrat in Canada, Levin (2004) describes the relationship in the following way:

This is a relationship in which each party needs yet also distrusts and sometimes despises the other. Governments need the media because the latter provide one of the main ways in which governments communicate with the public. At the same time, many politicians and their staff do not have a very favourable view of what the media do...Some politicians and civil servants believe that they cannot get fair coverage of their work because the media are biased against them. (Levin 2004, p.272)

It is clear that governments do not want to engage in a debate about young people’s sexuality through the media. Evidence of this can be seen in Anne Mitchell’s comments discussed in Chapter Five where the *Talking Sexual Health* materials were not launched publicly because the Minister believed that, “There’s no political mileage in this so just get it out. ...Don’t want the newspapers to find out about it”. During all the media attention on the SHARE project it was often SHine SA and not the SA Education Department or Minister for Education who had to debate the content of the program with the opponents.

At the time that the controversy on the SHARE project took place in South Australia the Howard Federal Liberal Government was actively promoting a neo-liberal approach to education in Australia. In 2003 they commissioned a major review of 'values education' with the aim of developing a framework that could be applied across Australian schools (Curriculum Corporation 2003). In an interview on sex education Brendan Nelson, the then Federal Education Minister located sex education as part of values education:

Well I think sex education is an extension if you like of values education, but again, I think parent communities - whether in government or non-government schools - are frequently, and quite rightly, sceptical about governments coming in over the top of them in areas like sex education. (ABC Radio, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2003)

As I discussed in Chapter Three the Howard Government actively positioned itself as sympathetic to the family values rhetoric of conservative Christians and the focus on 'values education' for young people is consistent with this approach. Nelson's position on sex education also appealed to the Christian Right through affirming that parents should decide what education their children receive on sexual matters.

At the same time that 'values education' was receiving attention by the Howard Government, political debates about the legal status of same sex relationships were taking place at both a Federal and State level. While the Howard Liberal Government again appealed to its conservative supporters through denouncing gay marriage, the Rann Labor Government in South Australia positioned itself as being in favour of removing legal discrimination against same sex couples but delayed actually passing legislation to make this happen. In the next section I explore how discourses relating to 'homosexuality' have been constructed and deployed within South Australia and the effect this has had not only on issues such as law reform for same sex couples but also on the way 'homosexuality' itself is understood in South Australia.

## **6.2 The 'homosexual body' in South Australia**

In the previous chapter I analysed the way the abject figure of the gay or lesbian teacher influences the sexual subjectivities of young people. The subjugated position of gay teachers reflects not only the way schools are shaped around heteronormativity but also the way the state fails to recognize and respond to claims of citizenship from people who are not heterosexual.

Sedgwick theorises that “homosocial” forms of domination are based on the repudiation of erotic bonds between men (cited in Warner 1993, p.xiv). This analysis is extended by Butler (1997) who proposes that “heterosexualized genders form themselves through the renunciation of the *possibility* of homosexuality, a foreclosure which produces a field of heterosexual objects at the same time that it produces a domain of those whom it would be impossible to love” (p.21).

The effect of repudiation and denial of same sex attachment is to project these desires onto a figure that symbolically carries the pain of this denial. According to Sedgwick (1990) it is the stigmatized ‘homosexual’ body that is the recipient of this psychic baggage. This body is both that of the individual homosexual/bisexual man who experiences this stigma and also the social body of queerness that is policed whenever it is perceived to be a threat to the heterosexual ‘natural order’, such as when there is an affirmation of same sex sexuality within sex education curriculum.

This analysis is a useful starting point in my exploration of the nature of the ‘homosexual body’ in South Australia. It is a body that is understood as ‘male’, although this maleness is feminised through the desire it holds for another male body. The anxiety created around this body does not just lie in the stigma of ‘homosexuality’ but also the fear that it is a potential paedophile and threat to children. Angelides (2004) links the identification by feminists that most child abuse is associated with dominant forms of masculinity to the emergence of the identity category of ‘paedophile’ which serves as “a convenient scapegoat for the restaging and projection of anxieties of manhood” (p.286). That is, the concept of a paedophile is considered so perverse that it is attached to the other perverse category of the ‘homosexual’ rather than the so called ‘normal’ category of heterosexual masculinity<sup>63</sup>.

In this section I focus on how ‘homosexuality’ in South Australia has become linked to danger as well as to illegitimate use of power. This is despite there being competing discourses that offer other more positive constructions of ‘homosexuality’ in South

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<sup>63</sup> My use of the term ‘homosexual’ draws on the identity category that is positioned in opposition to ‘heterosexual’ (Fuss 1991). It is acknowledged that other identity categories such as ‘bisexual’ are also constructed as dangerous and deviant and have their own political and cultural location within public discourses on sexuality. For further discussion on the place of bisexuality within sexuality discourses see Angelides (2001).

Australia. For example, a study of the gay community in Adelaide (Couch et al. 2000) found that the relative smallness of Adelaide leads to a 'do-it-yourself' gay community where creativity is brought to the task of 'doing gay'. This is particularly true for young gay men who weave together different strands of their lives into a pattern that provides meaning but is often not visible as it would be for example in the larger Sydney gay community. This study identified strong bonds of mutual support among gay men in Adelaide, a finding that stands in stark contrast to the sinister representation of homosexual men promulgated by organisations such as the Festival of Light

The public representation of lesbians in South Australia has been much more muted than has gay male identity. Even though lesbians have been actively involved in the legal campaigns to recognise same sex relationships in South Australia, the lesbian body has not been deployed to create fear in the same way as has the male homosexual body. The lesbian body has been subjected to increased scrutiny only when it is linked to the welfare of children such as in the campaign for access to assisted reproduction or adoption. In addition sexual acts between women have never been subject to criminalisation, presumably because such acts were unintelligible to male legislators concerned with acts of sodomy.

Legal reform is often used as the marker of social progress and if that is the case then South Australia, in relation to the human rights of its non-heterosexual citizens, occupies ambiguous territory as a social leader. In 1975 it became the first state in Australia to decriminalise homosexuality but more recently it delayed legal recognition of same sex relationships until 2006, thus becoming the last state or territory in Australia to grant legal recognition to same sex relationships. In the campaigns that took place around both legal reforms the former Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan provides an important reference point for how homosexuality is understood in South Australia.

### **6.2.1 Don Dunstan's state**

Don Dunstan was a Labor Member of the South Australian Parliament for over 25 years and Premier for 10 years. He came to power after decades of rule by the conservative Liberal Country League (LCL) party. The 1970s became known as the Dunstan decade and during that time South Australia was positioned as one of the most socially and culturally progressive states in Australia (Parkin 1981). Don Dunstan left politics due to

ill health in 1979 after the death of his second wife. He died in February 1999 aged 73. An obituary to Dunstan published in *The Guardian* newspaper records Dunstan's achievements in the following way:

Dunstan appointed Australia's first woman judge; he also instructed Buckingham Palace to commission the Aboriginal pastor Doug Nicholls as state governor. He decriminalised homosexual acts; involved himself in lesbian and gay affairs; instituted reforms in consumer protection; and was lavish in his financial support of the arts, and particularly of the Adelaide Festival. (Jones 1999)

At the time he died Dunstan had been in a 10 year relationship with Steven Cheng with whom he also had owned a restaurant known as *Don's Table*. However at the memorial service for Dunstan, which was held in the Adelaide Festival Centre, Dunstan's well known support for gay and lesbian affairs, referred to above in the *Guardian* newspaper, was absent from descriptions of his interests and achievements. Also absent was any recognition of his partner. Barbara Baird attended this memorial service and recalls that while there was no public acknowledgement of Dunstan's sexuality, "the 'open secret' was writ large in the memorial service for Dunstan" (Baird 2001, p.75). It was evident in the number of gay men and lesbians attending the service, the references to his 'flamboyant' style<sup>64</sup> and the erasure of his life with Steven Cheng.

The public representation of Dunstan's life is instructive for understanding how homosexuality is governed in South Australia. At his funeral Dunstan's previous heterosexual relationships were named publicly while his gay relationship was relegated to the private sphere. Dunstan himself supported this public/private dichotomy by being an active supporter of gay and lesbian events in South Australia (such as the Feast Festival referred to in Chapter One), while at the same time refusing to name himself publicly as a gay or bisexual man (Baird 2001, p.81). The political scientist, Carol Johnson (2002) posits that this demand for gay men and lesbians to keep their sexuality outside of the public sphere is part of a "'mainstream' assimilationist strategy" which confers honorary heterosexual status on those 'good' gay men and lesbians who are prepared to pass as heterosexual citizens (p.330). In Dunstan's situation it was difficult

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<sup>64</sup> Don Dunstan famously wore pink shorts to the SA Parliament.

for him to be both a respected state leader and an openly gay or bisexual man as the state defines citizenship only in terms of heterosexuality.

Dunstan is credited with initiating homosexual law reform in South Australia while in fact he was not directly involved in this law reform. The first legislative response to change laws on homosexuality was introduced by a Liberal Country League member of the Legislative Council who introduced a Private Member's Bill in 1972 to decriminalise male homosexual acts. This Bill was passed but in fact it failed to decriminalise homosexuality and merely allowed a legal defence if the "behaviour took place between two males over twenty one, in private and with consent" (Cowan and Reeves 1998, p.166). Actual decriminalization came on 17 September 1975 when a bill introduced by the new Attorney General Peter Duncan, was successfully passed.

The impetus for homosexual law reform in South Australia lay not just in a response to the advocacy by local gay groups such as CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution) but was given urgency by the murder of a gay man, Dr George Duncan on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1972. Dr Duncan, an academic at the University of Adelaide, was thrown into the River Torrens which runs through the Adelaide city. Three members of the South Australian police force were subsequently charged with the manslaughter of Duncan but one had charges dismissed and the other two were acquitted due to a lack of evidence (*Sunday Mail* "Thirty Years of Intrigue" 2 June 2002). The murder received widespread publicity and as Willett (2000) comments, "Suddenly the oppression of homosexuals was big news and the law reform genie was out of the bottle" (p.93).

During the debates on gay law reform the issue of homosexuality within school sex education received attention. The Attorney General Peter Duncan was alleged to have given a speech in which he supported 'homosexuals' talking to school children. This prompted a media outcry and calls for Duncan to resign. This did not happen but the SA Education Department issued a circular to school principals stating that "people with 'contentious or extreme views', including professional advocates of activities or beliefs associated with homosexuality' should not have access to schoolchildren" (cited in Cowan and Reeves 1998, p.165).

During 2003, when the SHARE project controversy was at its peak, there continued to be constant reminders of the Dunstan legacy. The current Labor Premier, Mike Rann,

worked as a media adviser to Don Dunstan and often publicly positions himself as continuing Dunstan's social reform agenda.<sup>65</sup> However Rann was also criticized by the gay community for the delay in recognising same sex relationships, thereby failing to ensure that people in same sex relationships were protected under South Australian law. After the Bill to achieve this was allowed to lapse before a vote could be taken, long time gay activist Ian Purcell wrote that, "Thirty years ago, SA led the nation in law reform. Today Mr Rann, who likes to align himself with Dunstan's legacy, does not seem at all shamed by the fact that SA is now far behind every other state and territory" (*Blaze* 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005).

I have begun the discussion of homosexuality with a focus on Don Dunstan and also on law reform as both are implicated in the issues of power and politics in South Australia. In the next section I explore homosexuality in South Australia through the experiences of David Paul Jobling. Jobling, a gay drama teacher, was appointed to a small country town in South Australia for a short contract only to find himself in the midst of controversy and community opposition.

### **6.2.2 Gay educators: the case of David Paul Jobling**

The experience of David Paul Jobling illustrates how discourses of homosexuality and education continue to be linked to those of deviance and contamination. The events surrounding the eventual sacking of Jobling took place in 1992 and the panic created around him needs to be viewed historically, within the context of the worldwide response to the relatively new AIDS epidemic that resulted in hysteria built upon fear of gay sexuality. As Watney (1987) comments:

AIDS is thus embodied as an exemplary and admonitory drama, relayed between the image of the miraculous authority of clinical medicine and the faces and bodies of individuals who clearly disclose the stigmata of their guilt. The principal target of this sadistically punitive gaze is the body of the 'homosexual'. (Watney 1987, p.78)

The other context for understanding the controversy surrounding Jobling is anxiety that was evoked around gay teachers within educational settings. In the discussion on

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<sup>65</sup> In his memoirs Don Dunstan describes how Mike Rann was one of the first people to be informed of his resignation due to ill health. Dunstan finishes his memoir by saying "My own adventure story, in seeking to create a social democratic society, was over" (Dunstan 1981, p.314).

decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Australia I referred to the controversy that was created against the then Attorney General in 1975 when he allegedly supported homosexual groups being allowed to talk in schools. A similar panic again took place 10 years later and was fuelled again by the organisation, the Festival of Light.

The trigger for the 1985 controversy was a draft industrial policy released by the South Australian Institute of Teachers (SAIT). The aim of the policy was to protect teachers from discrimination on the basis of their sexuality but one section also recommended that discussions on homosexuality in schools should be free from prejudice. The suggestion that homosexuality be a topic of discussion upset conservative groups who mounted a campaign against the new policy. Jose (1999) identifies that:

The issues were presented in terms of a conspiracy to subject children to the indoctrination of homosexual ideas and values. Claims were made in terms of supposedly self evident truths about the evils of homosexuality and the risks that would befall children if they were taught by homosexual teachers. (Jose 1999, p.205)

During the mid 1980s when controversy was being created around this policy, a booklet prepared by conservative educator Geoffrey Partington (1985) was circulated. At the time of writing this booklet Partington was a lecturer at Flinders University in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. Entitled *The Treatment of Sex* it had a large “R” on the cover and carried a warning that it contained materials that may be offensive. The introduction says that the “article will examine a few aspects of the treatment of sexuality within educational institutions from the university to the early years of schooling” (p.3) and Partington (1985) then begins by reproducing descriptions of anal sex that had been printed in the Flinders University student magazine *Empire Times* in July 1985.

Partington (1985) associates this ‘explicit’ material written by and for university students to sex education for school children. He does this by moving immediately from the ‘shocking’ opening material to discussion of the treatment of homosexuality within sex education programs in schools. He is highly critical of this education and claims that “over the last ten years, the pressures to make promiscuity, including homosexual promiscuity, more attractive to our young people have increased in leaps and bounds” (p.13). He particularly targets the above mentioned SAIT policy on the protection of gay teachers which he cites as evidence for his position.

It was in this context of vigilant conservative monitoring of any moves to positively address gay and lesbian issues in schools that the sacking of David Paul Jobling took place. Jobling was not a full-time teacher but was employed on a seven week contract as an artist in residence at Jamestown Primary School, in the mid-north of South Australia. He was an openly gay and HIV positive man and had previously worked in the arts sector where he wrote about some of his personal experiences. The then Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Josephine Tiddy, records the following events taking place:

David was gay and positive. These facts became widely known in Jamestown and community support for David and his program was then very divided. Many parents claimed they would not have a homosexual teach their children, whilst others focussed on David's well known skills and supported the program going ahead. The school in Jamestown felt they were managing the conflict but the Education Department after much deliberation decided to withdraw the program. The then Director General of the Education Department personally went to Jamestown, arriving late in the evening, the day before the program was due to start and cancelled it.

David lodged a complaint of discrimination under the Equal Opportunity Act claiming he had been denied his contract of employment on the grounds he was homosexual and/or HIV positive. In their defence the Department claimed it was an inherent requirement of the position that the person be "acceptable to the community". Clearly it is less likely that a homosexual man who is HIV positive would be acceptable to the community of Jamestown, so a very strong argument was put to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal that David was a victim of indirect discrimination. His ability to do the job was not in question. He simply did not "fit in". (Tiddy 1996)

The Equal Opportunity Tribunal did indeed find that Jobling had been discriminated against and he was paid compensation reported to be \$60,000 (*The Age* 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1993) which was later reduced to an out of court settlement of \$40,000 after the SA Education Department appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. The Jobling case received extensive media coverage in South Australia. As Tiddy indicates it created an anxiety in the Jamestown community that was underpinned by the spectre of not only a dangerous homosexual but also someone tainted by a disease that at that time was being constructed as a potential death threat to everyone in the community.

In 1987 an infamous 'Grim Reaper' national HIV awareness television campaign was run in Australia with maximum impact. The advertisement showed "a medieval icon of Death, the Grim Reaper: a macabre scythe-carrying, skull-headed creature swathed in a black hood, bowling in a fog-filled, graveyard-like bowling alley. Instead of knocking over ten-pins, the creature struck down a set of stereotypical characters who represented the diversity of 'ordinary' Australians" (Sendziuk 2003, p.137). People with HIV infection were thus positioned as a physical embodiment of the danger posed by HIV and were implicitly understood as male, gay and predatory.

In her study of how small communities understand and respond to homosexuality and lesbian/gay civil rights in the United States, Arlene Stein (2001) found that anxieties exist when boundaries stop being meaningful despite attempts to police them. She records that:

... the lesbians and gay men in town were strangers who were not all that strange; they tended to have families, respectable work; they shared many, if not most of their values, and even looked and acted very much like them – perhaps their very ordinariness made them even more threatening. (Stein 2001, p.216)

Jobling was located as an outsider both for his HIV status and homosexuality and also because he was not from the Jamestown community. Homosexuality may be acceptable in big cities but is much more problematic in rural communities (Hillier, Turner and Mitchell 2005). A mapping of homophobia done in Australia in 2005 found that "by and large city areas in all states are less homophobic than country areas, but there are exceptions" (Flood and Hamilton 2005, p.1). This study also found that the highest negative response to homosexuality amongst men was the Eyre Peninsula region of South Australia, located in the west of the state and containing the town of Port Lincoln where the most virulent opposition to the SHARE project took place.

The anxiety then is not that differences exist but that it may not be possible to clearly separate people by virtue of their sexuality or behaviour. Jobling's known homosexuality and HIV positive status appears to have presented the opportunity for active policing of sexual boundaries. It enabled the community members to take a public position on just who should be allowed to work with children. It is also another example of how state institutions involve themselves in the management of risk. Again the risk being managed

is negative community perceptions and media outrage rather than any real risk to children.

In this discussion I have focussed primarily on the construction of homosexuality as a potential threat to the general community through inappropriate influence on susceptible young people. However this perception of danger has been further exaggerated in South Australia through a series of high profile and particularly gruesome murders of young men. These crimes, known respectively as the 'Family' murders and the 'Snowtown' murders, have led to headlines such as, "Lock up your sons in the world's murder capital" (Ellis 2002). In this depiction of homosexuality, sexual exploitation is rife and linked to organised rings of paedophiles that operate across the different social stratas of conservative and respectable Adelaide.

### **6.2.3 Homosexuals and murders**

The first murder of a series that became known as the 'Family' murders took place in 1979. Eighteen year old Alan Barnes was found dead in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. He had died as a result of shock and haemorrhaging from an anal injury likely to have been inflicted by a beer bottle. Four other young men were murdered between 1979 and 1983 and some were dismembered. All had severe anal injuries and this contributed to linking the murders to homosexual sex. A *Sunday Mail* article on these murders suggested that "the thrill killing of five young men between 1979 and 1983, and the subsequent gruelling investigation and arrests, was a case that affected the psyche of Adelaide like no other" (Haran 2001).

It is interesting that the journalist Peter Haran refers to the "psyche of Adelaide" as it illustrates the way both the 'Family' and later 'Snowtown' murders came to be understood as something more than just a series of horrible and tragic deaths. They have both been interpreted as saying something about 'Adelaide' itself. Another journalist comments that it evokes an impression of Adelaide that "there is something sinister that I just can't shake" (Ellis 2002). The author Salman Rushdie said a similar thing when he visited Adelaide. He wrote an opinion piece in which he said Adelaide was "an ideal setting for a Stephen King novel or horror film...sleepy conservative towns are where those things happen" (cited in Mitchell 2004, p.4). It is my contention that not only

Adelaide is being understood in reference to these murders but also 'homosexuality' itself.

Only one person was ever charged and convicted of one of the 'Family' murders. In 1983 Bevan Spencer Von Einem, a gay man, was arrested and charged with the killing of Richard Kelvin, the son of a well known Adelaide news reader. He was convicted and given a 36 year jail term and the current Rann government has recently made statements that they will pass laws to ensure that people like von Einem are never released from prison.

The 'Family' murders not only involved the construction of the homosexual sadist (in von Einem) but also other subject positions which are both marginal and dangerous. One of these is the transsexual. Part of the evidence against von Einem was that he had previously picked up a young man named George and taken him to a house where George had sex with a woman. George was subsequently drugged and anally raped although it was never proven that this was by von Einem (O'Brien 2002).

When this house was visited by the police it emerged that the woman in question was a transsexual (whom the police called 'P'). One of the investigating police who subsequently wrote a book about the 'Family' murders commented that "People might wonder how someone can have sex with a transsexual. It might seem weird but P wasn't ugly and most couldn't tell the difference" (O'Brien 2002, p.138). It was also alleged that the abducted young men may have entered the car with von Einem because a transsexual was also in the car and the men felt safer getting into a car where there was a woman.

Such comments are further examples of the anxiety created when boundaries are unsettled as discussed in the Jobling case. It is not just that 'P' may have been involved in a serious crime but also that 'P' was able to 'fool' heterosexual men into assuming subject positions that disrupt set notions of heterosexuality. A straight man that has sex with a woman who used to be a man is contaminated by the homosocial implications of this behaviour.

The other deviant subject position that became associated with homosexuality was that of the paedophile. The media created a sensational view of murderers who were alleged to be part of a 'homosexual gang' with a deviant interest in 'boys'. The very term 'The

Family' was first used in a media interview on the TV program *60 minutes* in 1988 by a South Australian police sergeant. This was some years after the murders of the young men who were aged between 14 and 25 years and also after the conviction of von Einem for one of these murders. Miller (2000) comments that:

The press stories around the killings had magically adjusted the ages of victims so they were all referred to as 'boys', thus reinforcing the erasure of any distinction between homosexuality and paedophilia. The gang had also developed a magical number of nine members, some of whom were allegedly 'highly placed' or 'prominent' and thus able to protect other members. (Miller 2000, p.102)

This sense that a large group of powerful and dangerous homosexual men are operating in Adelaide continues to be reinforced by the media and is often linked to panics around paedophilia (Hunt 2002). Miller's (2000) argument is not that men other than von Einem may have been involved in the murders, but that the public representation of their motives for murder is linked to their homosexuality which is then collapsed with paedophilia. In this media representation, being gay then becomes a dangerous proposition and certainly not something that could be portrayed in a positive light.

An example of this can be seen in the following transcript from a talkback radio program conducted by radio announcer Bob Francis on Adelaide radio station 5AA. A minor media outrage was created when it was alleged that von Einem had been receiving 'special treatment' in prison and also visited regularly by a woman. The transcript reveals the following conversation between Frances and a caller, 'James':

James wonders who the woman is who visits von Einem in prison. [...] James asks if Don Dunstan did anything good for Adelaide. Francis says he changed a lot of old fashioned laws that Thomas Playford had but he did create an image of being a 'dead set bitch'. ... James wonders why all the lawyers and judges are all gay and into the 'scene'. ... Frances says they aren't all gay, there are some bloody good lawyers and you can't stereotype like that. (5AA, 20 November 2006)

This conversation is indicative of some of the key discourses that operate in Adelaide around 'homosexuality'. In this one snippet we have the killer von Einem and also Don Dunstan who is presented as having both a liberating and corrupting influence. Claims

are then made that powerful gay lawyers operate in Adelaide (and presumably in a way that is protective of their deviant behaviour). Frances' final comment appears to reinforce the deviance of gay lawyers when he says there are some good ones (presumably the straight ones). In this discourse the reference to von Einem serves to link homosexuality to paedophilia.

The issue of paedophilia was central in the other famous South Australian murder case that has become known as the 'Snowtown' murders, named after the town in rural South Australia where most of the victims' bodies were found. In May 1999 eight bodies were found in barrels in the vault of a disused bank in the town of Snowtown. A further two bodies were found buried in the garden of a house in the northern suburbs of Adelaide and two other bodies were later found.

Four men were charged with this series of murders but the main protagonists were John Bunting and Robert Wagner. Bunting and Wagner had met when Bunting and his wife rented a house opposite Wagner who at the time was living with his transvestite male lover, Barry Lane, who also had been convicted for paedophilia (Mitchell 2004). Wagner had been sexually abused as a child and been with Lane since he was 14 years old. Wagner told all this to Bunting who had a hatred of paedophiles as well as homosexuals. Susan Mitchell (2004), who wrote a book about these murders and attended the trial, reports the following event that took place prior to the murders:

A few months later, after more of these late night sessions and Bunting's repeated soliloquies of hatred and revenge, he took Wagner into his spare room, where he had designed a special 'spider wall'. He showed him the yellow Post-it notes with names on them stuck to the wall and connected by strands of pink and blue wool to map the links between the various people named, all of whom Bunting claimed were paedophiles or homosexuals. (Mitchell 2004, p.14)

The first person to be killed by Bunting and Wagner was an ex-lover of Lane's and this was the beginning of a series of murders that included eight men and two women. It also eventually included Lane. The women were killed to try and cover up the crimes which not only included murder but also fraud. Bunting and Wagner continued to collect welfare payments for the people they had killed.

I am not going to document all the details of these murders here but instead explore their implications for further reinforcing the construction of homosexuality as dangerous and deviant. As Mitchell (2004) also says about Bunting, “He made no distinction between paedophiles and homosexuals; they all deserved to be punished” (p.14). The Snowtown murders were Australia’s worst serial killings and media reporting of these murders also referred to other horrific murders most notably that of the ‘Family’ murders but also the Truro murders where seven young women were murdered and buried outside the country town of Truro in South Australia in the late 1970s. The Truro murders were committed by two men who were in a relationship. A media story described them as “Christopher Worrell, a good looking bisexual who had ‘form’ and his current boyfriend, James Miller, who had been picking up the young women, driving them to remote locations and killing them” (O'Brien 2002, p.xvi).

In her book on the Snowtown murders Mitchell (2004) depicts Adelaide as having two sides: the respectable, staid one which coexists with a gruesome and evil shadow. Mitchell also draws on her friends of influence in Adelaide in trying to understand and explain the murders. One of these is Christopher Pearson whom she describes as “One of the city’s characters. He had gone from being a passionate Maoist to a card-carrying neo-conservative, from a lapsed Anglican to a practising Roman Catholic, but he had always maintained his Evelyn Waugh sense of humour. And never denied his homosexuality” (Mitchell 2004, p.45). As mentioned in Chapter Four Pearson chaired one of the community forums against the SHARE project and wrote an opinion piece in *The Australian* newspaper lambasting the sex education program.

Mitchell (2004) also interviews George Gross and Harry Who, a gay couple in Adelaide who have a high profile as fashion designers. These interviews with gay men are used to construct an image of Adelaide as cultivated and tasteful, a counterpoint to the impoverished and brutal northern suburbs that harboured the Snowtown killers and their victims. Their inclusion also serves to provide an alternative discourse on homosexuality; one that is about art, culture, good food and wine. This juxtaposition is reinforced by Mitchell in the following conversation:

Back at Harry and George’s apartment, I explained to them the background to the book. Harry with his usual frankness, said, “I sometimes think I’m fairly intolerant of anyone north of Enfield. They’re not the same. Perhaps I’m becoming a snob in my older

years”. “I don’t think that’s right Harry” said George. “You’ve never been a snob. It’s more a question of never coming into contact with people who live in Elizabeth and around there”. (Mitchell 2004, p.233)

Mitchell’s discussion underlines that there is ‘good and bad’ Adelaide just as there is ‘good and bad’ homosexuality. These simplistic and binary constructions of both ‘place’ and ‘sexuality’ provide an important insight into the ‘psyche’ of Adelaide referred to previously. In a neo-liberal environment those with greater wealth have more status and are configured as more ‘human’ than those who live in poverty in socially disenfranchised areas. In the hierarchy of what constitutes a ‘good gay’, having money and being in a visible couple relationship are at the top. This is one of the reasons that gay marriage is becoming acceptable in some liberal democracies as it codifies the state’s view on what constitutes an ‘acceptable’ gay person and domesticated lifestyle. As I discussed in Chapter Three, those who resist this definition or do not meet its requirements become then illegitimate and even unintelligible to the state (Bell and Binnie 2000).

The Festival of Light used the Snowtown murders as an example of what can happen if the primacy of the ‘natural’ family, that is mother, father and children, is eroded. In an editorial in their newsletter which focussed on the Snowtown murders (charmingly titled *The Stench of Snowtown*) it is claimed that:

The whole horror story is full of distorted values. The 'non' traditional families described in *The Advertiser* Snowtown summary were breeding grounds for child sexual abuse, which in turn bred the most terrible forms of retribution. (Festival of Light 2003)

The ‘stench’ created by this construction of ‘non-traditional’ families as dangerous permeates also to the ‘queer’ family. This can be seen in the refusal to grant people in same sex relationships access to reproductive technology and adoption as well as in the calls to restrict lesbians and particularly gay men from teaching in schools in *loco parentis*. This suggestion that gay men and lesbians ‘reproduce’ themselves through the recruitment of young people echoes anxieties created by eugenics debates about who is ‘fit’ to have children.

The representation of homosexuality, reinforced through the publicity given to the 'Family' and Snowtown murders ensures that the homosexual body remains suspicious and dangerous. The comments made by radio talk-back caller James referred to earlier are a good illustration of this. He manages to link von Einem, a high profile convicted killer, with Don Dunstan a reforming political leader. This link is only understandable if read through the lens of their shared homosexuality, a process that then brings into question Dunstan's status. This link between Dunstan and von Einem was also made by members of the right wing group National Action who put up posters around Adelaide after Dunstan's death that linked him with the 'paedophile' culture and the 'Family killings' (Baird 2001, p.81).

In the next section I continue this exploration of discourses that provided the supportive context for the campaign against the SHARE project through a discussion of how child sexual abuse has been treated in South Australia. This discussion links to the one on homosexuality because publicity about child sexual abuse often gives disproportionate attention to sexual abuse perpetrated by older men on young boys. However as Itzin (2001) highlights, the media has created confusion about child sexual abuse through overuse of the term 'paedophile'. This obscures the fact that fathers that commit incest also often abuse other children and could be defined as paedophiles:

Apart from a minority of men who call themselves the 'man/boy' lovers, who like to regard themselves as 'the only true paedophiles' most of the rest of the child sexual abusers are heterosexual, not homosexual, often 'family' men who abuse both girls and boys, their own and other people's. (Itzin 2001, p.37)

### **6.3 Child sexual abuse and the state**

In the introduction to this chapter I introduced the concept of 'child politics' as a discourse that is deployed to set boundaries in a broad range of social contexts. This politics draws on the social construction of childhood referred to by Jackson and Scott (1999) in the opening epigraph. Childhood is given special status and this requires measures to be taken to protect not only the individual child but also the idealised and sacred concept of 'childhood'.

Ferguson (2004) identifies that formal systems for child protection emerged after the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century which saw masses of people coming

together in towns. This process led to the visibility of poor children exploited by unregulated hours of labour, particularly in the mills. The middle classes then offered 'care' and 'protection' of these children. This protection work was initially undertaken as a form of philanthropic exercise but developed into the professional work category of 'social work'. At the same time the state assumed greater responsibility for the protection of children, including their labour and education. Complex legal systems were developed to regulate child protection.

Any failure by the state in its role as the protector of children causes moral outrage. Ferguson (2004) argues that as with other moral panics, the media plays a crucial role in fuelling this outrage. He notes that:

Since the 1970s every conceivable aspect of child protection and welfare services has been subjected to controversy and placed under intense public scrutiny. I use the general notion of 'scandal' to refer to the process of aggressive media reporting of child protection 'failures' and increasing demands that the state be accountable for preventing them happening again. (Ferguson 2004, p.6)

One of the key areas for protection is the sexual innocence of the child. Some argue that this innocence is maintained through active adult denial of child sexuality (Kitzinger 1988, p.80) whereas others follow the Foucaultian assertion that childhood sexuality (as with all sexuality) is socially constructed and that there is no inherent defining characteristic of childhood sexuality. As I outlined in Chapter Two on the history of sex education, the social hygiene movement was based on a belief in the purity of children and saw sex education as a means to maintain that purity. However, Egan and Hawkes (2007) suggest that the notion of the child deployed by the purity movement actually "shifted between a sentimental figure in need of protection to an object of suspicion and sexual prurience in need of control" (p.443). Those in need of control were overwhelmingly young women who found themselves in prisons or reformatories if they were "judged guilty of sexual misconduct" (Luker 1998, p.625).

Angelides (2004) argues that the recent increase in public concern over child sexual abuse stems from that fact that "in the 1970s the child protection lobby and feminism together spearheaded a painstaking interrogation and politicization of the social problem of child sexual abuse" (p. 141). This assessment of those involved in raising awareness

of child sexual abuse is true for South Australia. It was the women's health movement particularly who mobilised to raise awareness of child sexual abuse. One strategy that achieved this was to focus on adult women who had experienced sexual abuse as a child. Whereas children who have been abused cannot be identified and therefore cannot give a voice to their experiences, adult women were encouraged to break the silence about abuse and talk publicly about their experiences.

In South Australia one of the most high profile child protection lobby groups has been the Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA). This group worked with women's health services to lobby for better services to respond to child sexual abuse and also advocated for legal reform. An example of this was a consultation they conducted which resulted in the release of a report in 1994 called *Not My Shame* (Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse Working Party 1994). This report included stories from women who had been sexually abused as well as recommendations for action to address the issues associated with child sexual abuse.

In South Australia, one legal barrier to pursuing legal justice for people who had experienced sexual abuse decades previously was that a legal time limit existed which prohibited prosecution of old crimes. In 2003, Andrew Evans from the Family First Party, put a bill to the South Australian Parliament known as the *Criminal Law Consolidation (Abolition of Time Limit for Prosecution of Certain Sexual Offences) Amendment Act 2003*, which amended the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935. This allowed the prosecution of sexual offenders who had committed crimes prior to 1982.

As I outlined in Chapter Four it was ASCA (2003) who put out media releases that accused SHine SA of child sexual abuse through likening sex education to the grooming done by paedophiles. Wendy Utting, the author of the ASCA press release against the SHARE project is well known in South Australia for making allegations that there are paedophiles in high places and/or being protected by those in authority<sup>66</sup>. *The Australian* newspaper reported in 2005 that Utting had left ASCA and joined a new hard line child protection group called "Child Protection Watchdog" that aimed to bring "paedophiles to account and extract justice for victims of child sexual abuse" (Bockman 2005).

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<sup>66</sup> In 2005 Utting was charged with criminal defamation after distributing by fax a statutory declaration in which she made such allegations about high profile men in SA, including politicians and police. She was subsequently acquitted of this charge (Dowdell 2008).

Utting's claims about the SHARE project and SHine SA are indicative of the way highly emotional responses are mobilised around the protection of children. Bray notes that feminists too have been accused of "spreading a dangerous paranoia about CSA [child sexual abuse] across the western world" (Bray 2008, p.329). One of the dilemmas in discussing child sexual abuse is how to address the legitimate claims made about the extent of abuse and its harmful effects while at the same time resisting a universalising discourse about the innocence of childhood that seeks to remove sexual desire and agency from children.

Alcoff (1996) argues that Foucault's approach to children's sexuality does little to resolve this dilemma because of his failure to analyse power dynamics in the consent process. She gives the example of young girls who "are often subject to multiple forms of domination based on their class, race, and gender" (p.124). This can lead to consent being given for sexual relations based on need rather than desire. Alcoff (1996) calls for a prohibition on adult-child sex not to protect children's innocence but to enable their developing account of themselves to be "free from the economy of adult sexual desire and adult sexual demands" (p.133).

The state plays an interesting role in this dilemma as it tends to adopt an extremely cautious position on young people's sexuality. Earlier in this chapter I referred to the fact that the legal age of sexual consent is 17 years of age in South Australia. Angelides (2005) points to the discontinuity between age of consent laws that assume a linearity in terms of sexual readiness and the actual age at which young people have sexual experiences. He argues that a measure that relies only on age ignores other factors of sexual readiness such as differences in sexual maturation. Age of consent laws have also often been higher for homosexual relationships which can mean that consenting sexual relationships become criminal and unlawful (Dowsett 1998). This contributes to the tendency to conflate homosexuality with paedophilia, a phenomenon I discussed as part of the 'Family' and 'Snowtown' murders.

As in other states in Australia and also particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, there have been high profile inquiries conducted into allegations of all forms of child abuse in both state and religious institutions. In South Australia these took place at the same time as the SHARE project was being introduced which enabled the

conservative groups to evoke the highly charged image of the abused child which was in the public imagination through these inquiries. The anxiety created was not only that abuse takes place by people who should be trusted with the care of children but that the state is complicit in that abuse and can therefore not be trusted to respond to the needs of children, particularly in the area of sexuality.

In South Australia the current Rann Labor Government explicitly signalled that it is a government that cares about children. One of its first actions on attaining office in 2002 was to hold an inquiry into the child protection systems in South Australia and make recommendations for their improvement. This review, conducted by Judge Robin Layton QC (known as The Layton Report) contained 206 recommendations for improving the child protection systems in South Australia (Layton 2003). The Layton Report was released in March 2003, the year in which there were also two high profile inquiries into sexual abuse within religious settings in South Australia.

One of these inquiries was into the Adelaide Anglican diocese's handling of complaints of sexual abuse and misconduct which was set up in July 2003 and reported on in May 2004. The final report was considered so serious by the Labor Government that it tabled it in Parliament on 31<sup>st</sup> May thereby making it a public document. The need for the inquiry was given impetus by the high profile sexual abuse cases involving a former church youth worker, the late Robert Brandenburg who was alleged to have sexually abused at least 80 young boys. Brandenburg also made regular trips to Tasmania with members of the Church of England Boys Society and also abused boys there. He committed suicide in 1999 and the Anglican Church subsequently provided financial compensation through out of court settlements with his victims.

However it was the criticism of the handling of another case of sexual abuse, at an Adelaide Anglican school, that led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Adelaide in 2004. The inquiry found that the Reverend Ian George had been too lenient on a priest who was alleged to have sexually abused a young male student (Olsson and Chung 2004). The release of the inquiry findings led to an outcry that the abuser was encouraged by the Archbishop to leave the country thereby making a police investigation difficult. Ian George was attacked by politicians as well as child protection advocates for allegedly protecting the abuser and eventually bowed to pressure and resigned.

The other major religious inquiry in South Australia was one conducted into the way that the Catholic Church had dealt with allegations of child sexual abuse at an Adelaide school for intellectually disabled children. The Church later admitted that it had failed in its duty of care by employing a convicted paedophile, who worked as a bus driver and handyman at St Ann's Special School from 1986 to 1991. The report revealed that the former principal of the school, the board of management and the Catholic Education Office did little more than note that serious allegations of sexual abuse involving students at the school had been made against an employee (*The Age* 4<sup>th</sup> June 2004).

At a state level a Commission of Inquiry into children sexually abused while in state care was established in November 2004 after extensive lobbying for many years by groups such as ASCA. This Children in State Care Inquiry (known as the Mullighan Inquiry) heard evidence from people who, as children, had been abused in state care and as a result the SA Police set up a Paedophile Task Force to investigate the claims of sexual abuse. This action was made possible because of the aforementioned change to the law which allows cases older than 1982 to be investigated and prosecuted. I discuss the findings of the Mullighan inquiry in more detail in the next chapter as it has particular implications for the direction of sex education programs in South Australia through the focus it gives to sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities in South Australia.

Another significant inquiry into child sexual abuse in Australia was undertaken in Queensland which led to the eventual resignation of the Governor General of Australia, Archbishop Peter Hollingworth in 2004. Hollingworth was criticized for his failure to respond adequately to allegations of child sexual abuse in an Anglican school in Brisbane during his time as Archbishop of Brisbane in the 1990s. He was also particularly condemned for comments he made in relation to one particular case of abuse where he appeared to attribute sexual responsibility to a young woman who had been sexually abused by a priest. This inquiry had a South Australian connection and a connection to the campaign against the SHARE project because Professor Freda Briggs was a member of the investigating committee.

The recent inquiries in Australia have served to reinforce the notion that abusers are everywhere in the public arena: schools, churches, welfare agencies and even in the police force and Parliament. Notably government inquiries have not been called to investigate abuse by family members despite its prevalence. The inquiry model relies on

people 'telling their story of abuse', a story that is alleged not to have been 'heard' before, despite possibly having been told previously. In telling this story it is important that those who are hearing it are seen to understand and respond appropriately. As the Hollingworth and George cases show it is not just their perceived failures while responsible for the safety of students in religious schools that led to community concerns and their eventual resignations. It was the fact that they appeared to minimise and disregard the experiences of those who have been abused.

Ken Plummer (1995) argues that stories about sex, including those that include experiences of abuse and rape, are shaped by the culture and politics in which these stories are told. He argues that "Different moments have highlighted different stories" (p.4). Given the greater visibility of stories from those who have experienced sexual abuse as children, which has been facilitated through the public inquiry process, it would appear that the moment for 'confessions' of abuse (as victims rather than abusers) came to the fore in Australia in the late 1990s/early 2000s. These stories have in turn assisted in creating new identities not only for those who have experienced abuse, who are now referred to as survivors rather than victims, but also for the state itself which is now firmly cast in the role of protector of its most vulnerable citizens: the children.

The telling of the 'abuse' story is not without its complications. While the stories can be used to argue for more resources for counselling and other support services, paradoxically they can also serve to fetishize a particular form of childhood innocence. Kincaid (1998) argues that the more we search for ways to identify paedophiles, the greater the implication that children are sexually attractive, which then paradoxically locates an irrepressible sexual agency within the child. This Freudian image unsettles the construction of the 'innocent child' and also has the potential to disrupt the relationship between parent and child.

The opponents to the SHARE project construct childhood as the 'property' of parents. This is evident in the advertisement placed in the *Port Lincoln Times* which said "Theft of Children? Some government educators want to steal your children's values and thinking away from *you*" (Sept 18th 2003 emphasis added). In this construction of childhood, the violation by the state is of the parent as well as the child, a notion that stems from the neo-liberal belief that the state does not have a right to intrude into the private realm of the family.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the social, political and cultural context which shaped how the controversy about the SHARE project was both produced and managed in South Australia. I have explored the genealogy of discourses relating to homosexuality and child sexual abuse to highlight how the conservative groups were able to draw on these discourses to evoke fear and anxiety about the SHARE project. I have demonstrated that in the year the SHARE project was introduced, South Australia was saturated with images of the vulnerable child who was at risk not only from adults but from the state itself. The importance of the family, which is held up as the natural protector of the child, was also perceived as being under threat through claims being made for recognition of same sex relationships and gay parenting. The conservative groups created controversy about the SHARE project as a way to draw public attention to what they argued was 'social engineering' that was destroying the 'natural' family unit.

Management of risk has been a key feature of the response to sexuality in South Australia. These risks include the age at which young people have sex as well as the managerial risks for state institutions of publicly failing to adequately protect young people from harm. In South Australia, as in other developed countries, significant attention has been given to improving the systems for preventing and responding to child abuse. However, protecting the rights of other citizens, such as those who are in same sex relationships, has not been accorded the same priority. Queer US theorist, Lisa Duggan (2006) argues that:

We know who really has special rights. In fact, the state is deeply involved in regulating and 'promoting' heterosexuality. It is queers who have been excluded from the benefits of state support in all kinds of areas, from tax law to education to support for cultural production, and more. (Duggan and Hunter 2006, p.179)

The controversy over SHARE needs to be interrogated for what it says about the sexual politics in South Australia at the time the campaign took place as well as the meaning it holds for how sexuality will be governed in the future. In the next and final chapter I move my focus to the future through providing an update on the achievements of the SHARE project through to its cessation in 2005 and looking at the direction sex education programs have taken to address current anxieties about young people's

sexuality. These include new initiatives for Aboriginal young people and inclusion of content to address the sexualisation of children in the media. I analyse the micro and macro political context that is shaping this education and explore the possibilities for education that is more inclusive of pleasure as part of an ethical engagement with both self and social transformation.

*Treating sexuality as something separate from political economy ignores the fact that health care access, affordable housing, adequate nutrition, safe environments, and secure livelihoods are indispensable for safe and pleasurable erotic experience to be real.*  
(Correa, Petchesky and Parker 2008, p.220)

## **Chapter 7:**

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### **Don't mention the 'S'(HARE) word: exploring alternative approaches and possibilities for sex education in South Australia**

This chapter summarises the meanings that can be drawn from the campaign against the SHARE project and the implications these have for the future of sex education programs in South Australia. As in previous chapters I undertake this task through investigating the micro environment for sex education that exists today in South Australia and surveying the latest international context for sexuality education. This is consistent with my argument that while the campaign against the SHARE project had its own local political and cultural dynamics, these drew on and spoke into wider discourses relating to sexuality. It is therefore necessary to examine both the 'local' and the 'global' in order to understand the constraints and possibilities that might exist for sex education programs.

The chapter begins by discussing the outcomes of the evaluation of the SHARE project, completed in 2006, and the direction the project has taken since this time. I ceased working for SHine SA in 2006 and so have not recently been involved in sex education in South Australia. To get an update on the direction this education has taken I interviewed SHine SA staff<sup>67</sup> in July 2009 and was informed that the project had attracted increased financial resources from the Health Department, it had changed its name and SHine SA had responded strategically to new outbreaks of panic about the safety of children.

All these changes have taken place without any significant opposition from the conservative groups who orchestrated the campaign against the SHARE project. In this Chapter I interrogate the current silence from the opponent groups to identify what might have been different in 2003 that produced the loud and public controversy over the

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Jane Flentje, Coordinator Teacher Education and Helen Rawnsley, Coordinator Focus Schools, SHine SA.

SHARE project. In particular I examine the way conservative anxieties about the proposed legal recognition of same sex relationships and the political instability that existed in South Australia at that time both fuelled the controversy.

The other issue that facilitated the moral panic about the SHARE project was the suggestion that SHine SA was implementing a project that could harm children. In the previous chapter I referred to recent government inquiries into child abuse which took place at the time the SHARE project was introduced which contributed to these discourses on the vulnerability of children. In section three of this chapter I describe two subsequent inquiries in more detail as both of these have influenced the direction for sex education programs in South Australia. The first inquiry was undertaken in 2008 by the Federal Senate and examined the sexualisation of children in the media. The second inquiry took place into child sexual abuse in South Australian Aboriginal communities.

SHine SA has responded to the recommendations of these inquiries by including strategies to address Aboriginal young people's sexual health and young people's sexualisation in the media in its expanded sex education program. While the intention of SHine SA's response is to achieve positive outcomes for young people, it does again carry the risk of framing sex education only within the discourses of risk and danger thereby possibly foreclosing the availability of other discourses such as desire and pleasure. I discuss this dilemma through exploring whether recent literature on sex education which draws on Foucault's concepts of ethics and pleasure offers useful alternative directions for sex education programs. As I discussed in Chapter One, Foucault recommended a turn to pleasure both as an aesthetic technique for living and to challenge notions of sexuality built around repression of desire (Foucault 1978, p.157). This recommendation has been taken up by queer scholars who argue that a move away from 'sex-desire' towards 'bodies and pleasure' can liberate pleasure from the binary identity categories of hetero/homosexuality (Rubin 1984; Rasmussen 2003).

I argue that while an ethics based on the 'care of the self' provides a useful starting point for moving away from a morality based on religious codes of conduct, it is also important that attention is given to the power relationships that influence the opportunities for this self transformation. As Correa, Petchesky and Parker (2008) state in the epigraph to this chapter, sexuality and pleasure cannot be disconnected from the political economy in which bodies and communities are located. In Australia this political economy is shaped

by the colonial history of the country and I argue that an ethical approach to sex education must take into account regimes of power associated with race as well as gender, sexual identity, class, disability and geography.

While there has been an expansion of sex education programs in South Australia since the end of the SHARE project, they will continue to be subject to scrutiny from conservative groups and the discourses of ‘family values’ and ‘the innocent child’ will still exert influence on what is possible to present in a classroom. In particular, challenging the heteronormative space of schools and acknowledging pleasure and desire will continue to be a struggle. Perhaps one of the biggest lessons from the SHARE project is that it is important to be vigilant about the political context for sex education and to be prepared to develop alternative discourses and ways to resist the constraints that are placed on this education.

In the next section I highlight the current micro political context for sex education in South Australia through describing the issues that impacted both upon the final evaluation of the SHARE project and the planning process for sex education programs in South Australia. Section two then analyses the political context from a macro political level by exploring what impact, if any, the election of Kevin Rudd in Australia and Barack Obama in the United States, may have on conservative anxieties about the ‘family’ and gay rights and the implications this has for sex education.

### **7.1 From ‘SHARE’ to ‘Focus’ schools: the current status of sex education programs in South Australia**

In 2006 SHine SA organised a national conference on relationships and sexual health education called ‘Teaching It Like It Is’. This conference included a keynote speaker from the Sex Education Forum in the United Kingdom and presentations from a range of workers involved in sex education in Australia. It also included active participation from young people. Roslyn Phillips and Trevor Grace, the key organizers of the campaign against the SHARE project attended the conference and listened attentively and quietly to the feedback session on the final evaluation of the SHARE project which included a critique of the effects of their campaign (Johnson 2006).

This event took place during the last week of my employment at SHine SA and served as a fitting conclusion to the SHARE project which ceased to exist as a separate ‘project’ in

December 2005. The conference enabled attention to be focussed on the positive achievements of the project and also illustrated that the moral panic about the project had passed. Johnson (2006) suggests that one important reason was that the “key media outlets in Adelaide lost interest in the SHARE story” (p.29) and it therefore became harder for the opponents to get public attention for their concerns.

The evaluation process itself was affected by the political focus on the project. In the original design for the project a comprehensive evaluation plan was put in place by La Trobe University which included pre and post surveys with students in three ‘SHARE’ and three ‘comparison’ schools. It also included qualitative interviews with parents and teachers in three ‘SHARE’ schools. This evaluation process relied on being able to survey students in schools on a number of occasions. This proved problematic due to the change to the consent process for the SHARE lessons. This change meant that some schools had to administer two separate consent processes, one for participation in the SHARE lessons and the other for participation in the evaluation surveys. As a result the number of surveys completed was reduced.

This quantitative evaluation did not capture any significant changes in young people’s behaviour or knowledge. The evaluators from La Trobe University found that “from the data that are available, it is difficult to comment on changes in the students’ knowledge and understanding about sex and sexual health as a result of their participation in the SHARE project” (Dyson and Fox 2006, p.31). They concluded that “the SHARE program has demonstrably not harmed the students who participated in it and appears to have offered them some benefits” (p.33). Dyson and Fox (2006) emphasized that the lack of evidence of a positive effect on the sexual health knowledge and behaviour of the students was likely to reflect the difficulty in capturing such information rather than any deficit in the program itself. This is consistent with other critiques of evaluation processes that point to the difficulties of getting evidence of immediate positive health outcomes from quantitative evaluations of sex education programs (Kirby 2007; Kippax and Stephenson 2005).

For SHine SA the equivocal finding of the quantitative evaluation was a problem. Vicki Chapman, the Shadow Minister for Education, had continually asked questions about the surveys and was requesting a copy of the evaluation report and the SA Education Department was also keen to be able to demonstrate ‘success’. While SHine SA had

been collecting its own data from schools<sup>68</sup> which showed a high level of satisfaction from both students and teachers, this had little legitimacy as it was not seen to be independent. To address this problem SHine SA commissioned a separate independent qualitative evaluation that sought to identify which features of the SHARE project were most useful to schools and to specify dilemmas and tensions that the schools faced in implementing the project. This evaluation was done by Professor Bruce Johnson from the University of South Australia who had previously been contracted by the SA Education Department to review the implementation of the child protection curriculum.

As discussed in the previous chapter the SA Education Department responded to the campaign against the SHARE project by mounting a public performance of risk management. SHine SA recognised that an additional independent evaluation process carried out by an appropriate ‘expert’ would assist with this risk management and increase the likelihood of Departmental support for SHine SA’s future work on sex education. The results of Bruce Johnson’s evaluation (2006) which concluded that the SHARE project “constitutes an exemplary model of a comprehensive sexual health and relationships program” (p.33) and that the “wider dissemination of the SHARE program should now proceed “(p.34) was therefore very helpful to this process.

At the end of 2005 SHine SA submitted a proposal for ongoing work with schools to the SA Education Department. The proposal included an expansion of the ‘SHARE’ model of sex education to more schools in the state as well as the development of curriculum materials for primary school children. Each of the different elements of this proposal was subject to a risk assessment by Departmental staff who emphasized that this was needed to ensure that there was no repeat of the controversy that had taken place over the SHARE project.

As a result of these assessments two decisions were made. One was to remove any reference to the word ‘SHARE’. The schools who volunteered to receive curriculum support, teacher training and resources from SHine SA were now to be called ‘Focus schools’. The name ‘SHARE’ and its associated controversy were relegated to the past so that they did not contaminate the ongoing sex education program. The Department

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<sup>68</sup> For example, over 14,000 students participated in the lessons, 314 teachers were trained by SHine SA to deliver the SHARE curriculum and 76% of students who were surveyed after the lessons rated the course as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ (SHine SA 2005).

also made it clear that the proposed extension of this type of program to primary schools was ‘very risky’ due to the age of the students and the consequent potential it gave for conservative groups to sensationally claim that even younger children were now being exposed to inappropriate sex education. The Department therefore did not support SHine SA’s formal involvement in the development of primary school curriculum.

At the time this discussion was taking place the SA Education Department was in the process of implementing its own child protection curriculum from early childhood to senior years. The elements of this approach to child protection are detailed in the *Keeping Them Safe* framework (Government of South Australia 2004) which outlines the Rann Labor Government’s reform agenda on child protection. The SA Education Department’s role in this framework is to train its teachers on mandatory reporting and also to implement curriculum that can assist children to understand what sexual abuse is and report it if it happens to them.

The Coordinator of Teacher Education at SHine SA was on the reference committee for the development of this curriculum and was disappointed that no formal links were made between this curriculum, which addresses children’s bodies only as a site of potential danger, and broader sexuality education programs that aim to prepare young people for future and hopefully positive sexual relationships. The current situation in relation to primary school education in South Australia therefore is that there is compulsory and well coordinated implementation of child protection curriculum and *ad hoc* implementation of other education programs on sexuality and relationships.

The approach within secondary school sex education is different because SHine SA has received additional funding from the Health Department to support secondary schools to implement a comprehensive approach to relationships and sexual health education. As a result of this funding SHine SA has employed additional teachers to work on the ‘Focus’ schools program and by July 2009, 80 schools had volunteered to be a ‘Focus’ school. This includes the original 15 schools which were part of the SHARE project. Schools are encouraged to implement the same range of strategies that were used in the SHARE project, such as implementation of curriculum over three years, compulsory teacher training and parent education sessions. However SHine SA staff report that many schools only implement the curriculum over two years and do not give as much attention to issues such as homophobia and sexual harassment as was required in the original

SHARE project. That is, the topics within the program that actually challenge power relations within schools continue to be considered as too ‘sensitive’ or ‘difficult’ to implement.

The teacher resource manual that was subject to extensive scrutiny by the opponent groups is now used by all 80 schools. This manual is again in the process of being updated and changes will include more scenarios on cyber dating and bullying and activities that focus on sexual violence and sexualisation of young people in the media. The other major change to SHine SA’s sex education programs is that considerable additional funding has been received to adapt this program for use in Aboriginal schools both within an urban context and on the remote Aboriginal owned Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in northern South Australia.

## **7.2 Sexuality, religion and politics: reviewing the current context for sex education programs**

As I discussed in Chapter Two, at the time that the SHARE project was implemented, both Australia and the United States had experienced many years of conservative leadership under John Howard and George W Bush respectively. These leaders had a close personal friendship and had taken similar moral positions and actions on issues such as gay marriage and the ‘war on terrorism’. In addition the US Administration had politically and financially supported the abstinence until marriage movement both within the United States and in other countries such as Uganda. Correa, Petchesky and Parker (2008) report that under President Bush “...the US government systematically manipulated data on Uganda in order to use it as scientific evidence on the efficacy of abstinence-only strategy, and later on, to restrict the provision of condoms in the country” (p. 40).

While the influence of Christian Right groups on sex education in Australia has been significantly less than in the United States, Australian groups still rely on global discourses on abstinence to make their claims. This can be seen in the following statement on abstinence by Roslyn Phillips (2004) from the Festival of Light:

Abstinence as a concept means that a man and a woman refrain from sexual intercourse until they have made a lifelong commitment to support each other (otherwise known as marriage). It is this abstinence concept which has provided such a remarkable success in

Uganda, where the HIV/AIDS rate has plummeted in the last decade while other African countries which only promote condoms have seen the HIV/AIDS rate increase. (Phillips 2004, p.2)

Di Mauro and Joffe (2007), writing before the election of Barack Obama on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2008, suggest that the religious right in the United States may have overreached themselves in their continued opposition to issues such as stem cell research and their continued politicisation of abortion, contraception and sex education. They speculate that “perhaps it is not too far fetched to expect a new moral panic to arise among Americans in reaction to the unacceptable intrusions of the Religious Right into the most private sphere of people’s lives” (p.86). Based on this analysis it could be argued that the election of Barack Obama reflects a backlash against the religious right and a victory for progressive politics in the United States.

However Obama’s election also coincided with the successful passing of four propositions against gay marriage which troubles this claim. The proposition that received the most publicity was Proposition 8 in California which reversed a ruling from the California Supreme Court which had earlier declared that banning same sex marriage was discriminatory. One of the features of the election process in California was that the large numbers of African-American voters who assisted in getting Barack Obama elected also voted in favour of Proposition 8 (Audi, Scheck and Lawton 2008). Barack Obama (2008) himself has been a long time opponent of same sex marriage (p.223) and therefore while the election of Obama has already resulted in progressive social policy changes (such as lifting the ban on funding of abortion in the US aid programs), it does not necessarily follow that Obama’s election represents a significant change in other aspects of the relationship between conservative religious values and politics in the United States.

In both the United States and Australia there has been a conscious effort by some religious and political groups to realign Christianity with progressive politics. Both President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd publicly identify themselves as Christians and have articulated the need to shift the discussion of values away from the sexuality topics that have traditionally excited conservative religious voters (Macklin 2007; Obama 2008). It has also been argued that the religious right itself is moving beyond a narrowly focussed sexual politics to embrace issues such as the environment and poverty and that as a result the evangelical churches are moving to the left (Religion

Report 2008). This is a view strongly articulated by the US preacher and writer Jim Wallis who argues in favour of a robust Christianity that takes on what he calls ‘secular fundamentalists’ as well as ‘religious fundamentalists’. Wallis (2005) believes that “In politics, the best interest of the country is served when the prophetic voice of religion is heard challenging both Right and Left from consistent moral ground” (p.18). Kevin Rudd refers to Wallis’s book in the essay he wrote prior to the 2007 election in which he articulates a vision for Christianity which places emphasis on addressing issues for the poor and vulnerable (cited in Macklin 2007, p.224).

Despite these changes in political leadership and the claims that religious attention is now focussed on other important issues such as poverty and the environment, issues relating to sexuality continue to be contentious for those Christian Right groups who see their key role as defending the natural family unit. For example, the Christian Right activist Bill Muehlenberg (2009) who maintains the website called ‘culture watch’ in Australia, recently decried the Rudd Government’s decisions to remove a man who made homophobic statements from a voluntary position as a Men’s Health Ambassador and to add a homosexual man to the group. From these actions he concluded that, “the homosexual lobby is holding the Rudd Government to ransom”. Muehlenberg also sees a deliberate conspiracy of deception of Christian voters by the Rudd Government. He argues that “the tactics of winning over our religious voters paid off. Labor knew that most people wouldn’t have a clue what the real Labor agenda was, and that social justice rhetoric would manage to fool many. So what we are now witnessing is simply what many of us warned about” (Muehlenberg 2009).

However other Christian Right groups appear to be reassured by the social conservatism of Kevin Rudd. The Australian Christian Lobby Group, which is based in Canberra, was one of the organizers of the National Marriage Forum in 2004. This group has continually opposed any legal changes that could give same sex partners access to marriage or civil partnership. The Rudd Labor Government has supported this stance and has used its constitutional powers to overrule an attempt to introduce civil partnerships in the Australian Capital Territory. At the most recent Labor Party National Conference, held in August 2009, the Labor Party again reiterated that they did not support any action that in any way undermines the institution of marriage as defined in the *Commonwealth Marriage Act* (Franklin 2009). Jim Wallace (not to be confused with the US Jim Wallis) from the Australian Christian Lobby Group publicly applauded this statement from the

Labor Party and attributed the policy decision to the personal faith of Kevin Rudd (Wallace 2009).

As I outlined in Chapter Three, the issue of gay marriage has been contentious not only for Christian groups but also for the gay, lesbian and queer communities. Lisa Duggan argues that “some gay groups are producing rhetoric that insults and marginalizes unmarried people” and warns that if marriage is pursued in this way “the drive for gay-marriage equality can undermine rather than support the broader movement for social justice and democratic diversity” (Duggan and Hunter 2006, p.228). I agree with Duggan’s concerns that the promotion of ‘marriage’ as the only legitimate and respectable way to form a relationship can in fact stigmatise those who (for various reasons) may live outside of any form of marriage-like relationship. However I am also troubled by the fact that in Australia same sex relationships are only able to be recognised through administrative laws and not through publicly recognised ceremonies such as civil partnerships and/or marriage. The Rudd Government’s veto of any public act of recognition for same sex relationships serves to construct a state law (the *Commonwealth Marriage Act*) as something that is inherently part of a religious ritual, regardless of whether the marriage is actually performed by a priest. This is an example of the continuing influence of religion within politics in Australia.

In section one of this chapter I described Bruce Johnson’s (2006) theory that the moral panic about the SHARE project subsided because the media lost interest in the story. A major factor that contributed to the loss of media attention was the fact the conservative groups turned their attention away from the SHARE project and towards the *Relationships Bill* introduced by the Rann Labor Government in 2004. This Bill aimed to amend laws to remove discrimination against same sex couples. However before the Bill was passed it was referred to the Social Development Committee of Parliament for its report and recommendations (Social Development Committee 2005). This process occupied considerable time for the Christian groups and conservative political parties in South Australia who opposed the Bill and while it enabled these groups to again exhibit their homophobic beliefs in a public forum<sup>69</sup> it did mean that they did not continue to give the same level of attention to the SHARE project.

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<sup>69</sup> One South Australian journalist commented that “the committee’s hearings have seen some of the most obvious gay bashing in SA in decades” and noted that “it seems there are politicians too worried about preferences from the Right at the next election to openly condemn their views” (Kennedy 2005).

The Report of the Committee was released in May 2005, however the Rann Government did not actually put a new Bill (called the *Domestic Partners Bill*) into Parliament until after the state election held in March 2006. The delay in introducing the Bill angered the gay and lesbian community but ensured that conservative groups in South Australia could not use this issue to campaign against the Labor Party. The Family First Party Members of Parliament worked with other conservative Members of Parliament to ensure that the *Domestic Partners Bill* gave only minimal rights to people in same sex relationships. The Bill did not introduce civil partnerships and it also did not support gay adoptions or assisted reproduction for lesbians.

These debates about gay marriage and same sex law reform are relevant to the discussion about the current political context for sex education as they illustrate that in 2003, when the SHARE project was introduced, there was considerable anxiety among Christian groups that Australia would follow the lead of other countries (such as the United Kingdom) and introduce civil partnerships and even possibly gay marriage. This concern was placated to some extent by the changes made to the *Marriage Act* by John Howard in 2004 and by Kevin Rudd's public opposition to gay marriage and civil partnerships. The limited success of gay and lesbian groups to achieve equal rights with opposite sex couples in the area of parenting, also reassured some conservative Christian groups about any imminent destruction of the 'family' and also the 'dangers of homosexuality'. One result of this is that even though some 'cultural warriors' such as Bill Muehlenberg still argue that the 'homosexual lobby' is destroying children, there is less likelihood that such claims will carry much influence amongst more moderate Christians.

In presenting this analysis for the current lack of overt Christian Right activism against comprehensive sex education in South Australia I am of course reporting on events that I find quite depressing. Those political actions that have reassured conservatives rely on the diminishing of human rights for gay and lesbian people. This is the same issue that I referred to in my discussion on the implications for changing the *Teach It Like It Is Manual* so that the amount of content on same sex relationships was reduced.

The lack of real political commitment to the gay and lesbian and queer citizens of South Australia was also made visible to me in 2005 through my role as chair of a Ministerial Council on Gay and Lesbian Health<sup>70</sup>. This Council had been formed in the previous year by the then Health Minister, Lea Stevens and part of its role was to advise the Minister on action that the government could take to counter homophobia in the community. The Council members produced a report with recommendations and presented it to a new Health Minister, John Hill, in 2005. However this Minister did not think it was politically advisable to support any of the recommendations in the report, particularly in the lead up to the 2006 election. The Council continued to meet until 2008 but was then disbanded by Minister Hill without seeing any of its recommendations implemented.

The reluctance of the Labor Government in South Australia to visibly support gay and lesbian concerns, including legal recognition of same sex relationships, prior to the 2006 election reflects the importance given to the religious vote in South Australia. This dynamic was also evident in the campaign against the SHARE project where the conservative Liberal Party courted religious constituents through strategically aligning themselves with Andrew Evans, at that time the only Family First Party Member of Parliament. This strategy was not successful for the Liberal Party as the Labor Party, led by Mike Rann, stormed “out from the shadows of minority government to record a decisive victory” in the 2006 election (Anderson and Manning 2006, p.631). However it was not only the Labor Party who was satisfied with what they achieved in the election. The Family First Party secured one further seat in the Legislative Council and did this through “driving hard bargains for their preferences”<sup>71</sup> (Anderson and Manning 2006, p.638). These bargains were based on trying to secure commitments from both the Labor and Liberal Parties to pursue ‘family friendly’ policies.

A perceived reduction in the threat of ‘homosexuality’ to the family is not the only issue that has reassured some of the Christian Right activists in Australia. The other change that has taken place is that the actions and discourses of conservative and progressive groups have become aligned through their common concerns about the protection of

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<sup>70</sup> This Council was called ‘Gay and Lesbian’ but also did address issues for bisexual, transgender, and intersex people as well.

<sup>71</sup> Australia’s compulsory and ‘preferential’ voting system allows smaller parties and independent candidates some power by making deals with the major parties to swap preferences. This increases the effective size of the major party’s vote and enables the small parties to secure promises on the policies that will be pursued by the major party should it win government.

children. In the previous chapter I explored how discourses on the ‘innocent child’ were deployed to create fear about the SHARE project. In the next section I analyse some of the recent events in an expanded ‘child politics’ agenda in Australia to illustrate the impact these have had on producing a new consensus for sex education programs in South Australia.

### **7.3 Recent development in ‘child politics’ in Australia and its influence on sex education**

In November 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd will be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Australian Christian Lobby<sup>72</sup>. The theme of the conference is “Building a Nation of Character” and the Prime Minister will be speaking on “The Best Interests of the Child” in public policy. Kevin Rudd has been an outspoken proponent on the need for greater protection for children, particularly in regard to sexual imagery. In May 2008 he was asked to comment on the fact that a well known photographic artist, Bill Henson, had exhibited work of naked adolescents. On being shown a copy of one of the photos Rudd is reported to have said, “Kids deserve to have the innocence of their childhood protected. I have a very deep view of this. For God’s sake let’s just allow kids to be kids” (Rudd cited in Marr 2008, p.47).

The controversy about Henson’s photographs came after extensive public debates on the sexualisation of children in the media evoked by the release of two discussion papers by The Australia Institute<sup>73</sup>. The first of these was titled *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of Children in the Media* (Rush and Nauze 2006a) and was followed by *Letting Children be Children: Stopping the Sexualisation of Children in Australia* (Rush and Nauze 2006b). These discussion papers attracted significant media attention and in March 2008 the Senate of the Federal Parliament established an inquiry which examined factors that led to the premature sexualisation of children in the media, reviewed the outcomes of this sexualisation and:

...examined strategies to prevent and /or reduce the sexualisation of children in the media and the effectiveness of different approaches in ameliorating its effects, including

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<sup>72</sup> Reported in the Australian Christian Lobby newsletter, August 2009.

<sup>73</sup> The Australia Institute describes itself as a progressive think tank whose role is to “conduct research on a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues in order to inform public debate and bring greater accountability to the democratic process”. For more information on The Australia Institute see <https://www.tai.org.au/?q=node/1>

the role of school-based sexuality and reproductive health education. (Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts 2008, p.2)

Rush and La Nauze's (2006a) analysis of the 'problem' of the sexualisation of children in the media relies on familiar discourses about the corruption of the innocence of children and the threat of paedophilia. They argue that "children may be encouraged to initiate sexual behaviour at an earlier age" and that "because sex is widely represented in advertising and marketing as something that fascinates and delights adults, the sexualisation of children could play a role in 'grooming' children for paedophiles" (2006a, p.ix). Egan and Hawkes (2008) argue that Rush and La Nauze's "conceptualization of the problem and their policy recommendations rely on the same epistemological assumptions which guided the social reform movements at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (p.308). In particular they are critical of the way that Rush and La Nauze (2006a) position children's sexuality as risky and dangerous and "defined as such in terms of adult (male) desire rather than in terms of their own subjectivity and awareness" (p.313). This analysis echoes the concerns I raised earlier in this chapter where I outlined how younger children in state schools in South Australia are having compulsory child protection lessons but little other formal education on sexuality and relationships that might enable sexuality to be understood as something enjoyable and positive.

The Senate Committee was not able to establish that sexual harm could be definitively linked to sexualised images of children in the media and advertising. The Committee argued that it was difficult to "disentangle the specific roles played by family, school, friends, society at large and the media in forming attitudes" (Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and Arts 2008, p.9). The Committee received more than 160 submissions and also invited a range of groups and 'experts' to give oral submissions. Those who presented to the Committee were drawn from the media and advertising industry, and included a psychologist, media and cultural studies academics, a conservative women's group (Women's Forum Australia) as well as those working in the area of sexual health and relationships, including SHine SA.

In the presentation to this Committee the Chief Executive Officer of SHine SA, Kaisu Vartto, drew on the SHARE model to promote the importance of comprehensive sexual health and relationships education<sup>74</sup>. In their final report the Committee found that:

The committee believes that the SHARE program and overseas experience amply demonstrate the benefits that can flow from sexual health and relationships education, both in encouraging responsible sexual behaviour and in equipping children to deal with the pressures placed on them in contemporary society. A vital component of such programs is education that enables young people to think critically about the media images and constructions that this report has been examining. (Paragraph 6.38)

One member of the Committee, the Family First Party Senator Steve Fielding, was unhappy with the Committee report because it did not accept the premise that children were being harmed by the media and did not make recommendations that would set greater limits on the media industry (Fielding 2008). The Australian Family Association (2008) argued that:

The Committee also allowed itself to be swayed by various Kinseyan activist organizations which partly hijacked the inquiry to push for mandatory comprehensive sex education. Shine SA and other similar groups argued that this would help young people negotiate sexualising media and marketing. However, such programs often use sexualization as a core modus operandi.

Despite these conservative cautions about the work of an organisation such as SHine SA, the public expression of anxiety created about the sexualisation of children through both the media debates of The Australia Institute discussion papers and the Senate Inquiry process positioned comprehensive sex education as an important strategy to protect young people. SHine SA responded to this issue through producing a lesson plan for teachers and a visual resource that can be used to engage young people in critical analysis of advertising images, particularly in regard to gender roles. These will be included in an updated edition of the teacher resource manual.

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<sup>74</sup> It is noteworthy that despite concerns by the SA Education Department that schools should no longer be called 'SHARE' schools, within this national environment use of the title (SHARE) was seen to be beneficial as it had become well known due to the media attention it had received as a result of the controversy.

This response brings SHine SA into a different relationship with conservative groups as it positions SHine SA as an agency that is taking action on the possible negative effects of the 'premature sexualisation' of young people and is therefore in agreement with conservative groups that there is indeed a problem to be addressed. The Senate Committee public affirmation of the work of SHine SA also assists to counter the claims by some Christian Right groups that the organisation is a radical organisation promoting dangerous sexual practices and identities. However this affirmation comes with the 'cost' of re-inscribing sexuality within a risk discourse.

I now want to move to another very different form of government inquiry; one that had a focus on the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children. My purpose in referring to this inquiry is to provide additional information on the context for the future approach to sex education in South Australia and also to begin a discussion of the relationship between technologies of sexuality and race that I pursue further in the next section. So far in this thesis I have addressed difference primarily in terms of sexual identity and gender but have not explicitly discussed the impact that race and culture have on discourses about young people's sexuality. As Stoler (1995) identifies, "the discursive and practical field in which bourgeois sexuality emerged was situated on an imperial landscape where the cultural accoutrements of bourgeois distinction were partially shaped through contrasts forged in the politics and language of race" (p.5).

In Australia, the effects of colonialism continue to shape every aspect of Aboriginal people's lives, including their ability to manage their own sexuality and reproductive choices, and are implicated also in the experiences of sexual abuse described below (Watson 2007; Arabena 2006). In discussing the issue of child sexual abuse I am not suggesting that this is anything other than an act of violence to children. That is, the experience of child sexual abuse should not be considered something that is part of children's sexuality. However discourses about child sexual abuse, as I discussed in the previous chapter, contribute to defining the sort of education children and young people receive on sexuality.

In the previous chapter I referred briefly to the Children in State Care Inquiry (known as the Mullighan Inquiry) which began in South Australia in 2004. The Mullighan Inquiry heard evidence that many Aboriginal children had been sexually abused but it was not able to investigate these claims as the children were not living in state care. The South

Australian Parliament amended the Children in State Care Inquiry legislation in June 2007 to include sexual abuse of children on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands<sup>75</sup> and appointed the same Commissioner, Hon EP Mullighan QC to investigate the extent of abuse in the communities on the Lands.

Unlike the Children in State Care Inquiry the APY Inquiry did not hear any direct first-hand testimonies of sexual abuse and it attributes this to the widespread violence in the communities which makes disclosure of sexual abuse difficult. The APY Inquiry instead gathered evidence of abuse through interviews with community members and workers in the communities. The Commissioner also had the power to request records from government agencies such as police, welfare and health services and partly from evidence in these records the Inquiry found that, “141 particular children had been sexually abused on the Lands. The majority of them were girls, 113 cases, and the other 28 involved boys...In some cases there were multiple allegations involving a child” (Mullighan 2008, p.xiii).

The APY Lands Report (Mullighan 2008), was presented to the Governor of South Australia in April 2008. The Inquiry made 46 recommendations to improve the response to those who had been abused and also to try and prevent further abuse. These included enhancing the child protection systems of the Lands, improving drug and alcohol treatment services, increasing the availability and quality of housing and a number of recommendations aimed at improving children’s attendance at schools. The Report also recommended that more resources be focussed on delivering education on sexual behaviours to children, their parents and the community generally. It is in response to this recommendation that SHine SA has received additional funding to work with schools on the Lands and in other Aboriginal communities to deliver sexual health and relationships education.

This South Australian Report on the APY Lands was publicly released fourteen months after another report on child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities was released in the

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<sup>75</sup> “The APY Lands are in the western desert in central Australia and cover 102,360 square kilometers in the far north-west of South Australia. The population of the lands varies from time to time but there are about 2,700 Anangu, including about 1,000 children, living in small communities and many homelands. The Lands are owned by Anangu and as a group are referred to as APY, which is a body corporate” (Mullighan 2008, p.xi).

Northern Territory (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007). This report, known as *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle-Little Children are Sacred*, attracted significant attention due to the fact that one week after the release of the report the Howard Government declared a state of emergency in the Northern Territory. This was done in the name of protecting Aboriginal children and the response became known as the NT Intervention. In August 2007 the Howard Government introduced three Bills into Parliament that contained legislation that was necessary to support the emergency intervention. The most contentious aspects of this legislation were the way Aboriginal people access and use welfare payments, control of alcohol, enforced school attendance and changes to the leasing arrangements of some communities and townships from Aboriginal community management to government control (Hinkson 2007).

The NT Intervention has aroused considerable political debate and divergent responses from the NT Aboriginal communities affected by the intervention and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists and academics<sup>76</sup>. The main point of contention is whether this intervention is anything other than a cynical and racist attempt to erode Aboriginal sovereignty even further (Dodson 2007). At the time it was proposed, John Howard argued on the ABC television news program *Lateline* that the intervention was required “because we have been presented with the most compelling evidence of total failure in a society, and I mean, there is nothing worse than to see little children denied just a few years of *childhood innocence* and that is essentially what is happening in these communities” (Lateline 2007, emphasis added). The intervention also had support from Kevin Rudd, the then Leader of the Opposition, who was reported as saying:

I think Mr Howard has now taken responsibility for this problem, and I’m prepared to work with him on that because child sexual abuse, the abuse of little ones, is so abhorrent to the entire community and both sides of politics, we should be taking the politics out of it. (Kevin Rudd cited in Craig 2008, p.89)

The reality of child sexual abuse and violence in Aboriginal communities has been the subject of numerous previous reports (Dodson 2007). The extent of this problem is also graphically recorded in the *Little Children are Sacred Report* which includes a whole series of recommendations for action to address the issue. However as Behrendt (2007)

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<sup>76</sup> See for example Behrendt (2007), Langton (2008), Dodson (2007), Hinkson (2007), Howe (2009).

comments, “As the details of the intervention plan emerged, one of the first things that became apparent was that the intervention strategy made no reference to the *Little Children are Sacred Report* on which it purported to rely. It followed none of its recommendations...specifically...that consultation with and the involvement of Aboriginal people in developing responses to child sexual abuse is critical” (p.15). This lack of consultation and engagement with the people who were subject to the intervention aroused widespread concern as it reinforced the paternalistic relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. However it was the fact that the intervention had been done in the name of ‘the children’ that provoked special criticism as “with this mantra, anyone - no matter their colour or their on-the-ground experience - who dared ask questions about either the motivation or the mechanisms employed - was deemed to be part of the problem” (Behrendt 2007, p.17).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore these issues in greater depth other than to note that child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities is a complex problem that has transgenerational causes linked to the history of land dispossession and child removal policies (Dodson 2007). The impact of this history also can be seen in the high rates of alcohol and drug use and poor mental health among Aboriginal people and these in turn also intersect with child abuse issues (Atkinson 2007).

As Baird (2008) argues, it is important to do “the careful work of analysis and deconstruction of the various ways in which the child is deployed” (p.296). My discussion of this intervention highlights how anxieties about the sexual innocence of children, so evident in the histories of sex education described in Chapter Two, are also informed by discourses of race and gender. This is evident also in the discourses about the ‘problem’ of the high rate of Aboriginal teenage pregnancy<sup>77</sup>. Reproductive health is situated within its own historical context in Australia which includes Aboriginal women’s exposure to sexually transmitted infections from the white colonizing men and also the removal of their children if they were ‘mixed race’ (Arabena 2006). Childbearing therefore takes place within a very different cultural location than within non-Aboriginal communities. As Geronimus (2004) notes:

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<sup>77</sup> Aboriginal teenagers have a pregnancy rate more than twice as high as non-Aboriginal, but a smaller proportion of pregnancies is terminated (Westerberg et al. 2002).

Fertility-timing norms are critical mechanisms through which the basic cultural imperatives toward economic and reproductive success are pursued; at their best, fertility-timing norms are well calibrated to support and draw support from local family economies and caretaking systems. (Geronimus 2004, p.159)

The high rate of Aboriginal teen pregnancy, which is often associated also with the birth of preterm and low birthweight babies (Westerberg et al. 2002) has become one of the main rationales for more sex education for young Aboriginal people. While this could be interpreted as an imperative that comes from ‘white’ anxieties about the different childbearing practices in Aboriginal communities, in fact Aboriginal teenage pregnancy is also identified as a problem by some community members themselves. SHine SA has a long history of working with different Aboriginal communities on sexual and reproductive health. Many of the Aboriginal elders in the communities, usually the grandmothers, are concerned about very young women having babies who are then left in the care of the grandmothers. This is because the middle generation, the young women’s mothers (and also fathers), are often not able to step into this role due to issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. These grandmothers therefore are supportive of sex education as they see the benefits for the community of encouraging girls to stay in school and also not having babies born when sufficient care is not available.

SHine SA’s work in Aboriginal communities has not attracted any negative attention from the Christian Right groups that opposed the SHARE project. It is also interesting to note that the new programs that will be offered to Aboriginal schools will include older primary school children. It was children of this age (nine and ten years old) that the SA Education Department assessed as too risky to be part of any formal sex education program run by SHine SA. In the conclusion of Chapter Five I proposed the notion that some young people are discursively constructed to have greater corporeal innocence than others. In particular it is the white Christian child, assumed to be chaste and heterosexual, who needs to be protected from comprehensive sex education. Sex education for the ‘black’ child therefore is considered less dangerous as their ‘innocence’ is already tainted through association with racial stereotypes of sexual promiscuity.

In this chapter I have provided an update on the SHARE project and the micro and macro social and political context that is shaping the future for sex education programs in South Australia. I have argued that the circumstances that contributed to the controversy about

the SHARE project drew particularly on anxieties about homosexuality and that the continued opposition to gay marriage and civil partnerships from John Howard *and* Kevin Rudd at a federal level, as well as at a state political level, has placated some of this anxiety. I have also described how recent events in the politics of the child have created new opportunities for promoting sex education and that this has enabled SHine SA to publicly strengthen its work without any controversy. In the next section I conclude this thesis by exploring what else sex education could become if it was not structured through the discourses of risk and danger.

#### **7.4 Towards a more ethical approach to sex education programs**

In September 2009 I attended the IVth Biennial International Conference on Sex and Relationships Education in the United Kingdom. The theme of the conference was the “ABC of Sex and Relationships Education, **A**pproaches, **B**enefits and **C**onstraints”. This theme deliberately sets up a challenge to the usual use of the ‘ABC’ of the abstinence until marriage movement (**A**bstinence, **B**e faithful and use **C**ondoms) and a critique of an abstinence approach to sex education was evident in many of the sessions in the conference. The opening plenary session was given by the American public health specialist Dr John Santelli who gave a presentation on the factors contributing to the decline in the US teen pregnancy rates. He argued that, based on the available data, there was no credible evidence for an abstinence only approach and reported that declining teenage pregnancy rates are attributable mainly to improved use of contraceptives and, to a small extent, to teenagers delaying the onset of sexual activity.

During this presentation Dr Santelli asked the audience whether, like him, their approach to sex education was guided by ‘science’, implying that this was the ‘right’ approach. My Australian colleague Mary Lou Rasmussen, raised her hand to interject that ‘science’ itself has its own morality and ethics. This exchange highlighted for me again the way that public health and morality discourses are positioned as being in opposition to each other and that it is the public health discourse (based on ‘science’) that is used to justify a comprehensive approach to sex education.

As I discussed in Chapter Five this continual positioning of sex education under the public health discourses of ‘risk and safety’ fails to acknowledge that discussion of sexuality and relationships is also something that involves ‘morality and ethics’. This is particularly relevant to how sex education programs respond to the needs of gay, lesbian,

bisexual, transgender and intersex people as this reflects judgments of which lives are considered of value or what Judith Butler describes as a life that is “grievable” (Butler 2004, p.24). While Christian Right groups are active in these debates because of the theological importance they give to these issues, ‘progressive’ educators are often wary of debating sex education outside of public health discourses, for example in terms of secular ethics and morality. I have previously discussed my own discomfort with this issue when I did media interviews in defense of the SHARE project.

Public health discourses then, while making an important contribution to how we understand the purpose and desired outcome of sex education programs, can also limit their possibilities. This has been identified in the way that discourses of pleasure and desire have been largely absent in sex education programs (Fine 1988; Allen 2005; Ingham 2005). In the opening chapter to this thesis I described Foucault’s approach to morality and ethics. He differentiates between a moral code which is based on legal or religious systems and rules, and ethical practices that are about the relationship one has to the self (Rabinow 2000). Foucault’s concepts of ethics and pleasure have been influential in exploring new possibilities for sex education content and pedagogy.

For example, in her book *Sex & Ethics*, Moira Carmody (2009) outlines an ethical approach to sex education that specifically aims to prevent sexual violence<sup>78</sup>. She posits that “the challenge for prevention education is how to support young people in their use of power to shape their sexual lives as *ethical sexual subjects*” (p.9, italics in original). Carmody (2009) brings together Foucault’s concepts of ‘care of the self’ and ‘care of the other’ as well as reflection and negotiation into something she calls a sexual ethics framework. She broadens the discussions of sexual violence beyond a danger discourse as she also emphasizes the need to take into account the pleasure of the other person as one way to reflect on whether in fact the sexual activity is consensual. What is interesting about Carmody’s work is that she actually trialled this approach with a small but diverse group of young people. She acknowledges that some of the young people, particularly the younger ones, found it hard to grasp the concepts. Of the 24 people who were followed up at six months, 63% identified that they were now more aware of their

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<sup>78</sup> The need for attention to this issue was highlighted in a recent Australian study of school students that found that young women’s experience of unwanted sex increased from 28% in 2002 to 38% in 2008 (Smith et al. 2009).

partner's needs and desires and felt more confident in negotiating their sexual relationships.

One of the main reasons for advocating for the inclusion of 'pleasure' or what Allen calls 'the erotics of desire' (Allen 2004) is that it will make sex education more relevant for young people. It has also been argued that supporting young people to explore 'pleasure' will assist them with their own ethical project of the self. For example Britzman (1998) asks:

Can sex education exceed sociological categories and be more than a semester in which bodies are subject to humanistic constructs of self-esteem and role models and to the endless activities of voting on knowledge and finding stereotypes? More to the point can sex be thought of as a practice of the self rather than a hypothetical rehearsal, as in preparation for the future? (Britzman 1998, p.77)

In considering the suggestion that an 'ethics of pleasure' is important to enable new and different approaches to the self and sexuality, it can be difficult to imagine what this may mean for how sex education is actually implemented in schools. Rasmussen (2004) proposes that one way to bring pleasure into the classroom is to stimulate discussion by using texts that give information on how to give and receive pleasure. She gives the example of the educational resource *Young, Gay and Proud* produced in 1978 by the Melbourne Gay Teachers' and Students' Group<sup>79</sup>. This book includes one section entitled 'Doing it' which explicitly describes the mechanics of gay and lesbian sex. She makes it clear that she is not necessarily recommending this text itself but instead is using it to illustrate the importance of having texts that address young people as sexual subjects, as people with bodies and desires (Rasmussen 2004, p.452).

The US sociologist Jessica Fields (2008) recently published a book that draws on her observations of sex education classes in three different sorts of schools in North Carolina. While also being critical of the lack of attention given to desire as opposed to risk and reproduction, Field describes one instance in which pleasure was present:

Jill [the teacher] insisted that her students learn about the clitoris and sexual pleasure. Now that she had introduced students to the anatomy of the clitoris, Jill wanted to discuss

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<sup>79</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two this book attracted significant negative attention from religious groups when it was released and was removed from state schools (Angelides 2005).

its function in women's sexual lives. The clitoris is "really about sexual pleasure" Jill explained, "It's the equivalent to one function of the penis, right?" Jill had previously explained the external view of men's bodies and was referring to her explanation of how boys and men experience sexual pleasure with their penises. Dante, a popular, easy going white boy, answered "Right" as most of the other students laughed and blushed. Girls' cheeks reddened as they laughed and kept their heads down. Boys grinned widely and looked around the room at their friends. With this assertion, Jill established pleasure as a fundamental bodily function for girls, boys, women and men. (Fields 2008, p.130)

Fields' research, as seen in this quote, illustrates that the experience, skills and comfort of individual teachers play a key role in determining whether open talk about pleasure will be part of sex education lessons. However as I discussed in Chapter Five, teachers also need to have permission to bring 'sex talk' into the classroom and controversies over sex education contribute to teachers regulating their speech, even where parents may be open to this form of education. Talking about pleasure is dangerous and this was evident in the campaign against the SHARE project where the 'Intimacy Cards' exercise attracted particular negative attention because it involved discussion of sexual practices aimed at mutual pleasure without involving marriage<sup>80</sup>.

Foucault's approach to the 'technologies' of the self or what McWhorter (1999) calls "self styling practices" (p.193) has been criticized for failing to take sufficient account of the relationship between the self and the community in which that self is located (Allen 2004, p.252). In Chapter One I described how feminist writers such as Bartkowski (1988) suggest that one reason for this is because Foucault's own relatively privileged position as a white European male blinkers his ability to recognise other sites of struggle and resistance especially for women. However it is not true that Foucault completely ignored the relevance of relations between the self and others. This can be seen in his statement, "The care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others" (Foucault 2000c, p.289). In this context Foucault is referring to the need for people (specifically men) to have a good understanding of themselves and their desires so that they successfully fulfill roles that affect the lives of others. That is, "an ethic of how one is

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<sup>80</sup> Christian Right groups have themselves tried to deploy discourses of pleasure to promote their message of abstinence until marriage by claiming that the most pleasurable sex that anyone can have is in the context of marriage (Stenzel 2003).

governed is also an ethic of how one governs others, of how one governs oneself” (Rose 1999, p.283).

An ethical approach to sex education needs to move beyond teaching about individual pleasure (although that is still important) and include teaching about our ‘ethical’ responsibilities to each other both at an interpersonal level but also at the political and social level. This is the direction that is recommended also by Correa, Petchesky and Parker (2008) who argue that there is a need to “relink bodies with communities, and erotic justice with social justice” (p.219). It is also consistent with the recent work on sex education by Michelle Fine and Sara McClelland who call for the concept of ‘desire’ to be replaced by something called ‘thick desire’ which takes account of the larger context of social and interpersonal structures that determine the opportunities an individual has to want and also create change (Fine and McClelland 2006).

I therefore am in agreement that new discursive possibilities are needed not only for the self but also for the social. As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter such an approach needs to take account of the regimes of power that both constrain and produce these possibilities for self (and social) transformation. In the previous section I described some of the recent events that are influencing the possibilities for Aboriginal young people. This is a good example of the critical relationship between ‘how one governs others’ and ‘how one governs oneself’. The NT Intervention, with its stated intention of protecting children, actually removes social agency from communities and consolidates Aboriginal people’s abject position within their own land. In this context the possibilities for self transformation from any education program, including sex education, are greatly limited.

I am aware that in defining sex education in these broad ethical terms the implications for the actual content and pedagogy for sex education can become lost. However I believe there are relevant examples of activities and approaches that are already in schools and some of these were included in the curriculum for the SHARE project. In Chapter Five I provided a critique of the Stepping Out exercise and while I was critical of some elements of it, this exercise does enable exploration of the way power influences the lives of young people. Exercises that affirm diversity and encourage notions of reciprocity, such as those proposed by Carmody (2009), can also make a difference and it is important that schools themselves become places that encourage and support ethical

practices. The SHARE project included strategies to assist this change to school culture through providing mechanisms to address issues such as homophobia and sexual harassment and it is vital these continue to be given priority in future sex education programs.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This final chapter of the thesis has illustrated that the controversy over the SHARE project did not curtail comprehensive sex education programs in South Australia. In fact these programs are now better funded and have expanded to reach a greater number of (secondary) school students. This positive outcome confirms that attempts to restrain talk about sex can in fact lead to more open discussion about sexual issues. This is consistent with Irvine's (2000) contention that "By using extremely provocative sexual speech to inflame anxieties and mobilize support, the Christian Right can at times create circumstances for public resistance to its moralism" (Irvine 2000, p.76).

In the opening chapter I set out the three research aims for this thesis. The first focussed on the similarities and differences between the campaign against SHARE and others that have taken place against sex education in Australia and the USA since the 1980s in terms of the organisations involved, the strategies used and the fears/moral panics invoked and evoked. I have demonstrated the discursive and tactical similarities between the Christian Right groups in Australia and the United States<sup>81</sup>. These similarities are not surprising as there is a long history of mutual support for 'family values' campaigns in the two countries. For example in 1982 one of the leaders of the Moral Majority in the US, Dr Ronald Godwin who is described as the Chief Operations Officer, visited Adelaide. The newsletter of the Festival of Light for June 1982 recommends that people should come along to "hear first-hand what they do and why". I argue that organisations such as the Festival of Light have not only drawn inspiration from the recent success of the US abstinence movement in gaining political influence and funding, but have also benefited from being able to use the research from US conservative 'think-tanks'<sup>82</sup> to present anti-gay and pro abstinence arguments that appear to have 'scientific' as well as 'moral' legitimacy.

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<sup>81</sup> In her critique of the campaign against the SHARE project, Judith Peppard (2008) also found similarities between the strategies of the Christian Right groups in Australia and the United States. Peppard (2008) argues that "in form and content it had all the hallmarks of the Christian Right grass roots activism that has typified the opposition to comprehensive sex education in the United States since the 1960s" (p.500).

<sup>82</sup> One example is the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, based in Texas. According to Kaplan (2004) this Institute became "one of the most prominent peddlers of fake science in the Bush administration" (p.107).

However there are differences between the two countries in how these arguments are received. Australia is a much more secular country and this manifests itself in suspicion of those who 'push' their religious beliefs too far into the domain of the social or political (Maddox 2005). In Chapter Two I described how Australian politicians are wary of giving the appearance that personal religious beliefs guide their political decisions. However at the same time Australian politicians are now more likely to declare their own religious faith publicly and it can become difficult to maintain the perception of any separation between personal beliefs and political actions. This is evident in the way that the Australian Christian Lobby believes that Kevin Rudd's opposition to gay marriage is something that is linked to his own personal Christian faith even though Rudd may not directly express it in these terms.

The fear created about the SHARE project was evoked primarily in relation to the danger of homosexuality. The 'innocent child' discourse is implicated in this danger through discourses linking homosexuality with paedophilia and the suggested psychological harm that young people may experience if sex education fails to privilege 'heterosexuality'. While the notion of (hetero) sexual activity by young people is of concern to Australian parents there is not a general expectation that young people should abstain from sexual activity until marriage. This is reflected in the fact that the SHARE project identified that one aim of the project was to 'delay sexual activity' rather than to 'abstain' from sex altogether. In Australia, therefore, there is acknowledgment of adolescent sexuality even though it is still constructed as dangerous and in need of management and regulation through education and technologies such as condoms and contraception.

The second research aim of this thesis was to identify the particular circumstances and conditions that enabled the SHARE project to emerge as a public problem in South Australia in 2003. In this chapter I argue that the controversy was created primarily in response to the perceived gains that were being made in gay rights and because there was political opportunity. Conversely, the current silence from these groups can be understood as stemming from less anxiety about same sex relationships (at least among some key conservative groups) and also the fact that there is now less political volatility in South Australia after the comfortable win by the Rann Labor Government in the 2006 election which means that it is no longer reliant on placating the smaller parties (such as Family First) to achieve its legislative agenda.

In 2003, South Australia was about to embark on a process of amending laws to recognise same sex relationships. Gay marriage had been introduced into some countries and there were fears that this may also happen in Australia although John Howard acted quickly to allay those fears. The inclusion of content in the SHARE curriculum that affirmed same sex relationships as equal to opposite sex relationships was interpreted as being part of the overall 'push' for gay rights. For religious conservative groups, many of whom have a long history of opposing these rights, it was important that they stand up and resist any change to the status of the family.

In the past, actions from groups such as the Festival of Light may have resulted in letters to the media and to the Minister for Education and petitions to parliament (Jose 1995). However the presence of a Family First Party member in Parliament and the willingness of the Shadow Minister for Education to take up these issues, ensured that there was both political and media attention on the SHARE project. This media attention then 'amplified' (to use Stanley Cohen's (1972) term) the sense of threat and enabled local discourses of fear about 'homosexuality' and 'child abuse' to join with the globalised discourses that have become part of the 'culture wars'.

However, as with other moral panics, once the threat appeared to be resolved then the media and political interest subsided. I have suggested that one reason the interest was no longer focussed on the SHARE project was the fact that the Christian Right groups turned their attention to other fights over gay rights, namely opposing same sex law reform in South Australia. The changes to the SHARE teacher manual in 2004 also contributed to the public appearance that the 'problems' had been resolved. Both Andrew Evans from the Family First Party and Vicki Chapman from the Liberal Party, claimed 'victory' for the changes made to the manual and made public statements that the project was now less potentially harmful. That is, they positioned themselves as having 'saved' young people from this harm.

I have focussed primarily on the role of the Christian groups and conservative political parties in the production of the controversy. However SHine SA also contributed to the controversy as the public launch and deliberate strategy to get media interest for the project enabled a public visibility for the project that invited attention. The intention of putting the SHARE project in the public sphere was to facilitate increased community

discussion on sex education and it could be argued that in fact the controversy achieved this beyond what was expected. However at the time SHine SA did not anticipate any negative response and was not prepared for the intensity of the response that was provoked. It was also evident that SHine SA's role in previous political battles over women's access to contraception and abortion immediately cast the agency as being in opposition to the Christian Right groups. It is for this reason that I argue in this chapter that recent events in 'child politics' have enabled SHine SA to take up a position that is more aligned to the concerns of the conservative groups and this may reduce the likelihood of them being subject to further negative attention from Christian groups.

The final research aim of this thesis was to explore alternative discourses and approaches for sex education programs in Australia based on the lessons learnt from the campaign against SHARE. One of the key lessons learnt from the SHARE project is that it is very difficult to bring discourses of pleasure into the classroom without provoking some opposition. This experience is consistent with other research which finds that adolescent sexuality is often addressed only in terms of danger and risk rather than pleasure and desire. Following Foucault, this literature suggests that sex education should be firmly situated as part of an ethical engagement with the self. The focus on pleasure is intended to assist this process as it can provide opportunities for new knowledge about the self, a knowledge that may be delinked from any particular sexual identity. However I also argue that pleasure does not exist outside of the social location of the body that may experience that pleasure. An ethical approach to sex education therefore has to take into account different regimes of power and in this chapter I discuss this in the context of the constraints and possibilities for Aboriginal young people's self transformation. As Jakobsen and Pellegrini (2003) suggest:

When practices of freedom are emphasized ethics is not just about the regulation of relationships or the repression of desires or the disciplines of the body; ethics is also about the social relations that can be generated out of interaction. Ethics becomes a project of imagining and enacting forms of life. (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2003, p.144)

So in conclusion, the controversy over the SHARE project represents an historical moment in South Australia where local and global discourses associated with sexuality collided with political opportunity and heightened anxiety in religious groups about gay rights and the sexual abuse of children. While the current political landscape, which

includes the new political leaders Barack Obama and Kevin Rudd, has reduced some of this religious consternation it has not significantly altered the regimes of power that influence sexual rights. This is reflected in the continued restrictions on citizenship for gay men and lesbians particularly in the area of parenting. In a panel discussion on sexual rights held at the City University of New York in 2008, Rosalind Petchesky (2008b) welcomed the election of Barack Obama for the opportunity it presents for sexual rights. However, she also cautioned that unless significant social change can be achieved then his election in fact may serve as an advance rather than a retreat for neo-liberal democracy. That is, rather than producing more freedoms it may instead entrench inequalities. She argued that that this will “depend on us and what we do”.

It is important also to remember, as Foucault emphasises, that power is not just enacted through the formal political processes. The small para church organisations will continue to monitor and respond to any activity that is perceived to promote secular humanist values. In the recent interviews I conducted with SHine SA staff they reported that one legacy of the campaign of the SHARE project was the perception of being under surveillance by conservative groups. This carries the risk that sex education will be constrained to fit within parameters that are safe and acceptable to these groups. This is the same experience I identified in Chapter Five where other educators in Australia also reported that they regulate the content of their programs to avoid controversy. However, even with these potential institutional limitations on sex education in South Australia I believe that there is still reason to be optimistic about what has been achieved and what might be possible in the future.

My own experience of the campaign against the SHARE project supports Petchesky’s (2008b) contention, cited above, that it “depends on us and what we do”. While it was personally challenging to experience the homophobic attitudes and actions of the opponents of the SHARE project it also enabled those of us working on the project to work collectively to resist such discourses. It is important therefore not to lose sight of the importance of achievements, such as same sex law reform and increases in funding for comprehensive sex education, which has taken place in South Australia over the last five years.

As the following quote from Jeffery Weeks (2007) reminds us, despite real challenges there is still much that can be done:

Even in the most hierarchical society men and women can develop relationships of equality and mutuality. Even in a homophobic society, men and men, women and women, can find love and respect. Even in the most individualistic of cultures, people still manage to find sources of community and solidarity. (Weeks 2007, p.223)

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## Appendix 1

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES

Name	Resource/Program	Date of interview
Sue Dyson	Discussion of development of: <i>Taught Not Caught</i> Clarity Collective 1983	2/2/05
Lorel Mayberry	Discussion of development of: <i>Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships</i> WA Department of Health 2003	22/4/05
Anne Mitchell	Discussion of development of: <i>Talking Sexual Health</i> La Trobe University 2001	15/3/05
Debbie Ollis	Discussion of development of: <i>Talking Sexual Health</i> La Trobe University 2001 and <i>Catching On</i> Department of Education & Training, Victoria 2004	18/8/05
Cecelia Gore	Discussion of development of: <i>High Talk</i> Family Planning Queensland 1997	2/3/05
Judy Rose	Discussion of development of: <i>High Talk</i> , and implementation of: <i>Human Relationships Education Program Out With Homophobia</i> , in Queensland	5/4/05
Jonathan Pare	Discussion of implementation of: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (Witthaus 2001) in Tasmania	22/2/05
Sue Williams and Liz Hammond	Discussion of implementation of: <i>Talking Sexual Health</i> in NSW	21/3/05

## Appendix 2

### KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONS

1. What was the background to the development of your teacher resource. Who funded it and who signed off on it. What involvement was there of government, universities, family planning agencies, other agencies.
2. How was the resource/program distributed to schools? Did any training of teachers accompany the resource? Did it link formally to the curriculum?
3. Was any evaluation conducted of its use by schools, both in terms of its uptake and its usefulness?
4. In developing the resource was there any constraints on what materials or topics could be covered? Where did this constraint come from and what was the effect of it?
5. Did you leave anything out of the resource that you believed should have been there because of these constraints?
6. When the resource was released was there any publicity about it? Was it 'launched' in any way? Was it written about in the media and was this in a positive or negative way?
7. Did you experience any sort of organised campaign to change anything about your resource? If so who from and how was this done? Did any particular religious or political groups respond to your resource?
8. Given the opposition to the teacher manual in South Australia in 2003 do you have views on why this should occur. Have you seen any evidence in your State to suggest a backlash against comprehensive sex education in schools?
9. Anything else you'd like to add.

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