Staying connected through conflict:

Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage.

Andrew David Kirby

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of

Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2019

Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Abstract

Same-sex marriage within churches is an ongoing, highly contentious, and contested space. A rich literature depicts dichotomised views, reflecting those of academics at denominational level, and addresses theological substance or denominational policies. However, significantly less is known at the parishioner level about the issue from the perspectives of clergy who support same-sex marriage. These perspectives are important to understand as clergy hold influential positions as opinion leaders at the congregational and social levels, and influence socio-moral discourses within religion and beyond. Using constructivist grounded theory, 21 Christian clergy from six Christian denominations in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia were interviewed about their supportive views. Namely, the research sought to explain what contributed to clergy's supportive views and how they managed their daily lives holding these views within their institutions. From data analysis a core process was identified as 'staying connected through conflict.' The conflict stemmed from clergy's supportive views which diverged from traditional religious ideology. Valuing relationship was found to be significant in the development of participants' supportive views on same sex marriage. Valuing relationship at multiple levels underpinned participants' decision to remain with their church and was a driving force in their staying connected through conflict. The emphasis participants placed on valuing relationship was also found to guide their day-to-day actions and informed how they managed diverse relationships with those holding differing views on the issue of same-sex marriage. This study expands the international evidence to Aotearoa New Zealand and contributes to a growing scholarship in Australia. The findings encourage religious institutions to be respectfully open to conversations that will lead to more understanding, tolerance, and support for supportive clergy as agents of change. Significantly, explaining the perspectives and lives of these clergy has the potential to provide a new source of reference and support for a more unified and compassionate way forward for church leaders or laity, religious or non-religious, straight or gay, who are struggling with the concept of same-sex marriage.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Andrew Kirby

Dated: 20th May 2019

Dedication

To my mother, Phyllis Kirby, who died during the writing of this thesis, and my husband, Iain Graham; you have both taught me what love and relationship is all about. I love you.

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude to my family, in particular Iain, who believed in me from the beginning of this doctoral journey and walked beside me every step of the way. Your constant encouragement and support went far beyond usual expectations and demonstrates your love for me in action in a way that is truly humbling. To my beautiful mum, thank you for your unconditional and unfailing love, and your encouragement to "Keep on keeping on!" I love you and will miss you terribly. Thank you to our cats, Sasha and Shumba, and horses, Dublin and Vegas, who, in keeping me grounded and sane, provided me with the best therapy I could ask for.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisors, Dr Barbara McKenzie-Green and Dr Judith McCara-Couper, for their invaluable guidance and so generously sharing their skill, knowledge, and wisdom. Your unwavering reassurance and belief in this research, through the highs and lows, has been motivational and fuelled my passion, carrying me through to the finish line. To Shoba Nayar thank you for all your help with proof-reading and editing. You are immensely talented and, with working together over the years, you have become a valued friend. To Ian Kaihe-Wetting, thank you for sharing your expertise with me regarding biculturalism. While the scope of interest changed along the way, our discussions around the kitchen table added value to the way I engaged sensitively not only with Māori, but all participants. To my friends, Jenny Castel and Peter Lineham, I greatly valued your time and interest in reading my developing chapters and providing me with honest and thought-provoking feedback which in turn generated further exploration. Thank you also to Tim Franklin and Charlene Warin for your help and patience, in working alongside me and sharing my vision on the graphics. Immense gratitude to Sue Knox for your wonderful thesis-formatting skills and putting together the finished product.

I wish to pay tribute to the participants of this study; without whom this study would not have been possible. Hearing their stories makes me aware that I stand on the shoulders of giants in conducting this PhD; your integrity and courage has truly inspired me and offers hope of a more inclusive world in the future.

Thank you to the grounded theory group at Auckland University of Technology which I was privileged to be part of for the duration of my research. This unique opportunity to

learn through participation with, and observation of, other PhD students and supervisors enriched my understanding of my research methodology, provided collegiality, and ameliorated the loneliness of doctoral work.

Finally, grateful thanks to Auckland University of Technology for the provision of a fees scholarship for the first three years of my research which significantly contributed to my being able to undertake this research. The support I have received, at multiple levels, from the university throughout the duration of my study has been truly commendable.

Approval for this research was granted by Auckland University of Technology's Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 30 November, 2015. No. 15/386; and amended ethics approval given on 21 November, 2016.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

I begin this thesis by stating the focus of the inquiry and set the scene of the studied phenomenon. The research aim, purpose and significance, including the rationale for undertaking this research and my interest in the project, are explained. Next, an overview of the place of marriage historically and culturally in the church, Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia is provided. This is followed with an explanation of current same-sex marriage legislation, including responses to the legislation by churches represented by those participating in this study. The scope of the study and key terms used in the thesis are defined. The chapter concludes with a layout of the thesis structure.

Focus of inquiry

This study sought to uncover the perspectives and processes underlying the actions of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage within the setting of their religious institutions, congregations, and wider communities. Consistent with the significant rise in public support for marriage equality in the West, in 2013 Aotearoa New Zealand joined the increasing number of governments globally, becoming the first country in Oceania, and 13th country overall, to legalise same-sex marriage. As in the rest of the world, the strongest opposition to same-sex marriage in Aotearoa New Zealand has come from some of the conservative and/or evangelical religious groups; the majority of mainline Christian churches stating that none of their clergy will conduct same-sex weddings and no churches will be used as marriage venues (Boyer, 2012; Collins, 2013). The current inquiry investigated a growing subset of clergy who supported same-sex marriage and, in some cases, were marrying lesbian and gay couples; thereby, taking a different stand to the traditional position of their institutions' that defines marriage as being between one man and one woman. In this thesis I explored what contributes to this small but growing population's challenge to traditional religious interpretations of marriage and how is it for them as they go about their daily lives holding such views which are often at odds with their institutions (L. Smith, 2013; Weiss, 2014).

Setting the scene

In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage. Since then, a dramatic shift has occurred with many western countries following suit. As of 2019, 27[1] countries (nationwide or in some jurisdictions) have legalised the marriage between same-sex couples and national debates on the issue are currently taking place in a further 26[2] countries. According to the International Human Rights Commission, same-sex marriage is a human right under international law; and whilst the European Union is unable to impose law on its member states, it encourages the recognition of same-sex marriage or civil unions as "a political, social and human and civil rights issue" (European Parliament Briefing, 2015, No. 162). The most prominent supporters of same-sex marriage, apart from human rights and civil rights groups, have come from the medical and scientific fields. Globally, the contemporary consensus of mental health professions is that homosexuality is a healthy variation of human sexuality. The American Psychological Association (APA) (2011) asserted that all state, legal, and religious rights and freedoms for gay and lesbian people should be recognised, including marriage. Emerging evidence (Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2012; Tatum, 2017; Wight, Leblanc, & Lee Badgett, 2013) has shown the psychological benefits of same-sex marriage for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Tatum (2017) demonstrated that sexual minorities residing in states without same-sex marriage experienced greater levels of distress and anxiety, and lower subjective wellbeing, compared to sexual minorities residing in states with same-sex marriage. The establishment of same-sex marriage has also been shown to significantly reduce the rate of attempted suicide among children and adolescents of a minority sexual orientation (Pawelski et al., 2006; Raifman, Moscoe, & Austin, 2017). In addition to human/civil rights organisations and the medical and scientific fields, public opinion polls (Baunach, 2012; Brewer, 2014; Jones, Cox, & Navarro-Rivera, 2014; Murphy, 2017a, 2017b; Pew Research Centre, 2013, 2017; Sikiaridi, 2018) have consistently shown an increasing trend toward support of same-sex marriage in almost all western democracies.

---

[1] Aotearoa New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay.
[2] Armenia, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Nepal, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, South Korea, Switzerland, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

The most prominent opponents of same-sex marriage have been, and continue to be, some conservative and/or evangelical religious and political groups. In fact, Rosik et al. (2007) asserted that religious conservative communities may be the only identifiable group still holding coherent negative beliefs toward gay men and lesbian women. Thus, the church remains one of the main obstacles for same-sex attracted individuals achieving social equality. Many Christian denominations neither recognise same-sex marriage nor grant lesbians and gay men the same membership privileges such as ordination and leadership positions afforded to heterosexual members.

A homosexual orientation does not discriminate and is known to occur in all genders and global ethnicities, including religion (Boswell, 1980); yet, the face of homosexuality has largely remained invisible in the church until the last 20 years. Increased public acceptance of homosexuality and marriage reforms legalising same-sex marriage has prompted more gay couples to grace the pews of churches making same-sex relationships harder to ignore. This shifting landscape has placed palpable pressure on religious institutions to take a stand and make public their position on same-sex marriage. It has resulted in many religious institutions taking a defensive stance against those who claim their beliefs and practice to be unethical and an impingement on human rights. Those institutions upholding traditional views of marriage, as that between a man and a woman, appear to be failing in their attempts to offer their millions of followers worldwide solid ground on which to anchor themselves against the prevailing socio-moral and political developments. As the Christian liberal movement has strengthened, the emotive debate between liberal and conservative/evangelical religious factions over same-sex marriage has deeply divided the church and threatens its future (Crary, 2019; Gates, 2018; Myers & Scanzoni, 2006; Robinson, 2013).

Focus of the study

This study used the interpretative qualitative approach of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) to answer the questions:

- What contributes to clergy's supportive views of same-sex marriage?
- How do clergy manage their daily lives holding these supportive views within their religious institutions?

The research question/s in a grounded theory study are typically broad as the researcher does not know the processes that underlie participants' actions. Remaining open to the

data provided by the participants invites them to freely articulate what is happening for them in the context of the study phenomenon (Glaser, 1992).

Research aim and purpose

The aim of this inquiry was to explore an under-researched population of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage to uncover the processes underlying their actions through the logic of grounded theory and openness to learning about the empirical world (Charmaz, 2014a). The purpose of the study was to formulate a substantive theory that explains what is happening to this population and, through increased understanding, bring into awareness some of the implicit meanings underlying and driving their processes and shaping their decisions. In doing so, I hope to provide an alternative perspective to the well-known traditionalist view that refutes same-sex marriage by offering new knowledge that might assist other church leaders, and wider Christian communities, who may be struggling with the issue. It is my hope the findings of this study will contribute to lesbian and gay individuals one day being able to take their position in the pews knowing they will be treated equally by the church.

Rationale for the study

The rationale for undertaking the study included:

- The significant rise in support for marriage equality in the West over the last decade is among the largest change in public opinion on any policy issue over this time period (Baunach, 2012; Brewer, 2014; Pew Research Centre, 2013).
- Religion has long been a predictor of negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage, perhaps more so than sexual orientation (Greenberg & Bystryn, 1982; Jakobsson, Kotsadam, & Jakobsson, 2013; Walls, 2010).
- Significant proportions of the population in the West identify as Christian: 70.6% in America (Pew Research Centre, 2015); 59% in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2013), 48.9% of Aotearoa New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2013)[3]; 52.1% of Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Tensions exist with a growing number of Christians who agree that same-sex marriage goes against their religious beliefs; yet, believe that same-sex couples should

---

[3] Reflects data from the 2013 census as results from the 2018 census were not released at time of writing.

have the same legal rights as heterosexual couples (Jones et al., 2014; Pew Research Centre, 2013).

- Clergy hold influential positions as opinion leaders that impact at both congregational and social levels, with the capability to influence discourses within religion and beyond. Jones and Cox (2010) found that clergy's views and rhetoric on homosexuality are positively correlated with congregants' views on same-sex marriage. Perceived by many to be a moral authority, Howe (2007) believed that religious institutions might be better situated to advocate for gay rights than other organisations that are seen as advocacy-orientated.

- Rich literature exists on the conflictual relationship between religion and homosexuality. Since 2004, a growing scholarship about religion and same-sex marriage is emerging mainly reflecting dichotomised views at denominational level. The perspectives of individual clergy at parishioner level, however, is limited to only a handful of studies (Cadge, Day, & Wildeman, 2007; Cadge, Girouard, Olson, & Lyleroehr, 2012; Cadge, Olson, & Wildeman, 2008; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; J. Dewey, Schlosser, Kinney, & Burkard, 2014; Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a; Jones & Cox, 2009; Olson & Cadge, 2002). This study will build on these earlier works and fill a gap in the literature as no known studies in the combined sociological and psychological scholarship have yet examined in depth clergy's perspectives and strategies concerning same-sex marriage (Estwick, 2010).

- Mental health providers and religious counsellors, such as clergy, are likely to encounter lesbian and gay clients and congregants struggling with issues of identity and belonging as they try to integrate their sexual orientation and religious beliefs. These findings have the potential to demonstrate that there are church leaders who believe that the two can be integrated. Similarly, Churches are in bitter conflict over same-sex issues; Spiritual Directors are likely to supervise more Christian clergy wrestling to align their belief-system and ethical practice regarding same-sex couples (Goroncy, 2014; Jackson, 2018). Explaining the affirming perspectives of clergy to Church leaders or laity, religious or non-religious, straight or gay, who are struggling with the concept of same-sex marriage, may foster an additional perspective and provide a new source of reference and support, possibly offering a way forward.

My interest in the research

My interest in the research is both personal and professional. I am familiar with the substantive area in that I was raised in a Christian household by parents both of whom are ordained clergy. I came out as gay in my late teens in an environment of heteronormativity that viewed homosexuality as a sinful deviation from heterosexuality; God's intended plan for mankind. While fortunate to have always felt loved by my parents, it took many years for me to reach a point of being able to integrate my spirituality, based on Christian values, and sexual orientation. My parents' journey was also not an easy one; wrestling initially with my homosexuality and then coming to terms with my relationships. The shift in their perspectives led, in more recent years, to them accepting and supporting my marriage to my long-term partner and has yielded a love for us both that is as remarkable as it is heart-warming. My experience, and observing that of my parents, has made me increasingly aware that there are different religious beliefs and understandings about homosexuality and same-sex marriage and some people shift their perspectives.

The impetus for this study arose specifically from two personal experiences in 2013. My partner and I decided to marry when same-sex marriage became legalised in Aotearoa New Zealand. We had a good relationship with the pastors at the church we were attending at the time who had warmly welcomed us into their congregation knowing that we were a couple. Because of the relationship we had with them we asked if they would consider marrying us, although we were aware of the institution's official stance against same-sex marriage. They were happy for us and felt honoured at having been asked but explained they would first need to clear any participation with hierarchy. Permission to conduct or take part in the wedding in any way was refused. So, they declined. They apologised but expressed a desire to attend the wedding if still invited. Their decision not to marry us was in part due to the institution's prohibition and in part because they were unsure personally where they stood on the issue. This incident highlighted a tension caused by ambivalence over same-sex marriage, which I had witnessed in other clergy. An uncertainty about how to reconcile seemingly-competing value-systems: beliefs based on time-honoured religious interpretations of scripture that rejected homosexual behaviour as sinful and positive experiences of monogamous same-sex relationships that appeared to be loving, caring, and God-honouring. The dilemma for these individuals was that accepting same-sex marriage challenged long-

held tenets of an established faith; while denying it challenged their ethical and social justice values. An impossible bind that caused dissonance.

The second incident occurred shortly after the first, when my partner and I approached another pastor at a church we had attended previously with the same request to marry us. In contrast, this pastor was openly affirming of lesbians and gay people and believed same-sex marriage and Christian faith to be compatible. Despite her views not reflecting those of her institution, she agreed to marry us. My partner and I were married in a simple Christian service at home on our 29th anniversary of being together.

On reflection, both clergy faced the same institutional prohibitions on same-sex marriage. One, we subsequently learnt, courageously followed her convictions in the face of extreme adversity with hierarchy and peers, risking her position, livelihood, and career. These two experiences made me curious as to why were some clergy vehemently opposed to same-sex marriage, others ambivalent, and still others, from the same faith tradition, passionately supportive? My interest lay with the latter; had they always been supportive or had their perspective shifted? If so, what contributed to this shift? What made some clergy, who supported same-sex marriage, conform to church law by not marrying same-sex couples while others go out on a limb to offer a Christian marriage to lesbian and gay couples at great cost to themselves? Furthermore, how did those who thought and/or acted in defiance to their institution, sometimes enduring great hardship in the process, sustain holding the views they did? The burning question for me: *What was happening with this subset of clergy and how was it for them?*

From a professional perspective, in my capacity as a trained psychotherapist, I uphold the first principle of 'do no harm' when working with my clients. Through my work I have become acutely aware of the harms suffered by individuals through discrimination and exclusion from society. Therefore, as a health professional, I advocate for social justice and adhere to the belief that everyone should be treated equally and given the same opportunities in life, including the right to marry regardless of sexual orientation. My experience as a therapist informs me that the psychological integration—cognitive, emotional and spiritual—that can come from a sense of belonging and acceptance is a powerful healer. Religion is no exception. Clergy who support same-sex marriage have the potential to create a safe space offering acceptance and belonging to all by challenging injustices in the church; one of the last bastions upholding discrimination and inequality toward lesbian and gay individuals and couples.

Significance of the research

This research contributes to the growing literature on Christian clergy and lesbian and gay rights (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012; Cadge, Lyleroehr, & Olson, 2012; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; J. Dewey et al., 2014; Olson & Cadge, 2002). This study, specifically addressed clergy and the issue of same-sex marriage because more religious institutions and church leaders are adopting a softer stance toward lesbian and gay people using the mantra 'love the sinner, hate the sin' (Wilson, 2018). This softened approach, which shifts the 'problem' from the individual to the behaviour, makes it easier for institutions to welcome lesbian and gay people but still restrict them, especially couples, from leadership positions, ordination, and other full membership rights and privileges. For lesbian and gay people, their sexual orientation, and hence behaviour, is at the heart of who they are; behaviour and personage cannot be separated (Anderson, 2011). Therefore, clergy's support of same-sex marriage symbolises something much more important; it endorses full acceptance of lesbian and gay people as human beings in the church.

This study highlights participants' dilemmas as they worked to combat perceived social injustices by the church against lesbian and gay individuals while at the same time wanting to remain connected with the institution they loved and belonged. Uncovering a social process where the emphasis participants placed on valuing relationship, which drove their perspectives and actions, can offer an alternative perspective to traditional religious thinking about sexuality helping those who feel stuck and providing a way forward. Sharing participants' stories also has the potential to encourage those clergy holding similar views and who feel alone or unsupported on their journey. Finally, the findings from this research can contribute toward positive social change in the church—perceived by some as the last bastion obstructing social equality for LGBTIQ+ individuals—moving it from a position of exclusion or token inclusion toward full inclusion.

Study context

This study was primarily Aotearoa New Zealand-based and began with the intention of recruiting local participants living and working in a country where same-sex marriage had been legalised. During the project, the study location (guided by theoretical sampling – see Chapter 4) was extended to Australia because, at that time, local participants could not be sourced to explore certain theoretical questions arising from

the analysis. Unlike those from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australian participants were living and working in a country where, although amid a national debate on the subject, same-sex marriage had not yet been legalised. It was anticipated that comparison of the data from both locations might add a further level of complexity to the analysis. All participants (n=21) were from Aotearoa New Zealand (n=16) and Australia (n=5) and came from six mainline Christian denominations: Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army. There were 9 women and 12 men, located across a range of both city and provincial/rural settings.

When considering the perspectives and actions of clergy who support same-sex marriage, it is helpful to understand the traditional role of marriage in the church. In continuing to place the study in context, a brief historical and cultural overview of marriage within the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches is provided. This is followed by a synopsis of the current legal position of same-sex marriage within Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, along with perspectives of the churches represented by the participants.

The emphasis in this study using grounded theory does mean that it occurs in a specific context, at a given moment in time, is not generalizable, relates to this field of study and not a wider application of sociological research methods.

The place of marriage in Christianity

When addressing the issue of clergy who support same-sex marriage, and the meaning of marriage in the church, it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity of beliefs represented within the Christian faith. Below is a comparison of marriage between the Roman Catholic and Protestant stances; the two faith traditions represented in this study. A caveat is warranted to clarify that the term 'Catholicism' represents the ideology of the international Roman Catholic Church and 'Catholics' in this study refer to those who formally subscribe and adhere to the Roman Catholic Church's teaching.

Marriage in the Roman Catholic Church

In their paper *The many meanings of marriage*, Yarhouse and Nowacki (2007) purported that marriage in the Roman Catholic Church has been shaped by the Church's interpretation of Scripture and historical traditions. According to the catechism of the

Catholic Church[4], the purpose of marriage includes the good of the spouses and emphasis on the procreation and education of children. However, there has been a more personal move that emphasises the relationship between husband and wife as a covenant symbol of the love Christ has for the church (Carmody & Carmody, 1993). As such, marriage was initially recognised as a sacrament[5] by the Catholic Church in the 12th century. There are seven sacraments recognised by the Catholic Church which are rites administered by the church through which the grace of God touches humans. Therefore, as a sacrament, marriage comes under the control of the church, is regulated by church (cannon) law, and is only deemed valid if administered by a priest (P. Lineham, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Allowances to permit a couple with marital difficulties to separate and, in rare instances, have the marriage annulled through the Church have occurred; however, the commitment of two people through marriage is deemed permanent (Lienemann, 2004). This is in spite of recent improvements to the marriage annulment process (Kirchgaessner, 2015). As such, the Roman Catholic Church staunchly disapproves of divorce and remarriage (Yarhouse & Nowacki, 2007). While recognising homosexuality as a true form of sexual orientation, the Catholic church "holds that same-sex behaviour is against natural law and that homosexuality itself is ontically disordered" (Yarhouse & Nowacki, p. 38). Because 'a right' in Catholicism is related to morality (Hanigan, 2004), the Catholic Church, therefore, rejects the rights of lesbian and gay people to marry and calls for them to live a chaste life, "accepting their same-sex attraction as a personal trial in their walk with God" (Yarhouse & Nowacki, 2007, p. 38). The Catholic church officially recognises an internal resource organisation 'Courage' to assist persons in this situation. In recent years, liberal Catholic voices that do not view homosexuality as intrinsically disordered have formed an in-house organisation 'Dignity,' which the Church does not officially recognise as a support group.

Marriage in the Protestant churches

Although a diversity of denominations exists under Protestantism, because of their shared foundations in the Continental and English Reformation movements (Yates, 1985), the majority express similar views on same-sex marriage (Yarhouse & Nowacki, 2007). Only from 1753–1837 did English law require marriage in a church. However,

---

[4] A summary of the official teachings of Roman Catholicism.
[5] A "principle means by which God communicates the grace (favour) that heals human beings of sin and elevates them into the divine life" (Carmody, 1985, p. 32).

unlike the Roman Catholic Church, marriage is not a sacrament although churches conduct services if the laws of their country allow it. Protestants (apart from Anglicans) mostly have no structures of church 'canon' law to regulate marriage and tend to follow state rules (P. Lineham, personal communication, March 28, 2019). The parties are the couple, the husband and wife relationship, which can be seen as complementary or egalitarian depending on interpretation of biblical texts and religious tradition, and is viewed as a covenantal bond[6]. In comparison to Catholics, Protestants lack a clearly defined understanding of 'rights' as a moral category (Hanigan, 2004) and, more recently, tended to move away from the centrality of procreation and hold a stronger emphasis on love and companionship between husband and wife. In contrast to Catholicism, Protestantism places less emphasis on celibacy than monogamy and some have argued the sacred family replaced the sacred church (Yarhouse & Nowacki, 2007; Yates, 1985). What has become important is the relational quality of the couple; hence, divorce is accepted as a last resort. Due to the increasing diversity of views expressed within the various denominations, the Protestant stance on homosexuality is less precise. While there have been significant shifts regarding the blessing of same-sex couples in recent years, for example The Episcopal Church[7], The Anglican church of Canada[8] and the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia[9], most Protestant denominations do not marry same-sex couples. However, the historical consensus about the morality of same-sex behaviour and whether to bless same-sex unions is currently being challenged in almost all the major Protestant denominations. The perspectives of Protestant Christians on same-sex marriage is influenced, to differing degrees, by interpretation of scripture, Christian tradition, reason (informed by sources in the field of behavioural, medical, psychology, and social sciences), and experience. While all four informants are influential to conservatives, more credence is given to traditional interpretations of scripture and Christian tradition, with a belief that homosexual behaviour is immoral "because it is viewed as outside of God's revealed will for full-genital sexual expression" (Yarhouse & Nowacki, 2007, p. 39). While traditional Protestant groups hold a stance similar to that of the Catholic Church and call

---

[6] Symbol of the relationship between God and His people as conveyed in Jeremiah 3:14 and Ephesians 5:22-23.

[7] In July 2009, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution allowing individual bishops to choose whether or not to allow the blessing of same-sex unions within their dioceses.

[8] On July 12, 2016 the Anglican Church of Canada General Synod voted in favour of same-sex marriage.

[9] In May 2018 the General Synod of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia allowed blessing of same-sex marriages.

for celibacy among lesbian and gay men, liberals accept homosexual behaviour as morally-neutral behaviour which should find expression in same-sex relationships.

The evolving meaning of marriage in the Catholic and Protestant traditions, discussed above, originated in the West. Next, a brief historical overview of marriage in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia is presented.

History of marriage in Aotearoa New Zealand

Some scholars hold that both male and female homosexual relationships were present and accepted in the Austral Islands and among Aotearoa New Zealand Māori (Greenberg, 1990). British sovereignty introduced the marriage law of England to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 19th century. Prior to this, traditional Māori marriage was shaped by family and tribal links. Partners were mostly chosen from within the hapū or iwi group by family (whānau) or tribal elders. These arranged marriages often saw children promised in marriage from a very young age, with the purpose of safeguarding resources, and creating or strengthening tribal links. There was no marriage rite; however, hapū or whānau approval was required. Regulation of sex was not of primary importance within Māori society, and pre-marital sexual relationships were generally common. The New Zealand legal system continued to recognise marriage according to Māori custom as valid until 1888. Thereafter, legislation became contradictory where, in some cases, traditional marriage was recognised and in others it was not. From 1909 legal recognition of marriage between Māori required a minister of religion, who was legitimised by the Marriage Act 1908. The last legal recognition of traditional marriage ended when the Māori Purposes Act 1951 was passed, which resulted in all marriages in Aotearoa New Zealand being governed by the same law. This, combined with the increasing urbanisation of young Māori, completed a move away from traditional marriage (Cameron, 1966; Cook, 2017) .

History of marriage in Australia

Whilst today many indigenous Australians self-identify as lesbian and gay (S. Ross, 2014), there is little recorded about homosexuality and same-sex relations in pre-colonial Australian societies. Literature capturing anecdotal stories of same-sex relationships, however, is emerging (Dunn et al., 1994). When the British took possession of Australia in 1788, they did not recognise Aboriginal culture as a valid

system arguing that the land was *terra nullius*[10]. The marriage law of the European settlers at the time—Lord Hardwicke's *Marriage* Act of 1753—required marriage to follow the rites of the Church of England. Early on, any other form of marriage, unless receiving special permission from the Archbishop of Canterbury, was deemed void and could result in the guilty parties banished to America for 14 years (Quinlan, 2016). Prior to this, marriage had been a central feature of traditional Aboriginal societies. It provided a way of maintaining attachment with land, sustaining populations and keeping up traditions, and was matched with a desire to ensure children were raised according to the right family groups. As a result, freedom of marriage was restricted through balancing prohibitions against marrying certain close relatives and exogamy[11]. Arranged marriages—usually infant betrothals—often took place between a young girl and an older man and affection between couples came secondary to kinship obligations. Polygamous marriages were common with a husband having two or more wives. A wife, on the other hand, would only have one husband, although usually she would be married to several husbands in succession if her husband died or the marriage broke up. There was no single marriage ceremony and, similarly, divorce occurred without formality—by mutual consent or unilaterally—and was usually signified by the termination of cohabitation (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1981). Australian colonies initially established their own marriage laws; however, all recognised marriage as being between one man and one woman. Polygamous and customary marriages of Aboriginal peoples were not recognised, and bigamy became a criminal offence. To address the complexities of different marriage laws Federal legislation was introduced—the *Matrimonial Causes Act 1959* and *Marriage Act 1961*—to standardise marriage in Australia. While the Acts continued to prohibit bigamy and set a minimum age for marriage, the Australian Law Reform Commission determined that a functional approach was the best and least intrusive way to recognise Aboriginal traditional marriages. This recognition, while indirect, provides some freedom to develop rules to cope with specific and/or new situations while not enforcing any aspects of traditional Aboriginal marriage that might be contrary to basic individual rights (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1981; Quinlan, 2016).

---

[10] Belonging to no-one.
[11] Marrying outside one's group.

Current position in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia on same-sex marriage

Legal status of same-sex marriage in Aotearoa New Zealand

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Aotearoa New Zealand since August 19, 2013. Labour Party MP, Louisa Wall, introduced to Parliament the *Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill* (Māori: Te Pire Marena Takatapui) proposing equal marriage opportunities for same-sex couples. On the third and final reading, the bill passed by 77 votes to 44 on April 17, 2013 and, after receiving royal assent from the Governor-General, the bill took effect on August 19, 2013 (New Zealand Legislation, 2013 No 20). The marriage equality bill exempts any clergy from participating in same-sex weddings if such practice is against their religious beliefs or humanitarian convictions. Conservative lobby group, Family First, claimed its passage represented "an arrogant act of cultural vandalism" (McCoskrie, 2013, April 12). The Aotearoa New Zealand Parliament cannot enact laws in the other three countries comprising the Realm of Aotearoa New Zealand—the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau—which do not recognise same-sex marriage. The *Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013* amended the *Marriage Act 1955* defining marriage as the union of two people, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Prior to legalising same-sex marriage, the *Civil Union Act 2004* (New Zealand Legislation, 2004, No. 102) permitted same-sex and opposite-sex couples to register their civil union (Māori: uniana ture or hononga a-ture) and be granted some of the rights and obligations married couples receive, including immigration, next-of-kin-status, social welfare, and matrimonial property. However, some (Australian Marriage Equality, 2009; J. Campbell, 2006) have highlighted the difficulties in asserting those rights within the context of family law. These organisations/authors contended that, apart from a lack of interjurisdictional recognition, there was the problem that: civil unions were not widely recognised or understood as equivalent to marriage in the non-government sector; some insurers charged higher premiums for same-sex civil union partners than for opposite-sex heterosexual partners because they were regarded as 'singles'; some hospitals, employers, schools, and even state government agencies failed to recognise civil unions.

Legal status of same-sex marriage in Australia

Same-sex marriage has been legal in Australia since the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* passed on December 9, 2017. The Act

(Section 5) defines marriage as "the union of two people, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life." The passing of the Act followed a voluntary postal survey of all Australians where 61.6% of respondents supported same-sex marriage (Karp, 2017). Prior to the passing of the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017*, 22 bills in support of same-sex marriage were introduced to parliament between 2004 and May 2017, none of which passed. These failed attempts occurred after the Howard Government amended the law in 2004 to exclude same-sex marriage. De Facto relationships are another type of same-sex relationship that is recognised under federal law in Australia providing most of the rights and responsibilities as marriage. While no national civil union law exists in Australia, most states and territories have legislated for civil unions or domestic partnership registries and such unions are recognised as de facto relationships under federal law. A strong backlash has arisen from conservative religious and political leaders calling for more protection for those, apart from clergy, who are opposed to same-sex marriage and should have the right to refuse to participate in same-sex weddings. A Parliamentary inquiry—the Ruddock review—was initiated by government and proposals for adjustments to the law to reflect the importance of people living their lives and raising and educating their children in accordance with their beliefs (Ruddock, 2018). But the question remains if freedom of belief extends to allowing people to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, and at present unlabelled (LGBTIQ+) people, then any law changes need to be consistent with Australia's human rights obligations and protect the equal dignity of all (Hilkemeijer, 2018).

Position of the Christian churches in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia

All participants in this study were affiliated with denominations with international affiliations. In most places in the world, most of these institutions uphold a traditional definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman. While there has been a more liberal approach shown by some, in recent years, the issue of sexuality, and more specifically same-sex marriage, continues to cause bitter conflict and divide most churches. When same-sex marriage was legalised in Aotearoa New Zealand, a religious spokesperson in one interview estimated that as little as 1-2% of clergy might go down the path of marrying same-sex couples (Collins, 2013). Over the past few years, discussions have led to some significant shifts taking place within some denominations (Baird, 2018; Whitaker, 2018), with developments continually evolving. Because same-

sex marriage was only legalised more recently in Australia, churches there are, comparatively, in earlier stages of discussions, with many retaining a traditionalist stance.

Roman Catholicism has a hierarchical polity whereby the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand follows the Vatican's position which, despite their recent softening stance toward gay men and women, makes its opposition to same-sex marriage clear. In October 2015, the Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome concluded that same-sex marriage was "not even remotely analogous" to heterosexual marriage. While the views of Catholic priests, as with other denominations, in Aotearoa New Zealand vary, a survey of 2000 Aotearoa New Zealand Catholics found many people younger than 40 years old think the Church's stance on same-sex marriage is "out of touch" (One News, 2014). Similarly, Anglican teaching and practice regarding same-sex issues varies widely, with the Church of England currently upholding the traditional view of marriage. In 2014, the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia paved the way at their general synod for the blessing of same-sex relationships voting to uphold "the traditional doctrine of marriage" by creating a liturgy for the blessing of same-sex unions, rather than call it marriage. The decision to allow blessings for same-sex marriage in May 2018 resulted in some conservative churches in Aotearoa New Zealand breaking away and leaving the Anglican fold in protest (D. Fisher, 2014; Stringer, 2018). The Salvation Army, recognised for its social work, is perhaps less known as a Protestant Evangelical denomination with over one and a half million members worldwide (The Salvational Army, 2017). Like many other churches, it upholds a traditional view of marriage. In June 2014, 814 people completed the Aotearoa New Zealand same-sex attitudes survey which reported 51% of Salvation Army Officers[12] responding were unsupportive, 37.5% were unsure, and 11.36% were supportive of same-sex relationships. In November 2018, the International Morals and Social Issues Council and International Doctrine Council sent to all their territories a discussion document entitled *Let's talk about same-sex relationships* to encourage more positive discussion on the topic.

In 2013, the Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, with its connexional polity, issued a pastoral letter in response to same-sex marriage, taking the same policy it did over civil unions; a parish-by-parish decision allowing congregations that opted to

---

[12] The term Officer in the Salvation Army is synonymous with ordained clergy.

perform same-sex marriages to do so. A further step has since transpired whereby, if a Methodist parish wishes to have same-sex marriages but the incumbent minister is not comfortable, it can invite a minister from another parish who is happy to perform the ceremony, and vice versa (Sweet, 2013). In May 2017, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, with its Presbyterian polities, voted in favour of allowing same-sex marriage after years of conflict over the issue. The following year, a committee was tasked with drafting church law to incorporate same-sex weddings. Presbyterian congregations and their incumbent ministers in Aotearoa New Zealand also vary in their viewpoints; however, the official stance, according to the Presbyterian Book of Order, which is the lawbook of the Church, states that while a minister has "ultimate responsibility for the conduct of worship and sacraments" (Section 6.8/1) within their congregations they "may solemnize marriage only between a man and a woman" (Section 6.8/5). On 13 July 2018, the Uniting Church—a merger of Presbyterian and Methodist congregations—in Australia voted at their National Assembly to approve the creation of official marriage rites for same-sex couples (Sandeman, 2018). In 2013, the Baptist Union, with its congregational polities, ratified a previous instruction from the Executive Council prohibiting any Baptist church in Aotearoa New Zealand from hosting same-sex weddings and barring any clergy from officiating at such ceremonies. Any church/pastor doing so, could be subject to expulsion from the Baptist Union. A decision to uphold the definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman was the outcome of a working party which reviewed the position of same-sex marriage in 2015 (Baptist Union of New Zealand, 2015). Discussions concerning same-sex issues continue within almost all religious institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. While there is evidence of shifts occurring toward the acceptance of same-sex marriage within some denominations, it should be stressed that supportive churches and/or clergy remain a small, but growing, minority. It does, however, raise the question: Are these shifts an indication that a move toward an inclusive Christian church is inevitable? That remains to be seen. I do believe that knowing more about the individuals behind this move is a crucial step in the journey toward inclusivity, justice, and equality within the church.

Scope of study

This study investigates the responses of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. While participants' religious views and philosophies are inextricably linked

with and inevitably influenced by their actions, this thesis is not intended to be theological but lies within the sociological field. This thesis focuses on individual stories and personal experiences of church leaders and not the institutions to which they belong. However, because the two are interwoven, reference in the findings is sometimes made to the perceived thinking and/or actions of the institutions and reflects the perspective of the participant.

The research focuses on issues related to the lesbian and gay community exclusively as opposed to the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer plus (LGBTIQ+) community, sometimes referred to collectively as the Queer community. This is because exclusionary religious policies have focused up until now on same-sex behaviour, rather than on sexuality and gender as identities. Dewey, Schlosser, Kinney, and Burkard (2014) explained, "The lack of clear denominational language pertaining to the inclusion/exclusion of gender divergent persons provides a major contrast to the clear, specific messages related to homosexuality" (p. 316). Similarly, the bisexual community has been invisible in faith communities, society, and even within the LGBTQI+ community. The unique challenges faced by the bisexual community, particularly with how they self-identify and are perceived (Alford-Harkey & Haffner, 2014), warrants its own study and falls outside the scope of this research.

Explanation of key terms used in this thesis

The terms 'homosexual' and 'lesbian women and gay men' are used interchangeably and refer to those who are sexually attracted to persons of the same sex. In some instances, the word 'gay' is used to collectively reference a group of individuals (e.g., gay people or gay community). The term 'same-sex marriage' is used predominantly throughout the thesis to represent the legal recognition of a relationship between two persons of the same-sex by a state or nation. 'Marriage equality' is used to refer to a political status, reflecting a value-system, in which same-sex marriage and opposite-sex marriage are recognised as equal by the law. For example, an individual might advocate for marriage equality. As such, commonly, participants from Aotearoa New Zealand talked of same-sex marriage while those from Australia often referred to marriage equality where same-sex marriage had not been recognised. The terms 'church,' 'institution,' and 'denomination' are also transposable in the context of this thesis and have been used to denote the religious doctrinal group a participant is affiliated with; vocationally, financially, and doctrinally. Finally, 'clergy' is a 'catch-all' representation

of the different titles given to church leaders within different denominations who have been ordained, such as pastor, reverend, minister, priest, and vicar. Definitions of other terms used in this thesis are provided in the Glossary.

Conclusion and the structure of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the reader to the area of inquiry and set the scene by explaining the aim, purpose, and rationale for undertaking the study and my interest in the research. A study context provided a brief historical overview of the place of marriage in the Christian church—Roman Catholicism and Protestant churches—and in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. Current legislation on same-sex marriage, and how it is it perceived by the Christian denominations represented in this study, is delineated within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented as follows:

Chapter Two extends the area of inquiry to an international context with a critical review of extant literature. The place of the literature review in grounded theory and search strategy used to locate relevant literature is explained. The first part of the literature review comprises a broad overview of the context within which the research topic is situated. The second part critiques the literature related to the research question.

Chapters Three and **Four** explain the methodology and methods used to carry out the study. Pragmatism and constructivism are described as the ontological and epistemological positioning underpinning this inquiry and my choice of methodology— CGT—for the research question is extrapolated. Ethical parameters informing the study and strategies used for data collection and analysis are outlined. The research rigour is considered.

Four participant quotations used in Chapters 3 and 4 to support the methodology and methods used in this thesis have also been used in the findings chapters because they explain the concepts very well.

In **Chapters Five** to **Eight** the findings are explicated. **Chapter Five** presents an overview of the theory 'staying connected through conflict' and introduces the core concept of 'valuing relationship' as it relates to the three stages of a trajectory— diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting—that explain the processes underlying participants' actions. I have highlighted, in the introduction of this chapter,

the major concepts that I will be discussing in the rest of the thesis; however, this has only been done in this section for ease of reading. In **Chapter Six**, comprising two parts (Part A and Part B), I delineate the first stage of the trajectory 'diverging ideologies' and its sub-categories. Part A focuses on participants' initial and developing perspectives on homosexuality and later same-sex marriage; while Part B addresses the strategies individuals adopted in constructing a congruent theology of sexuality. **Chapter Seven** explicates the second stage of the trajectory 'holding a space' and its sub-categories. In **Chapter Eight** I explain the third stage of the trajectory 'revisiting' and its sub-categories.

A discussion of the research findings is presented in **Chapter Nine** and is interwoven with the literature search before and after data collection. The knowledge this research contributes to the field is outlined and implications delineated with regards to the church—its hierarchy and policy-makers—clergy, and Christian community. Strengths and limitations of the study are elucidated, and recommendations made for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is in three sections. Initially, the place of the literature review in grounded theory is discussed. Next, the method of searching, extracting, evaluating, and synthesising relevant data from the literature is explained. The final section presents a review of the literature and comprises two parts: the first contextualises the research topic; the second examines the literature in relation to the research question. The chapter concludes with defining the focus of the study.

The literature review in grounded theory

The role and timing of the literature review in grounded theory has long been disputed (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014a; Dey, 1999). With other research methodologies, examining extant literature provides a theoretical framework from which ensuing analysis develops; however, in grounded theory, where the intent is to generate theory, the literature review is used differently (Birks & Mills, 2015). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that the literature review in the substantive field be delayed until after analysis, or until the core variable had emerged, to avoid contamination by preconceived ideas influencing the analytic process. Others theorists (Bulmer, 1984; Dey, 1999; Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010; Layder, 1998) perceived this original view of the literature review in classic grounded theory as naïve; contending that researchers brought their own perspectives to the work including their discipline specific experience and knowledge. Furthermore, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) acknowledged, the requirements from university ethics and grants committees made this purist approach untenable.

As variations of grounded theory emerged (Bowers & Schatzman, 2009; Charmaz, 2014a; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Dunne, 2011; Thornberg, 2012) alternative strategies to safeguard theory integrity were offered. Thornberg (2011) advocated for an 'informed grounded theory' that valued the literature as a "possible source of inspiration, ideas, 'aha!' experiences, creative associations, critical reflections, and multiple lenses, very much in line with the logic of abduction" (p. 7). Such a method, with its pragmatist idea of abduction, is found in Charmaz's (2006, 2011, 2014a) version of CGT. Conducting a literature review helped to contextualise and provide a rationale for conducting the research presented in this thesis. Due to the

topical nature of this research, I updated the literature after analysis. This literature review integrates the results from both searches. When the finding chapters were completed, I revisited the literature to locate, evaluate, and defend my constructed substantive theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), and the outcomes of this final review are extrapolated in the discussion chapter (see Chapter 9).

Literature review methodology/method

My objective in this literature review was to critically evaluate, synthesise, and summarise international work regarding responses of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. The design for this literature review was adapted from several authors (Aslam & Emmanuel, 2010; Aveyard, 2010; Wakefield, 2014; White, 2015), and A. South's advice from AUT's library learning and research services (personal communication, September 18, 2018).

Formulating a working title

To conduct a robust literature review, I formulated a sound research question (Aveyard, 2010) by defining the critical elements or 'theory areas' (White, 2015) of the study. These were identified, using the PICo tool (Aslam & Emmanuel, 2010): P = Participants (supportive Christian clergy); I = area of Interest (same-sex marriage); Co = Context (daily experiences in their clerical roles). The working title was thus defined as "Responses from Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage."

Selecting the literature

The inclusion and exclusion criteria limits were set to be unambiguous but sufficiently wide-ranging (Wakefield, 2014). Criteria are presented in Table 1 (p. 23).

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Papers focusing on supportive Christian clergy's personal experiences of same-sex marriage	Papers not focusing on supporting Christian clergy's personal experiences of same-sex marriage
Participants - adult ordained clergy	
Literature in the English language	
Empirical studies, unless related to the study	
Limited to publications between 2000 – September 2018, unless a seminal work	
Religious publications if pertinent	
Popular periodicals, websites/blogs and social media if pertinent	

Selecting credible databases

I searched in research and academic databases (see Table 2, p. 24) with limits on empirical studies in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. These databases were chosen because they contain access to literature from the social sciences, religious, mental health and allied professions, and multidisciplinary databases. I also included dissertations/theses and discourses of a theoretical or philosophical nature where relevant, and religious and denominational publications which proved a rich theoretical and theological resource. Due to the topical nature of the subject an expansive and growing literature on same-sex marriage is found in popular periodicals, websites/blogs and social media. However, because these comprised reports and/or views of individuals or groups, such material was excluded unless providing pertinent information or illustrative examples.

Clarifying key search terms

Search terms related to the research phenomenon and were guided by the critical elements identified in the working title ('clergy,' 'same-sex,' and 'marriage').

Table 2: Databases searched

• Scopus	• PsychINFO
• Web of Science	• PEP
• SocINDEX	• Google Scholar (through AUT library)
• CINHAHL	
• ProQuest Theses and Dissertations	• AUT library search
• JSTOR	• Tuwhera Open Theses and Dissertations AUT, Aotearoa New Zealand and rest of the world
• DART Europe E-Theses Portal	

Distinguishing the primary relationships between the critical elements elucidated the required literature. The interplay between 'clergy and same-sex marriage' signalled the entry point with which to begin searching. Directed by the search outcomes, at times a fourth element—'support'—was added. Variations and combinations of search terms were generated to extend my search laterally. For example, my list for 'clergy' included priest, minister, pastor, preacher, reverend, vicar, church-leader. Boolean operators were used in conjunction with search terms to explore the relationship between the terms. For example, AND, OR, and NOT expanded or limited/narrowed the search respectively (Wakefield, 2014). Brackets and quotation marks, wild cards and truncations allowed for the expansion of a word stem to include variations. A detailed search using all variations of search terms was initially applied to Scopus database (see Appendix A) and then consistently applied to the remaining databases. Through this process, the number of search 'hits' decreased primarily due to duplication of results, providing confirmation that the search had been thorough.

I then broadened the search terms for two reasons. First, there appeared to be a dearth of studies directly relating to the issue of clergy and same-sex marriage. Second, there was an expansive scholarship at the intersection of i) religion/Christianity and homosexuality/same-sex marriage and ii) clergy and homosexuality, which seemed important to situate the topic. However, due to the sheer volume of articles emanating from the latter, and not relating directly to the topic, my reading in this 'fringe' area was less structured.

Analysing, synthesising, and critiquing articles

Evaluating the literature occurred in three stages: checking the abstracts against the inclusion criteria; scanning the paper for specific information; detailed reading to gain a

comprehensive overview. Articles selected for screening were appraised via a data extraction tool used to identify study methodology and methods, themes, organising ideas, and provide a means of generating a reference list (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). Papers were divided into four categories of relevance: 1) clergy and same-sex marriage (later narrowed to supportive clergy); 2) clergy and homosexuality; 3) the Christianity/church/religion and homosexuality and/or same-sex marriage; and 4) non-religious and homosexuality and/or same-sex marriage. Articles most relevant (category 1) were re-read in detail. Literature from the remaining categories were screened and pertinent information retained for providing context to the study. The believability and robustness of articles were measured, where possible, using Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin's (2007) guidelines and considered: research plausibility; credibility and integrity; documentation, procedural and ethical rigour. The data extraction sheet enabled me to manage large amounts of information and, more importantly, look across studies rather than viewing them in isolation. This was important for drawing conclusions about what had been written on a topic from different viewpoints. Summarising information in this structured way equipped me to better identify patterns of ideas and show how previous research related to my topic, and to each other in terms of content and findings. Information from the final list of articles were organised into overarching themes and supported my rationale for this study (Aveyard, 2007). Figure 1 (p. 26) provides a summary of the search results.

Presentation of the findings

The first part of the review is contextual and provides a historical overview of the research topic. It is presented chronologically, exploring how issues such as marriage, the church, and gay liberation movement have changed over time. The second section, focusing on research related to the topic, is presented thematically.
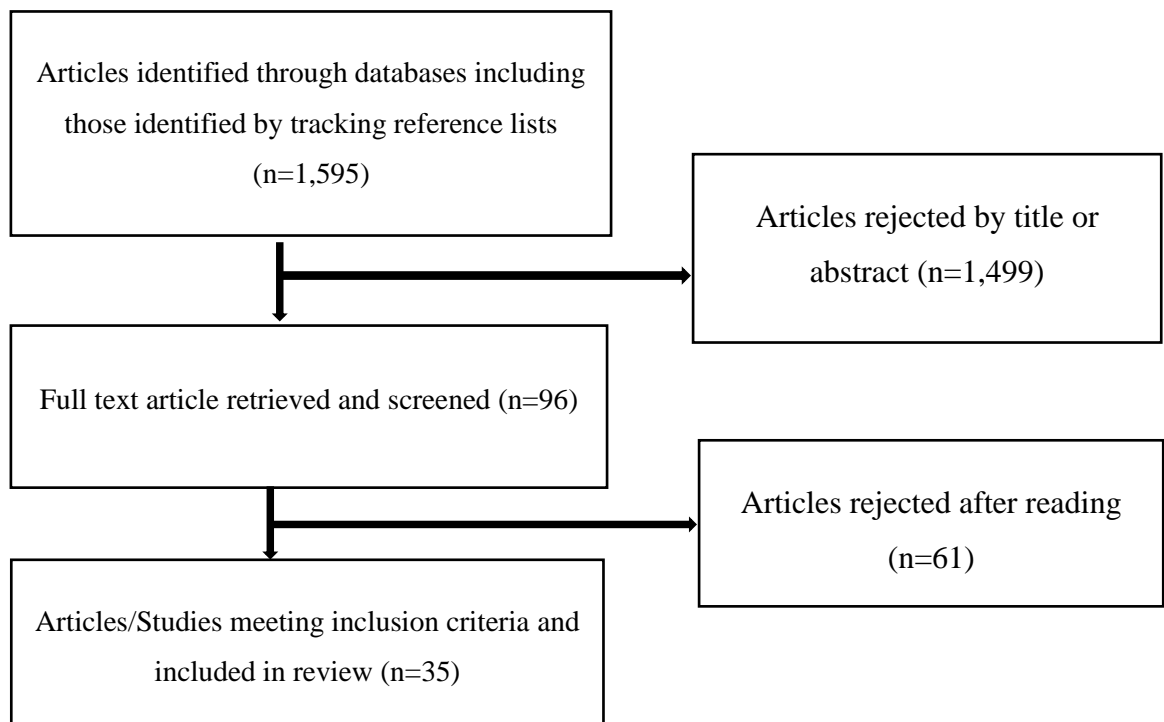
Figure 1: Search results

Contextualising the topic

Introduction

Perceptions of marriage have changed over time (Kirby, McKenzie-Green, McAra-Couper, & Nayar, 2017). Thus, it is imperative to explicate the transitions that have taken place within the institution of marriage. In this section, I describe the institution of marriage, outline the history of same-sex unions, and explain the relationship between religion and same-sex marriage.

The institution of marriage

At the heart of the debate about same-sex marriage within churches is a dichotomy about the institution of marriage itself. Some claim marriage, as an age-old, immutable institution that forms the cornerstone of society, is under threat of change. Others argue that marriage, as we know it, is a relatively recent social phenomenon; a social construct subject to changes over time (Mah, 2005). The origins and history of marriage provide a helpful entry point into this discussion.

Origins of marriage.

Marriage predates recorded history. The best available evidence suggests that it is about 4,350 years old (The Week, 2012), prior to which marriage was as simple as wife stealing among tribes. In the Stone Age, 'families' consisted of loosely formed groups with several male leaders, who shared multiple women and children. As hunter-gatherers settled into agrarian civilisations, pair bonding offered a way of organising and controlling sexual conduct and providing stability for children.

Some of the first recorded marriage ceremonies between a man and a woman date back to 2200 B.C. in Mesopotamia (Fordham University, 1999). The concept of marriage was embraced by the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, but had little to do with love, religion, or the state. Its primary purpose was to bind women—a 'bride sale'—to men, in order to produce children. The production of heirs was paramount to the notion of marriage as implied by the Latin word *matrimonium*, which is derived from *mater* (mother).

In ancient times, marriages were arranged by parents. Daughters, often contracted in marriage as young children, were sold to forge strategic alliances, economic advancement, and produce legitimate heirs. In the working class, children expanded the labour force and were essentially an economic asset to work the family plots and support ageing parents (Coontz, 2004). Marriage between relatives was common, as evidenced with biblical forefathers Isaac and Jacob who married their cousins, and Abraham who married his half-sister. Marrying cousins continues to be legal in many countries today (Fox, 1983; D. Paul & Spencer, 2008).

Throughout history, and in different cultures, there have been many constructions of marriage (Abbott, 2013; Mah, 2005). This includes the widely accepted practices of polygamy, as with the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, involving one husband and one or more ceremonial wives, concubines/slave-wives, and male lovers. Polygamy has been observed from biblical men, such as Jacob and Kings David and Solomon (the latter who had 700 wives and 300 concubines), to American Mormons in the 19th century, and is currently practiced in several countries[13]. Throughout history polyandry—the union of several husbands to one wife—has been practiced. In some societies there have been rare instances, of group marriages, a form of polyamory,

---

[13] Mainly certain African, Arabic, and Asian countries.

involving several husbands and wives cohabiting, and sharing responsibilities for work, economics and child rearing. Some countries[14] still permit spirit/posthumous marriages allowing two people to get married, one of whom is dead (Halliday, 2017). Yearly, many people petition the President of France to permit such unions. Until two centuries ago, monogamous marriages were reflected in a small portion of the world population, mainly in Western Europe and minor settlements in North America (Coontz, 2004).

Traditional marriage.

Prior to the Middle Ages, marriage was a family agreement which did not involve church or state. After the Roman Empire collapse in the 5th century, the Catholic Church became powerful throughout Europe, as did its influence over marriage. 'Traditional marriage' developed among the laity of Christian societies and survived well into the 20th century (Abbott, 2013). Religious involvement in marriage, however, retained the power relations of men as head of the family with wives deferring to husbands. Love was of no significance in the traditional marriage contract. Under Saint Augustine there was a gradual move towards monogamy; although it took several centuries to stamp out polygamy, which was seen to be less morally repellent than divorce at that time. Before Augustine, a man could leave his wife, or take a new wife, if she did not bear him children. However, the Church, under Augustine, argued that the sanctity of marriage was not contingent on producing offspring (Coontz, 2004). In 1215, the Church introduced a requirement for banns of marriage in England, and by 1563 the sacramental nature of marriage was formally written into cannon law as declared by Pope Innocent IV, "intimating in the process that matrimony had always been a sacred rite of the church" (Lehmkuhl, cited in Newton, 2010, p. 36). Furthermore, the blessing of a priest became necessary for a marriage to be legitimised.

Towards the end of the 16th century, with the rise of statutory law in Europe, the State began playing an increased role in marriage. In 1639, the first marriage license was required in the state of Massachusetts, and by the 19th century marriage licenses were common throughout North America. In the 17th century, a husband's dominance over his wife was officially recognised under the legal doctrine called "coverture" where women lost legal identity. The bride's identity was absorbed into her husband's identity, symbolised with her giving up her name, and could not enter contracts in under her own name, hence, could not be protected from husbandly abuse. Additionally, women

---

[14] France, Sudan, and China.

marrying foreigners immediately lost their citizenship. As late as the 20th century, dual laws of monogamy and tolerance protected men from informal promiscuity and extramarital affairs. Any children resulting from such assignations were deemed illegitimate and had no legal claim to the man's inheritance. Women, in contrast, received no protection from the law (Abbott, 2013).

Emergence of modern ideas of marriage.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, love and romance began to play a central role with marriage in cultures arising from Western European roots. After agriculture gave way to market economies and the industrial revolution, increased opportunities and wealth among a growing middle class meant that parents no longer wielded tight control over their children's future and access to their inheritance. Fewer young men felt the need to wait for parental approval and began making their own marriage choice. Greater markets and the growth of democracy facilitated increased economic roles for women, more independence and thoughts of free choice. Enlightenment thinkers pioneered ideas that life was about the pursuit of happiness, and encouraged people to take charge of their love life and demand the right to dissolve unhappy unions (Witte, 2013).

After thousands of years of custom and law enforcing subordination of wives to their husbands, an important transition within marriage occurred as the women's-rights movement gained strength in the 19th and 20th centuries. When women won the right to vote in 1920 in America, wives began insisting they be recognised as their husbands' equals. Until then, women were entitled to support from their husbands; however, could not, for example, own property or obtain credit cards in their own name. Prior to the late 1960s, prohibitions against interracial marriage reflected a history of eugenics[15]. In 1967, after civil rights' advocates argued changing societal norms, the US Supreme Court finally struck down all interracial marriage bans in America; yet, discrimination against interracial marriages continues. The arguments previously used against permitting interracial marriage often resound in today's arguments against same-sex marriage. While some argue the differences, for example interracial marriage is between one man and one woman, who can procreate, there have always been married couples who could not procreate, and in modern times may choose not to procreate. Mah (2005)

---

[15] Eugenics, reflecting the notions of racial purity and superiority, was the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics. Developed largely by Francis Galton (1822-1911) as a method of improving the human race, it fell into disfavour after the horrors of Nazism.

argued that the procreation objective does not necessarily preclude same-gendered couples from marriage given the options of adoption, in vitro fertilisation, and so forth. In 1970, marital rape was legislated as criminal; previously not possible, as a husband "owned" his wife's sexuality.

In the last 50 years Marriage law has become gender-and-ethnicity-neutral in Western democracy, and even more recently the essence of marriage has come to reflect, in most Western countries, a personal contract between two equals in terms of love, mutual sexual attraction, companionship, and flexible division of labour. According to Coontz (2004), in redefining marriage for heterosexuals, particularly as based on complementary gender-based roles, the way has been cleared for gay marriage, the next logical step. Graff (1999) poignantly noted that in one way, opponents to same-sex marriage are correct when they say traditional marriage has been undermined, but traditional marriage had already been destroyed in a process that began long before anyone in modern times even imagined legalising same-sex marriage.

Same-sex unions

Origins of same-sex unions.

Some scholars have argued that forms of legalised relationships between same-sex couples have been known for thousands of years in most cultures (Boswell, 1996; Newton, 2010). Boswell (1996) purported that in Rome, during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, homosexual marriages were common, accepted, and not prohibited; although many have disputed his claims. Apart from his five heterosexual marriages and his relationship with Hiereocles, Emperor Elagabalus (ruled 218-222) married Zoticus, a male athlete from Smyrna, and Emperor Nero legally married at least two males during his reign. Suetonius described Nero's marriage to Sporus as a marriage with all the usual ceremonies, including a dowry and bridal veil, and that Nero treated him as a wife (Abbott, 2013). In China, marriages between men have been recorded during the Yuan and Ming Dynasty (1264-1644); and in Africa, the vast majority of same-sex marriages reported—and still practiced within some tribes—are between women (Newton, 2010).

The history of same-sex marriage and Judeo-Christian society.

With the ascension of the first Christian Pope in 342 A.D. perspectives on same-sex marriage changed. Emperor Constantius II began to incorporate church doctrine into Roman law and declared same-sex marriage illegal. Shortly after, in 390 A.D., the death

penalty was introduced for any man who "played the role of a woman" in a sexual encounter. The underlying premise to the argument against same-sex marriage was, and still is, to a large extent based on biblical injunctions. Newton (2010) noted that not only have there been numerous authorities on homosexuality over time, but the wording and translation in biblical documents have changed over hundreds of years. This is particularly significant where there is no precise comparable word in modern English, such as 'homosexuality,' a term only coming into existence in the late 19th century. Despite the controversy over biblical interpretation, it is clear that after the death of Jesus, a Christian model of marriage, similar to that promoted by most modern-day Christians, evolved. This is based on the union of one man and one woman for the purposes of procreation and sanctioned by a church ceremony.

Rome had officially outlawed same-sex unions by the 4th century A.D. However, Boswell's (1996) 12 year research into same-sex unions in pre-modern Europe claimed that homosexual unions were prevalent after the 4th century A.D. throughout the Mediterranean, and some recognised by the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Church. A litany taken from one liturgical Greek document ("Order for Solemnisation of Same Sex Union" – 13th century Greek) asked God to grant the participants "grace to love one another and to abide unhated and not be a cause of scandal all the days of their lives, with the help of the Holy Mother of God and all the saints" (Brown, 2014, p. 44). In another ("Office of Same Sex Union" – 14th century Serbian), the couple laid their right hand on the Gospel while holding a cross in their left hand. After kissing the Gospel, the couple were required to kiss each other, and, having raised up the Eucharist, the priest gave them both communion. Apart from the couples' gender, these same-sex unions were almost indistinguishable from heterosexual marriages of the same period. Boswell's critics claim that these ceremonies were merely rituals to seal brotherly alliances and business deals. However, Berkowitz (2012) pointed out the difficulty in not acknowledging the erotic content of these rituals. In fact, he emphasised that it was the sex between the men involved that later caused same-sex unions to be banned. Apart from such ceremonies, homosexual relationships were assumed to be casual and almost all homosexually-orientated people were in arranged heterosexual relationships. It was the advent of marriage for love that raised the possibility of non-heterosexual relationships.

Shifting public opinion regarding same-sex relationships.

Since the Christian model of marriage emerged in the Middle Ages, same-sex relations have been considered a form of mental illness, socially deviant, and morally wrong in religion, medicine, and psychology. However, over the past 40 years, with the development of gay rights, augmented by advances in medicine and psychology, there has been a significant shift in people's understanding and attitudes toward same-sex attraction. Originally listed as a "sociopathic personality disturbance," homosexuality was 'upgraded' to a mere "sexual deviation" in 1968, and finally removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-II) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1973. This decision was followed by the American Psychological Association in 1975. Since then, the consensus of the behavioural and social sciences, and the health professions, is that homosexuality is a healthy variation of human sexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2009), and that all state, legal and religious rights and freedoms for lesbian and gay people should be recognised, including marriage (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Research studies indicate that in the past 10 years there has been broad acceptance toward homosexuality and same-sex marriage in North America, the European Union, and much of Latin America (Brewer, 2014; Pew Research Centre, 2013). Following the Netherland's decision in 2001 to legislate permitting same-sex couples to marry, a growing number of governments have legalised same-sex marriage (including, more recently, all American states in 2015, Australia, 2017, Austria and Taiwan, 2019). Major shifts in public policy are rare and "the rise in support for marriage equality over the last decade is among the largest changes in opinion on any policy issue over this time period" (Pew Research search, 2013, p. 1). As emphasised by Pew Research (2011), "The long-term shift in the public's view about same-sex marriage is unambiguous" (p. 1). According to Coontz (2004), the incredibly rapid increase in acceptance of same-sex marriage is because heterosexuals have completely changed their notion of heterosexual marriage, which is now based on love and equality.

To return to the beginning point, the institution of marriage is no stranger to controversy, indicating that it is not necessarily an immutable, age-old institution threatened by change, as some might perceive. Instead, marriage is broad and has reflected historic social norms and practices, which included religious observance, social and economic considerations, and political ideology. Mah (2005) believed the inequitable aspects of marriage that have been changed in recent times reflect our

growing Western collective consciousness. Marriage between two 'persons' represents the natural progression of this collective consciousness to ensure everyone is treated equally in society and under the law.

Christianity and same-sex marriage

History of conflict: Christianity and homosexuality.

The issue of same-sex marriage within a religious context can only be fully understood in the context of the conflictual relationship between Christianity and homosexuality (Dourley, 2010). Religion and sexuality are inextricably intertwined because virtually every religion "regulates sexual behaviour and dictates a specific set of values regarding human sexuality" (Worthington, 2004, p. 741). Walls (2010) pointed out that while secularisation theory predicts that religion will become decreasingly important in contemporary society, Sherkat and Ellison (1999) showed that religion "continues to play an important part in the lives of a sizable portion of the American population" (Walls, 2010, p. 112). Some of the strongest opposition to homosexuality has come from conservative religious organisations and/or religious-based political parties, using traditional scripture-based perceptions that homosexuality is morally wrong. Claiming divine moral authority in society, religion has viewed gay people as not only different, but sinfully different. Furthermore, Christian religions have argued that same-sex attraction is contradictory to the natural order of creation[16] and no other form of sexual relations, other than heterosexuality, "is adequate to the interpersonal and cross-generational institution that we call marriage and family" (Brooke, 1993, p. 79).

The Catholic Church and Lutherans have labelled homosexual acts as intrinsically 'disordered' and 'evil,' respectively (Donnelly, 2013; Kieschnick, 2009). The Archbishop of Singapore stated that gays are detrimental to society (Johnson, 2014), while in Aotearoa New Zealand, a former Archbishop envisioned a world without gays (Masters, 2004). Religious institutions continue to play a powerful role in maintaining that stigma through heteronormative teachings and exclusionary policies. Rosik et al. (2007) suggested that religious conservative communities may be the only identifiable group still holding coherent negative beliefs toward lesbian and gay individuals. A public opinion survey reported that six in 10 white protestant evangelicals agree that

---

[16] Natural Law as it relates to human sexuality assumes that the male body is sexually made for the female body. Sperm are by their design oriented toward the egg and same-gendered sex and any sex other than vaginal intercourse cannot fulfil the purpose "written" into our physical form.

there should be no legal recognition for gay people and more than eight out of 10 hearing about homosexuality in church report their pastors say it should be discouraged by society (Pew Research Centre, 2011). In 1991, the American National Council of Churches "called the issue of homosexuality 'a great seismic fault' in the face of Christianity" (Hill & Watson, 2006, p. 37) and scholarship depicting this deep rift of conflict between religion and lesbian and gay individuals is well documented (Anderson, 2011; Brooke, 1993; Burgess, 1999; Dourley, 2010; R. Fisher, Derison, Polley, Cadman, & Johnston, 1994; Hill & Watson, 2006; Loughlin, 2018; Pizzuto, 2008; Sheetz-Willard, 2007).

The conflictual relationship between homosexuality and religion has given rise to an array of theoretical and theological models offering help to clergy who are required to minister pastorally to conservative and liberal factions in and outside the church. Such models included epistemological (Hodge, 2005), cognitive and personality (Radom, 2011), open and closed societal structures (Henrickson, 2009), and intrinsic versus extrinsic religious orientation (Walker, 2012). Within some Protestant denominations the emphasis is on homosexual "behaviour" rather than the state of being homosexual itself, as sinful. As a result, more churches are saying that they welcome lesbian and gay individuals; however, their official policies restrict them from being able to enjoy all the rights of passage and privileges such as taking up positions of church leadership, ordination, and marriage.

A rich authorship has depicted the correlation between religion and harm to lesbian and gay individuals resulting from its anti-homosexual bias (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Boswell, 1980; Ellison, Acevedo, & Ramos-Wada, 2011; R. Fisher et al., 1994; Greenberg & Bystryn, 1982; Hildebrandt, 2012; Kettell, 2013; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006; Sowe, Brown, & Taylor, 2014; Subhi & Geelan, 2012; Tatum, 2017). This hierarchy of mind over body that the church promotes creates a "bifurcated sexual existence" for lesbian and gay people who wish to remain part of a faith group (Anderson, 2011). Repression and/or disavowal of aspects of the Self run contrary to the notion of 'integration,' a fundamental tenet of psychotherapy that promotes psychological well-being. Rodriguez and Ouellette (2000) posited that the integration of one's religious and gay identities is the most psychologically beneficial outcome for lesbian and gay persons seeking to remain in their religious group.

Conflict between Christianity and same-sex marriage.

Religion has played an important role in the debate on same-sex marriage, perhaps more so than sexual orientation (Barclay & Fisher, 2003; Wald, Burton, & Rienzo, 1996; Walls, 2010). Debates about the legitimacy of same-sex marriage within American mainline denominations began in the mid-20th century (Sullivan-Blum, 2003). Prior to the introduction of same-sex marriage, civil unions were seen by many as something motivated by economic reasons and, as a civil ceremony, was viewed as separate from the church. Even then, religious variables played powerful roles in structuring attitudes; non-religious were much more likely to support same-sex unions than were religious and those who participated actively in religious life were more likely to oppose such unions (Olson et al., 2006). However, with the introduction of same-sex marriage, an already contentious debate between religion and homosexuality exploded as it challenged Christian marriage and institution of marriage itself.

In America, Canada, the UK, and Europe, theological perspectives from both sides of the same-sex marriage debate have been presented from mainline Protestant denominations (De Santis, 2007; Henwood, 2014; Olson et al., 2006; Radner, 2014; Sullivan-Blum, 2003, 2006; Young, 2006) and the Catholic Church (Bordeyne, 2006; Cunningham, 2005; Lemaitre, 2012; Ozzano, 2016). It is well established that Christian religions strongly influence individuals' views on same-sex marriage, in particular, for those who are opposed (Olson et al., 2006; Pearl & Galupo, 2007; Perales, Bouma, & Campbell, 2019). In the West, traditionalists and religious conservatives have been vocal in their opposition to same-sex marriage through their 'Protect Marriage' initiatives (Edwards, 2007; Goldingay, LeMarquand, Sumner, & Westberg, 2011; Van den Berg, 2017). Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia have not been spared this conflict from Christian churches in the same-sex marriage debate despite being comparatively more liberal and secular than other parts of the world (Boyer, 2012; Collins, 2013; Edwards, 2007; Turner, 2013).

As public opinion has shifted toward acceptance of same-sex marriage, diversity of views on the topic has increased among congregants. This has led to some religious institutions' reluctance to become politically involved to avoid conflict and retain unity among its members; while others have become more vocal in their opposition (Van Geest, 2007). Rights claims emanating from religious freedom clauses, which exempt clergy from marrying same-sex couples if it goes against their beliefs, have been examined (Djupe, Lewis, & Jelen, 2016) with one Aotearoa New Zealand author

(Adhar, 2014) arguing that the same rights protection offered to clergy be extended to non-religious celebrants.

Predictors of attitudes toward same-sex marriage by people of faith correlate with an individual's religious view of homosexuality. Ellison et al. (2011) asserted that religious variables perform better than demographic measures when examining attitudes toward same-sex marriage. A large scholarship documents associations between individuals' religious identification, attendance, and religious importance with negative views of same-sex marriage (Anderson, Georgantis, & Kapelles, 2017; Gay, Lynxwiler, & Smith, 2015; Patrick et al., 2013; Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2009; Sherkat, Mattias de Vries, & Creek, 2010; Whitley, 2009). Anderson et al. (2017), examined data from 137 Australians recruited through social media and found individuals who identified as religious were less likely to support same-sex marriage. Analysing data from a panel study of young Australians (Social Futures and Life Pathways Project, n=1,836), Smith (2016) identified religious importance as a significant indicator of negative views toward same-sex marriage, as did Sloane and Robillard (2017) who examined online data from 430 Australian students. Of significance was the association between those who identify as religiously conservative or evangelical and opposition to same-sex marriage (Gay et al., 2015; Perry, 2015; Perry & Whitehead, 2016; Schnabel, 2016; Sherkat, 2017; J. Smith, 2016; Whitley, 2009). These individuals' unsupportive views were largely driven by biblical literalism and beliefs in biblical inerrancy (Gay et al., 2015; Perry & Whitehead, 2016). Non-conservatives and those who were sporadic attenders to services were inclined to favour same-sex marriage (echoing Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006). Contrarily, conservative Protestants were almost uniformly opposed to same-sex marriage and this viewpoint was not contingent on the frequency of attendance at services. Religious identity, importance, and attendance associated with unsupportive views is perhaps unsurprising as these expose individuals to environments where negative views about same-sex behaviour are reinforced and restrict individuals' experiences which can normalise such behaviour (Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2009). Ellison et al. (2011) showed that, despite common assumptions that Latino Catholics are more conservative with regards to family values, Catholics—Latino and otherwise—tended to hold more moderate views of same-sex marriage than conservative Protestants.

Despite religiosity being a primary predictor of negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage, a growing literature about people of faith who advocate for the rights of gay

people has begun to emerge. The next section maps the beginnings and development of the Christian liberal movement that stand in support of same-sex marriage.

Christian liberal movement.

Beginnings…

Mainline Protestant clergy have long been involved in political and controversial socio-moral issues, i.e., slavery, women's and civil rights, nuclear-free movement, and the sanctuary movement (Deckman, Crawford, & Olson, 2008). Anderson (2011) believed such clergy's ethics were motivated by a vision of social justice, allowing them to move beyond the usual confines of conservative religious thinking. Early attempts by clergy to work with science/psychology were recorded in one of the first formal psychological studies of religion in 1902, and the Emmanuel Movement[17] in 1906. A shift from a punitive approach to a more Rogerian person-centred Christianity led to the formation of Norman Peal's Religio-Psychiatric Clinic in 1937, the Academy of Religion and Mental Health[18], and the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors in the 1950s and 60s (Michel, 1984). The Reverend Robert Wood (1960) argued that lesbian and gay individuals held a rightful place in church and society, and encouraged gay and lesbian people not to abandon either. In 1964, the San Francisco Council on Religion and Homosexuality was the first religiously-orientated American group designed to address discrimination against homosexuals and provide "legitimacy to the charges of police harassment that the word of a homosexual lacked" (Olson & Cadge, 2002, p. 155). Jones (1970) challenged the church to explore its theological perspective on same-sex marriage in his recounting of one of the first known same-sex unions officiated by a Methodist minister.

In another pioneering move, David Sindt founded Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns in 1974, and in 1978 Robert Davidson, a New York Presbyterian minister, wrote a statement of conscience that was the first step toward founding a grassroots congregational network that formally welcomed lesbian and gay men into their churches. By the 1990s, religious programmes or splinter groups supporting gay men and lesbians existed in most Christian denominations throughout America and Europe. Since then, an expanding body of academic work (Hunt, 2015; Mahaffy, 1996; Pitt,

---

[17] The Emmanuel Movement combined religion and modern medicine in meeting the psychological, physical, and spiritual needs of parishioners.
[18] The Academy of Religion and Mental Health was formed in America in 1956 as one of the earliest attempts of a religious-science association.

2010; E. M. Rodriguez, 2010; Eric M. Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Small, 2015; Sullivan-Blum, 2004; Walton, 2006; Wilcox, 2002) has documented the experiences of lesbian and gay Christians; specifically how individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community construct an identity that integrates their faith and sexuality.

Despite the increased grassroots activity, the opinions of most mainline clergy remained mixed. Polarised views about same-sex relations split churches into conservative and liberal factions, the former tending to take a literal view that the biblical passages prohibiting same-sex behaviour mean just that, while the latter emphasised the importance of history, context, translation, and interpretation.

Shifts in religious perceptions on homosexuality.

The Christian liberal movement has been documented through historical reviews (Anderson, 1997; Bos, 2017), theological exegesis (Gomes, 1996; Helminiak, 2000; Miner & Connoley, 2002; J. Rogers, 2009; Scroggs, 1984; Spong, 1991; Via & Gagnon, 2003), literature reviews (Keenan, 2007; J. Paul, 2017), and empirical research. The journeys from anti-gay to pro-gay have been reported among heterosexual-identified individuals from evangelical Christian backgrounds (Hildebrandt, 2012) and religious elites (Cragun, Sumerau, & Williams, 2015). Alongside these shifts, authors began challenging traditional religious views about human sexuality. Green (2009) explored how religious beliefs have been used to abusively 'divide and conquer,' and argued that beliefs about homosexuality have been used selectively to support destructive social pathologies rather than using their doctrinal content to bring people together across differences and conflicts. Analysing questionnaire data from 10 church leaders from different Christian mainstream denominations in North Carolina, Brooke (1993) drew associations between individuals' interpretation of homosexuality and Kohlberg's theory of moral development, suggesting higher levels of moral development equate with higher acceptance and support of gay rights.

As some religious institutions softened their stance on homosexuality, researchers began investigating predictors among church-goers that inhibited acceptance of lesbian and gay people into Christian congregations, while others offered theological perspectives to clergy and congregants about how they might effectively engage with sexual minority individuals (Adler, 2012; Krull, 2015; McQueeney, 2009; Whitehead, 2013). Using grounded theory, Zeininger, Holtzman, and Kraus (2017) interviewed 14 parents of faith who had accepted a family members' homosexuality. Earlier research indicated

families' acceptance often comes at the expense of their religious faith, i.e., moving to new more accommodating churches or choosing to ignore incongruent doctrines (Lease & Shulman, 2003). However, participants in Zeininger et al.'s (2017) study revealed significantly less conflict and felt relief "that their family member finally felt comfortable enough to disclose their sexual orientation" (p. 293). These authors found that the process of accepting one's gay or lesbian family member involves a complex interaction between a general desire to accept them, the degree to which one's religion promotes or opposes the acceptance of same-sex relationships, and the level of investment an individual has in his or her church.

Strengthening of religious support for same-sex marriage.

By the turn of the 21st century all mainline denominations, except for the United Church of Christ[19] (UCC) and the Universalist Unitarians[20] (UU), were struggling with the issues of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Catholics remained in strong opposition, while the Episcopal Church was deciding whether to develop marriage or union rites for same-sex couples (Olson & Cadge, 2002). Anglicans and United Methodists were taking disciplinary action against bishops for officiating at lesbian and gay weddings in defiance of denominational policy (Radner, 2014). American Baptists were struggling to decide what to do about the churches dis-membered from their regional bodies for their stance in supporting gay men and lesbians. Presbyterians officially took a 'sabbatical' from the issue. Religious institutions' opinions about same-sex marriage remained divided: some argued that there should be no same-sex marriages; others that same-sex unions might be permissible but objected to using the term 'marriage'; a growing number advocated for the full inclusion of lesbian and gay individuals in civic and congregational life (Olson & Cadge, 2002).

The ongoing same-sex debate in the church spurred by the Christian liberal movement has seen an increase in supportive literature. Much of this literature comprised theological exegeses linking biblical hermeneutics with Christian ethics regarding Christian same-sex unions (Brownson, 2013; Caldwell, 2010; Good, Jenkins, Kittredge, & Rogers, 2011; Robinson, 2013). Dreyer (2008) investigated historical textual

---

[19] In 1985, the UCC in America became the first mainline denomination to adopt affirming policies toward gay people at national level. Their General Synod voted in favour and advocating for the rights of same-sex marriage in 2005.

[20] The UU introduced inclusive policies toward gays and lesbians in 1989, and voted in favour of same-sex marriage in 1996. The Unitarian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, founded in 1898, passed a resolution about gay rights in 1970 to provide a spiritual home for those not fitting into orthodox Christian churches (Lee, 2013).

evidence on same-sex intimacy and demonstrated the changing theological views on sexuality and marriage. Furthermore, Dreyer noted that the church's historical legacy, which has alienated sexual minorities from faith communities, stems from the hegemony of heteronormativity based on an essentialist view of sexuality, as well as a positivist ethical reading of the New Testament texts and the contemporary world. Dreyer argued that "the ecclesia itself has not yet been transformed by the gospel message of inclusive love" (p. 739). Similarly, Chapman (2008, 2017) advocated that, in alignment with evangelical principles, lesbian and gay Christians could undertake a faithful and monogamous same-sex union as a Christian marriage before God with clear consciences. Coulmont (2005) drew parallels between same-sex unions and the issue of divorce asserting the same attitudinal shifts by the church—from being adamantly against divorce to establishing guidelines for people who wanted to re-marry—needed to take place with same-sex unions. With the strengthening of the Christian liberal movement, more studies explored factors which contributed to religious people's supportive attitudes for same-sex marriage.

Religious attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

Religious participation and political ideology have a powerful effect on attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Schwartz (2010), conducted a secondary analysis of the News Interest Survey[21] regarding participants views (n=710) on same-sex marriage and adoption by lesbian and gay parents. Findings revealed that liberals or people attending religious activities less regularly (i.e., less than once per month) held more favourable attitudes toward same-sex marriage, mirroring findings by Olson et al. (2006) and Jakobsson, Kotsadam, and Jakobsson (2013). Regular church-goers also felt more positive about adoption by lesbians and gays than they did about same-sex marriage. Therefore, gay rights advocates "might frame appeals for marriage rights to religious opinion leaders in terms of how legalised same-sex marriage would benefit the children of gays and lesbian couples" (p. 758). From a political perspective, research has revealed that individuals with conservative attitudes on morality are likely to oppose such unions (Jakobsson et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2010).

A Scandinavian study (Jakobsson et al., 2013) examined variables explaining attitudes toward same-sex marriage by analysing responses from an internet-based survey of 1,716 Norwegians and 1,815 Swedes. In addition to religious participation, the authors

---

[21] Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates for Pew Centre for People and the Press.

reported that gender, education, and people committed to gender equality were strong predictors of religious attitudes toward same-sex marriage: women were more likely than men to support same-sex marriage; higher education was positively related to attitudes towards same-sex marriage; people believing in gender equality were more likely to favour the rights of same-sex couples to marry. Data from three different telephone surveys of 976 adults across Louisiana, Arizona, and Minnesota revealed that women, Whites, and younger people tended to be more approving of same-sex marriage than men, Blacks, and older people (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008). Jakobsson et al. (2013) conversely found that age was not a significant predictor with his Scandinavian participants. This age disparity likely reflects the two country's predominant political ideologies and time difference between studies; the former being conducted five years prior, and the latter four years after, same-sex marriage was legalised in the respective country/states. The literature on predictors of religious attitudes toward same-sex marriage in the general population offers useful information; however, it is not known if these results would apply to clergy.

The growth of the Christian liberal movement over the last 100 years has led to certain religious institutions[22] becoming more supportive of same-sex marriage and some conducting same-sex blessings. The ensuing divide between conservative and liberal factions has caused rifts, with some member churches breaking away from governing bodies in protest over institutional stances (Crary, 2019; Farley, 2018; Gates, 2018; New Zealand Herald, 2019; Peachey, 2016), and some factions penalised for their liberal stance (Shirbon, 2016). The conflict over same-sex marriage has become, arguably, one of the most divisive issue to face religions in the last century, creating conflict for many Christians and threatening to tear churches apart (Myers & Scanzoni, 2006; Straw, 2015; Thompson, 2015, May 23). It is within this contentious context that clergy must decide whether, when, and how to express their views about human sexuality (Ammerman, 2002). The second section of this literature review considers the scholarship as it relates directly to clergy's perspectives on homosexuality and, more specifically, same-sex marriage.

---

[22] Churches that had more inclusive or tolerant policies regarding same-sex marriage include the Episcopal Church in America, United Church of Canada, Church of Sweden, UCC, UU, and the Metropolitan Community Church.

Clergy's perspectives

A rich literature exists at the intersection of the church/religion/Christianity and homosexuality, with a growing literature on the issue of same-sex marriage (Rodriguez, 2010). Most studies have been conducted in America, with some in Europe and other parts of the world, and depict dichotomised views in an ongoing heated debate. Danforth (2006) argued that Christians have a choice between reconciliation and divisiveness within this debate and "those who have chosen the latter course have received all the attention" (p. 17). This attention refers to academics at the denominational level which primarily address theological substance and policy statements and is weighted on representing collective viewpoints of those who oppose homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Significantly less is known about the views and experiences of church members or how clergy respond to the issue of gay rights at both denominational and parish levels (Cadge et al., 2008). Kennedy and Whitlock (1997) documented the views of conservative clergy who reject homosexuality, highlighting the significant role religious leaders play in shaping views about sexuality among their congregants. Less is known about religious leaders whose theological position would be considered liberal within their faith tradition. I begin by reviewing the literature regarding clergy's responses to homosexuality; however, it warrants noting that sometimes the boundaries are blurred in that clergy's responses, at times, included gay rights and same-sex marriage.

Clergy and homosexuality

It is well established that having an affirming faith experience can enhance the lives of religiously-orientated lesbian and gay individuals (Lease, Horne, & Noffsinger-Frazier, 2005; Eric M. Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Thumma & Gray, 2005), and that adverse interactions with one's faith group can promote internalised homophobia, social isolation, anxiety, and depression (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Kirby, 2008, 2009; Lease et al., 2005; Nicholson & Long, 1990; Eric M. Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; M. Ross & Rosser, 1996). For lesbian and gay Christians who wish to remain part of a faith group, the church provides an important source of support and identity formation (Bowland, Foster, & Vosler, 2013; Heermann, Wiggins, & Rutter, 2007; Love, Block, Jannaronne, & Richardson, 2005; Rostosky, Riggle, Brodnicki, & Olson, 2008; Walton, 2006), and integration of one's sexual identity and religious beliefs promotes psychological well-being (Primiano, 1993; Eric M. Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Shokeid, 1995; Wilcox, 2002). It is especially helpful if a member of the clergy facilitates a process of identity

reconciliation, primarily through affirming faith experiences. As such, clergy are in a unique position to impact people's lives, both at congregational and social levels. The knowledge and skill of pastoral care providers—i.e., having an historical perspective, self-awareness, a non-judgemental attitude, expanding definitions and understanding the power of words—were reported to be significant factors contributing to 27 lesbian and gay Christians integrating spiritual issues with their sexual orientation (Bowland et al., 2013).

Homosexuality: A complex issue for clergy.

The issue of homosexuality is on most clergy's minds (Olson & Cadge, 2002). However, Cadge and Wildeman (2008) found that after the 'culture war' (Hunter, 1991) stemming from the controversial election and ordination of the first openly gay Anglican Bishop in 2003, many clergy—heterosexual and homosexual—were reluctant to vocalise their personal beliefs about the issue of homosexuality within the church for fear of dividing congregations and/or jeopardising their careers. According to Hildebrandt (2012), clergy, as employees, may experience more difficulty than laity in supporting gay men and lesbians due to formal ties with their denomination's theology and identification with the church. This could restrict freedom of thought and action. Analysing data from in-depth telephone interviews with 62 clergy from across America, Olson and Cadge (2002) found that clergy tended to focus on denominational debates and the impact of homosexuality on the church rather than discuss or take action over the issue within their own congregations. This raises questions as to the exact nature of the relationship clergy have with their institutions, congregations, and wider community.

Using grounded theory methodology, Cadge, Lyleroehr, and Olson (2012) interviewed 23 Catholic and Episcopal parish priests to examine whether, how, and why clergy choose to undertake public or private action regarding homosexuality. Findings revealed that 83% of Episcopal priests (n=10) and 64% of Catholic priests (n=7) undertook some action—sermons, counselling, informal teaching, conversation—around homosexuality. Episcopal clergy were more likely to address homosexuality outside of their parishes and describe their actions using social justice frames. This likely reflects a divergence between the two religious traditions' official policies about homosexuality.

Supportive clergy who did address homosexuality with their congregations circumvented institutional restrictions—i.e., external pressure from above (institutional)

and below (congregational)—by taking a more pragmatic or pastoral approach as a way to share personal beliefs (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012; Olson & Cadge, 2002). Olson and Cadge (2002) suggested that denominational affiliation, gender, race, and geographical region might influence a clergy's likelihood of being willing to speak on the issue of homosexuality.

Shifts in clergy's perspectives.

In another grounded theory inquiry, Cadge et al. (2012) moved beyond the simple dichotomised views of clergy toward homosexuality and recognised the importance of allowing conceptual room for ambiguity. These researchers found a significant number (70%) of the 40-clergy interviewed, expressed uncertainty about whether homosexuality is innate or chosen, the appropriateness of same-sex marriage, and the mismatch between moral opposition and positive experiences with gay people. One clergy-member explained, "What I believe today about this issue I may not be believing tomorrow… as I continue down the pathway of maturity" (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012). This implies clergy's views are neither simplistic nor one-dimensional and reveals the often processual and multivalent nature of this complex socio-moral issue (J. Dewey et al., 2014; Hildebrandt, 2012). Despite reports of ambiguity, many clergy according to Jones and Cox (2009) stated that their views on gay and lesbian issues were an on-going process and that their thinking had become more liberal.

Following the idea of process, Hildebrandt (2012) explored the stages of conversion and transformational learning of 12 heterosexual-identified individuals with an evangelical Christian background who journeyed from anti-gay to pro-gay. Contributors to their process included personal crisis, sociocultural context, space to discuss concerns in a non-judgemental environment, choice that sexuality was innate, rejection of biblical literalism for alternate hermeneutics, love being a motivator for change, and personal experience with oppression. Thomas and Olson (2012) challenged assumptions that evangelical elites are intransigent in their opposition to homosexuality. Using content analysis of the popular evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, the authors suggested that, whilst there is some validity to the perception that evangelical elites are uncompromising in their views, alternative positions on these debates are developing, "particularly as evidenced in the responses of public and personal accommodation" (p. 267). This softening in moral reasoning was explained by a shift of moral authority from solely biblical interpretations to accommodate knowledge from science, medicine,

and the natural order. This, the authors attested, demonstrated a trajectory of change that portends increasing liberalisation of some evangelicals' theological reasoning.

Handling conflict.

In their roles, clergy are regularly required to deal with conflict particularly on contentious issues. Half (51%) of the Christians church-goers participating in an American public opinion survey believed that same-sex marriage goes against their religious beliefs (Jones et al., 2014). This can create conflict where clergy are called to engage in deliberation processes and employ conflict resolution strategies to deal with the issues of homosexuality in their congregations. Key to the successful resolution of such conflict (even if to agree to disagree) includes taking a multi-level approach incorporating the emotional well-being of congregants as well as the official policy of their denomination, and having meaningful contact with LGBTIQ+ persons (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a; Estwick, 2010). The latter has long been positively correlated to the reduction of fear and prejudice (Allport, 1954; Borgman, 2009; J. Dewey et al., 2014; Henrickson, 2009). While these studies provide useful information about how clergy manage the conflicts of others it does not convey how these individuals might handle the same conflict within themselves.

Clergy as allies of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Using grounded theory, Cadge and Wildeman (2008) interviewed 30 supportive Protestant clergy regarding how such individuals positioned themselves with their congregations regarding homosexuality. In responding to homosexuality, participants negotiated their roles and developed a range of identities as facilitators, and quiet or outspoken advocates. This range of positions suggests that the degree of affirmation and extent of advocacy is less homogenous than might have been expected in individuals who identify as gay-affirming, echoing a recent Australian study by Perales et al. (2019) which found high degrees of within-group heterogeneity in support of equal rights for same-sex couples.

Analysing data using consensual qualitative research (CQR) methods, that combine elements of phenomenology (Giorgi, 1985) and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Dewey et al. (2014) interviewed 13 supportive heterosexual clergy from protestant parishes invested in fostering change toward making Christianity more inclusive for lesbian and gay people. The researchers investigated factors contributing to

the development of the activist worldviews, and the beliefs and experiences that sustained their efforts. Advocacy was found to be central to participants' identity and behavioural manifestations, with the more outward advocates explicitly preaching about gay rights and having contact with the LGBTIQ+ community. The underlying motivations, principles, and beliefs of this growing subset of clergy was based on the view that their denominational exclusive policies were wrong and unjust, that selective biblical literacy was invalid, and an understanding of how fear created bias. LGBTIQ+ affirming clergy saw, as a moral imperative, the need to provide a counter-voice to the exclusionary policies espoused by many traditional church leaders. They embraced theologically-driven views that heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality are natural variations of human sexuality that are equally acceptable to God. In addition, these participants held a belief that they were on 'the right side of history' with an optimism that a sea of change was underway. However, three participants, while resolute on their supportive views, positioned themselves more subtly with regards their advocacy role and reported ambivalence about who, how, and when to speak about homosexuality which restricted their actions. Dewey's sample was small and mainly reflected the views of white clergy who identified as strong LGBTIQ+ allies invested in fostering change. Less is known about those who identify as facilitators, quiet supporters, or quiet advocates. Dewey et al.'s study raises questions about whether the findings of supportive clergy's experiences of homosexuality would follow the same patterns on the issue of same-sex marriage. Participants' in Dewey et al.'s study also located 'fear' as a primary factor underlying congregants' anti-gay bias; their fear of sexuality, gay and lesbian people, as well as scriptural misinterpretation (echoing Cadge et al., 2008).

Lesbian and gay clergy.

Other related research (Fischer, 1989; Gerow, 2010; Haneke, 2018; Meza, 2013; Mungello, 2009; Simon, 2016) includes inquiry into the lives and experiences of lesbian and gay clergy and how their sexual orientation and/or gender roles impact their pastoral work. Haneke (2018) studied the experiences of LGBTIQ+ pastors from a major German Protestant church and reported that knowledge of, and shared experiences with, similarly-marginalised people played an important role in carrying out their ministry. By embracing those experiences and community knowledge as part of their pastoral theology, lesbian and gay clergy strengthened their pastoral work. In a gender analysis of 11 lesbian and gay Christian clergy living in San Francisco, Fischer

(1989) summated that female respondents had greater similarity in their emphasis upon relationality; whereas men, while not negating the value of relationship, revealed concern with personal presence and freedom from authority. Men were perceived to be struggling "to be," while women expressed a satisfaction in "being with" (Fischer, p. 172). One might surmise that while men prioritised different concerns, the concept of relationship remained important to both clergymen and clergywomen. In a CGT study, Gerow (2010) interviewed 12 gay clergy to explore what encouraged and/or discouraged queer clergy to enter and remain in their traditionally-heteronormative occupations. Findings indicated that the factors influencing individuals to enter ministry mirrored those that caused them to remain in their ministry: God's calling, early influences, seminary experiences, political activism for change to counteract denominational practices, policies and homophobia. Participants maintained their positions through a love and affection for their congregants, through holding hope for change that would bring a church polity that was good for all its members, and overarching positivity about the good of their faith tradition.

Predictors of clergy's attitudes towards homosexuality.

In two large studies (Cheatham, 2006; Park, Perez, & Ramirez-Johnson, 2016), religious beliefs, education, and knowledge were identified as predictors influencing clergy's views on homosexuality. Park et al. (2016) interviewed 231 senior Protestant and Catholic clergy in Texas over a five month period and findings revealed that "the less education the individual had, the more likely he or she viewed homosexuals as being more psychologically disturbed than heterosexuals" (p. 778). While the authors did not operationalise the meaning of 'disturbance,' argument was made for greater education and training of religious leaders. Analysing the results of a self-report survey of 1,000 American Protestant clergy, Cheatham (2006) found that training and contact with lesbian and gay people can transmit knowledge to clergy, which can be associated with more positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. While knowledge was a consistent and significant predictor of attitudes, religious conservative beliefs significantly predicted more negative attitudes. This review now turns to the literature directly related that of clergy who support same-sex marriage.

Clergy and same-sex marriage

From the earliest times, religion has been perceived as an authority on socio-moral issues within society. Clergy, who are seen to represent this moral authority, hold

influential positions as opinion leaders with the capability to influence discourses within religion and beyond. Therefore, clergy might be better situated to advocate for gay rights such as same-sex marriage than other individuals and/or organisations that are seen as advocacy-orientated (Kazyak, 2011). The impact of clergy's perspectives is reflected in the findings of a state-wide Californian public opinion survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute (Jones & Cox, 2010). The data from telephone interviews of a random sample of 2,801 adults aged 18 years or older showed that clergy's views and rhetoric on homosexuality are positively correlated with congregants' views on same-sex marriage. Of those congregants who reported hearing negative messages from their clergy on the issue of homosexuality, fewer (19%) supported same-sex marriage. In striking contrast, of those congregants who reported hearing positive messages from clergy about homosexuality, 60% said lesbian and gay individuals should be allowed to marry.

Much of the discourse over same-sex marriage has been voiced through the writings of popular theologians, provocateurs, public opinion surveys, and media reports filling a void left by clergy who are often hesitant to address this controversial topic publicly (Caldwell, 2010). Empirical research pertaining to clergy who are supportive of gay rights and touch on same-sex marriage is limited to a handful of sociological studies. No known studies in the combined sociological and psychology scholarship have yet examined in depth clergy's perspectives on same-sex marriage (Estwick, 2010). While previous study on religious attitudes toward homosexual individuals provides an initial theoretical framework, "attitudes toward same-sex marriage may not necessarily follow the same pattern" (Jakobsson et al., 2013, p. 1351). Accepting gay partnerships is one thing, but to accept a redefinition of the institution of marriage itself can be more problematic for many religious people (Goldingay et al., 2011). Pearl and Galupo (as cited in Jakobsson et al., 2013) suggested this is because the issue of same-sex marriage is potentially more likely to invoke a morally-based response because marriage has traditionally been associated with religion. I would argue that knowing more about clergy's supportive views of same-sex marriage is vital. As more clergy soften their stance on homosexuality as a sexual orientation, the 'problem' can easily be shifted to the behaviour rather than the individual. However, the problem still exists; whereas a view by clergy that Christian faith and same-sex marriage is compatible supports full acceptance of lesbian and gay people.

The literature pertaining to supportive clergy and same-sex marriage comprises three themes: theological perspectives built on latest biblical scholarship and principles of social justice, gender as a predictor of clergy's attitudes and behaviour toward same-sex marriage, and conflict resolution among clergy over same-sex marriage.

Theological perspectives: Biblical scholarship and principles of social justice.

In his examination and critique of the common, competing theologies employed to address the viability of Christian same-sex unions, Caldwell (2010) proposed a biblical theology as a constructive, conciliatory alternative. He contended that Christian communities whose controlling influence was Scripture must accept the biblical testimony on the identity of human beings and the calling of human beings to image God's covenant of faithfulness through the gift of sexuality, regardless of sexual orientation. Similarly, Oliver (1996), a gay clergy member, argued for the church to recognise same-sex marriage by proposing the means by which this would be achievable. His theological perspective included working to accommodate lesbian and gay people's experience as: a marginalised, outcast part of society with its accompanying shaming, hatred, discrimination and violence; lovers in relationship with a universal need of belonging; worshipping Christians and members of a larger Christian organisation; the welcoming church praising God in gratitude for God's love manifest in the love of lesbian and gay people and their relationships. Other exegeses on homosexuality have been extended by clerical academics to support biblical arguments for same-sex marriage (Achtemeier, 2014; Loader, 2014; Whitaker, 2017). These are primarily hermeneutical studies focusing on inaccuracies in early biblical translations that have led to misinterpretations about homosexuality and same-sex behaviour. While it could be argued that literature on biblical hermeneutics is important if only because clergy are expected to explain laity concerns about the bible's perceived prohibitions, I chose not to include them in this review because this study's focus is sociological rather than theological and it would, therefore, expand investigations beyond the scope of this research.

Gender as a predictor of clergy's attitudes and behaviour toward same-sex marriage.

Literature about predictors of clergy's attitudes and behaviour toward same-sex marriage is scarce compared with literature exploring the same in the general population. Gender as it relates to clergy's views about same-sex marriage, however, is one area that has been investigated. Robins (2007) analysed survey responses from

1,459 clergy from the Church of England in the UK to explore the extent to which clergywomen brought a more inclusive set of values and beliefs to their ministry. Questions relating to the issue of same-sex marriage were included in the questionnaire. Findings revealed that clergywomen are significantly more supportive of the idea of ordaining practising homosexuals than clergymen. Furthermore, clergywomen are more supportive of same-sex relationships. Almost half (47%) of clergymen agreed that it was wrong for people of the same gender to have sex together, compared to 32% of clergywomen. A quarter (26%) of clergywomen agreed that same-gender couples should have the right to marry one another compared with 19% of clergymen. These findings were similar to Deckman, Crawford, and Olson (2008) who analysed the data of 3,208 clergy from six mainline protestant denominations in a national random survey in America. These authors reported that the gap between men and women (women were more likely to speak out or take action) on gay rights issues is large, significant, and growing. Ten percent of women were clergy at the time of the study, and this percentage is growing (Hunter & Sargeant, 1993), which could affect future projections on the issue. These gender studies echo earlier findings by Stevens (1989) who found that clergywomen were likely to be more inclusive regarding gay people in their ministry and work more collaboratively and democratically with the aim of empowering others. Since the more recent literature on gender as a predictor of clergy's attitudes was published 11 years ago, public opinion regarding same-sex marriage has changed significantly, so the findings may also have shifted.

Conflict resolution among clergy over same-sex marriage.

Due to the contentiousness around the same-sex marriage debate it is perhaps not surprising that conflict is an inevitable part of supportive clergy's lives. Recent research (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a; Massey, 2014; Meek, 2015) has included how clergy deal with conflict about gay rights and same-sex marriage. Analysing data from 148 clergy who responded to a mail survey in Columbus, Ohio, Djupe, and Neiheisel (2008a, 2008b) aimed to connect the conflictual debates among denominational leaders with the way clergy present arguments about homosexuality and gay rights to their congregations. Previous research (Djupe & Gilbert, 2002; Olson & Cadge, 2002) highlighted the complexity of these debates with some clergy expressing degrees of ambivalence which resulted in less argumentation to their congregations, perhaps inhibiting their deliberations, especially if clergy were crucial in initiating conversations in congregations. Djupe and Neiheisel's (2008a, 2008b) findings from their survey

identified that the greatest effect on clergy's public speech, over and above denominational and congregational influences, was clergy's personal motivations which saw them moderate their opinions, especially when confronted with a variety of conflicted views. This suggests clergy take a reflective approach and might be expected to balance their own supportive views while considering the stance of the institutions to which they belong.

Investigating denominational conflict, Massey (2014), using discourse analysis, explored clergy leadership in the midst of the Iowa and Presbyterian Church (USA) conflict over same-gender marriage. Although a small sample (n=5), Massey found that some clergy accepted conflict while others avoided it; yet, participants believed that God's intention was that the church should be diverse and inclusive. As a result, participants valued member conflicts through empowering openness and valuing difference. Conflict accompanies change. A key finding was that leadership initiatives that foster transformed communities to reflect the 'realm of God' occurred through seeing, appreciating, and encouraging the experience of relational differences that invite affective change. This necessitated "revisiting reformed theology arising from the Bible" (p. 278). Meek (2015) employed descriptive case study methodology to explore a United Methodist (USA) congregation's response when their dissenting Pastor supported and performed same-sex marriages in violation of the denomination's regulations and sought to change *The book of discipline's* language pertaining to homosexuality. Interview data (n=10) from the dissenting clergy-member, his wife, lay congregational members and a regional superintendent identified six themes—dialogue; general concerns; ideology; denominational concerns; outcomes of dissension; and an uncertain future—that provided useful theoretical frameworks about what within-group dissent looks like and the types of congregational roadblocks preventing social change. The Pastor's actions of combating the injustices he saw against the LGBTIQ+ people, which he felt called to do or leave, led to the disintegration of cooperation from his congregation. These studies yielded important information about the nature of conflict and how religious leaders use their positions to deliberate with, and institute social change in, their congregations rather than how clergy manage this conflict themselves.

Summary and focus of study

Religion is a powerful and influential force in the West on socio-moral issues and remains an important barrier to the social inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in

contemporary society (Perales et al., 2019). Rosik et al. (2007) claimed that Conservative and Evangelical religious communities may be the only identifiable group still perpetuating coherent negative beliefs toward lesbian and gay people, restricting them from the full rights and privileges enjoyed by their heterosexual members. Clergy, as church leaders, are instrumental in administering religious controls and, particularly, those who support same-sex marriage play a crucial role in advocating for positive change by standing up and challenging religious institutions' traditional stance that impedes social equality based on an individual's sexual orientation. Therefore, it is vital that we understand more about what underlies the thoughts, actions, and processes of individuals within this small but growing group.

A review of the literature has revealed a rich scholarship at the intersection between religion, homosexuality, and gay rights. This scholarship depicts polarised views with attention largely reflecting theological substance and policy at denominational level. Significantly less is known about how individuals within the church respond to the issue, in particular clergy at parishioner level who deal with the issue of homosexuality, and more specifically same-sex marriage, within their institutions, congregations, and communities. The study presented in this thesis builds on previous research that has investigated clergy's responses to homosexuality and gay rights (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; J. Dewey et al., 2014) and fills a gap by specifically focusing on the responses of clergy who support same-sex marriage as a separate issue.

The bulk of the substantive research has been carried out in America (Perales et al., 2019) which, according to some sociologists of religion, is "exceptional" due to the high attendance rates of church-goers which are dominated by evangelical and charismatic protestants (Berger, Davie, & Fokas, 2008). This study expands the international evidence to Aotearoa New Zealand and contributes to a growing scholarship in Australia. This study aimed to explore what drives clergy's supportive perspectives and to uncover the processes underlying the actions that sustain them in their positions. The research questions that directed the research inquiry into the responses of clergy who support same-sex marriage were:

- What contributes to clergy's supportive views of same-sex marriage?
- How do they manage their daily lives holding these supportive views?

Conclusion

This chapter began by explaining the place of the literature review in grounded theory research and clarified the method adopted in this study. I outlined the search strategy I employed to locate evaluate and synthesise relevant literature. In the last section of the chapter, a review of the literature was presented, initially providing a context within which to situate the study and, thereafter, moving toward studies directly related to the research topic. Finally, the focus of the study, including the questions directing the research, was specified.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale behind the methodological approach used in this study. It begins with an outline of pragmatism and constructivism which provide the ontological and epistemological underpinnings adopted in this inquiry. Next, grounded theory is introduced as the methodological process that shaped the research: the origins and development of grounded theory, variants, and constructivist grounded theory (CGT), as described by Charmaz (2014a) and which was chosen for this research, is detailed. Finally, an evaluation of grounded theory is provided.

Ontological positioning: Pragmatism

Origins and development

Ontology refers to the form, nature, and what can be known about reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The ontological position of this study reflects the ideas of pragmatism, an American philosophical framework stemming from the University of Chicago. Introduced by logician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), in the early 1870s, it was psychologist William James (1842-1910), in 1898, who first coined the term pragmatism and John Dewey (1859-1952) who brought pragmatism to the fore in the early 20th century.

Peirce (1878) originally sought to delineate phenomena encountered in immediate experience through his early essays, notably '*How to make our ideas clear*.' From James' contributions, two streams of pragmatism emerged. One was a "pragmatist-naturalist philosophy that focused on a nature of and genesis of a shared world, intersubjectivity, and communication" (M. Rogers, 1981, p. 140), which subsequently became the focus of Mead's sociological work and Blumer's (1969) naming of the term symbolic interactionism, later espoused by Strauss. The other stream, a subtler Glaserian pragmatism link, was developed by Lazarsfeld, Merton, and more recently Nathanial (2011). These thinkers noted the convergence of Peircian pragmatism and classic grounded theory through the correlation of the pragmatist-scientific method which has commonalities through reality, latent patterns, and the human perspective.

However, those who follow Glaser rarely acknowledge or claim the Peircian link (Charmaz, 2017). Contemporary pragmatism is divided between the analytical tradition (Brandom, 2011) and 'neo-classical pragmatism.' The latter is associated with Susan Haack (1993) and is more aligned with the original ideas of Peirce and James, with its emphasis of experience in the construction of meaning and reality. CGT has retained its pragmatist foundation through Strauss (1959, 1961, 1993) and is influenced by Dewey, Mead, and central ideas of Peirce (Charmaz, 2017).

Key tenets of pragmatist ontology

Reality, or meaning, can be understood as objectivist (meaning resides in the object) or subjectivist (meaning resides in the subject) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In applying the notion of evolution to theories of knowing, as influenced by Charles Darwin (J Dewey, 1910), pragmatism falls between objectivism and subjectivism in that it recognises an external world and considers how organisms navigate within their environment through the process of ongoing change. James (1907) contended that we live in a world that is in the process of becoming and, in Dewey's (1925/1984) words, "a universe whose evolution is not finished" (p. 13). The inferences and judgements in people's thinking, which lead to action, are not original but emerge from antecedent reality. The temporality of action, which is subject to consequences and contingencies in the world, means process is central in pragmatist thinking. Dewey (1929) claimed, "Because we live in a world in process, the future, although continuous with the past is not its bare repetition" (p. 40). Through the accumulation of collective knowledge, thought, and meanings, society evolves and changes over time. Current 'truth' requires continual validation and may, eventually, be judged as partly or even wholly wrong. Therefore, reality is viewed as contextually-bound, somewhat fluid and indeterminate, and open to multiple interpretations. For the pragmatist, acts of knowing embody perspectives and cannot be separated from the preconceptions of the knower.

Dewey (1929) stated, "ideas are not statements of what is or has been but of acts to be performed" (p. 138); therefore, human beings' actions need to be studied as it is through their actions that humans come to know their world. Typically, reflective thinking arises by testing the means toward the resolution of a problem. The testing of ideas is "found in the consequences of the acts to which the ideas lead, that is in the new arrangement of things which are brought into existence" (J Dewey, 1929, p. 136). In other words, an

idea or proposition is true only in so much as whether it works satisfactorily; and the meaning of a proposition is found in the practical consequences of accepting it.

Thayer (1947) argued that pragmatism is not so much a philosophy or a 'theory of truth' as it is a technique for finding solutions of a philosophical or scientific nature. In 1877, Peirce suggested resolutions are reached by one of three ways: a) accept the first available hypothesis; b) accept what culture or those in authority preach; or c) accept a hypothesis that seems the best. These suggestions raised the question of how hypotheses are generated and led Peirce to delineate his logic of 'abduction' which sought to explain observable facts through a general principle or means of conceptualisation. So, how does one think conceptually in a pragmatic way? Marriage is a concept, one that concerns a relationship. We each use our concept of marriage to explain and predict experience whenever we make an inference to marriage. Using a concept in this way is to think pragmatically. To think un-pragmatically is to hold a concept that is not supported by experience. I may hold to the concept of marriage as only being between one man and one woman, even though same-sex couples can and do marry. To persist in my concept of marriage and call into question the veracity of evidence that challenges the concept I hold is to think unpragmatically; to "force the square peg of authoritative tenets into the round hole of experience" (P. Campbell, 2011, p. 9).

In a report of the Peircian Harvard lectures (1903), Campbell (2011) explained that for Peirce, pragmatism was "nothing more than the logic of abduction" (Lecture VII, p. 282). Peirce explained his theory of abduction as follows:

> The surprising fact, C, is observed.
> But if A were true, C would be a matter of course.
> Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true. (Peirce, Lecture VII, p. 245)

Abduction (or conceptualisation), therefore, links the pieces that were in our minds, revealing anew their connection or relationship. As every conception is of conceivable practical effects (Peirce, 1903), abduction is abstracted from direct experience and ultimately must return, once again, to inform experience (P. Campbell, 2011). Daniel, a participant in this study, encapsulated this process when he stated:

> *I think the experience preceded the change in theology. For me, it's always been experience that sends you back to your theology and requires that you do the theological work, but out of the context of relationships and experiences. I've been able to both theologically and pastorally come to a very different position than what I was raised with.*

Having outlined the pragmatist ontology underpinning this study, I turn next to the epistemology which characterises the research design.

Epistemological positioning: Constructivism

Any research inquiry seeking to explain how we view and make sense of the world involves knowledge; thus, requiring an understanding of what knowing entails and what is knowable. Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known. It provides a philosophical grounding for deciding the scope and possibilities of knowledge and ensuring both are adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994). The constructivist epistemology adopted in this study is embedded in the ontological perspective of pragmatism which elaborates the assumptions brought to the current research. Further, pragmatism is reflected in grounded theory methodology, providing a framework for understanding what constitutes as knowledge and guiding how we view and approach inquiry.

Key tenets of a constructivist epistemology

For the constructivist, relativity and subjectivity enter ontological and epistemological assumptions cognisant with a post-modern world-view. A constructivist approach is qualitative, interpretivist, and claims that there is no absolute truth to discover; rather, reality is multiple, processual, and constructed (Charmaz, 2014a). From this perspective, all meaningful reality "is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Thus, a plurality of meaning exists which is contingent upon context; the relationship between history and biography (C. Mills, 1967). Constructivism differs from an objectivist epistemology—the traditional framework of the scientific method— which holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists independent of consciousness (Crotty, 1998). This objectivist underpinning evident in positivist inquiry, which Kuhn (1970) called 'normal science', assumes there is a 'real' world that can be known and requires the knower to adopt a posture of objective detachment in order "to discover how things really are" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). There is a presumption that the knower and the known are independent entities that do not influence one another. There is a search to discover an objective 'truth,' for the facts in

an objectivist orientation are quantifiable terms and empirical data are held in the highest esteem. I concur with Archer (1998) that to expect any objective view of reality to be entirely accurate is naïve.

Constructivists assume that meaning is constructed by individuals when their consciousness engages with objects; however, it does not deny the existence of an external reality. While I espouse many of the key tenets of constructivism, which shares threads from a subjectivism viewpoint, I have difficulty with the extreme view of radical constructionism which places meaning as residing solely with the subject and claims reality cannot exist independent of human thought. I align with the notion of unperceived existence raised by Berkley (1982) and the belief in the possibility that certain phenomena in our world, and beyond, may exist without our observation and understanding. At the same time, I am drawn to Brentano's (1874) concept of intentionality inherent in phenomenology, which emphasises the active relationship between the conscious subject and the object of the subject's consciousness in the construction of meaning that makes sense for individuals; even if this consciousness is incomplete. While constructed meanings may vary depending on the biographical, historical, social, and cultural norms assigned to the objects or events, and be complex in what they represent, ultimately, I believe people do not create meaning; they construct meaning (Crotty, 1998).

Assuming that knowledge is constructed, the researcher's position, privileges, perspectives, and interactions are taken into account as an inherent part of the research, which is also a construction (Charmaz, 2014a). Constructivist research acknowledges that such preconceptions shape analysis, including the researcher's values that shape the very facts that he/she can identify. Although this perspective treats research as a construction it also recognises that it occurs under specific conditions, of which we may or may not be aware. A constructivist epistemology acknowledges that much of what people know and how they make sense of things is founded on tacit knowledge. Therefore, constructivist research seeks to explain what is consciously known, and uncover the extent to which the studied experience is embedded in larger and often hidden structures, networks, situations, and relationships (Clarke, 2005).

Marx (1852) explained that men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please or under self-selected circumstances, rather under existing circumstances, given and transmitted from the past. Thus, relativism characterises the research

endeavour, and the view of research as a construction, rather than a discovery, supports the notion of researcher reflexivity (Clarke, 2005). Although neither the observer and observed come to the scene untouched by their world, it is the researcher not the researched who is obligated to be reflexive about what is brought to the scene and how it is seen (Charmaz, 2014a). I have articulated my endeavours to safeguard against bias in Chapter Four, Research Methods.

Social constructionism and constructivism

The terms constructivism and social constructionism tend to be used interchangeably in the literature and, according to Andrews (2012), subsumed under a generic term 'constructivism.' Constructions can be—depending on the context—knowledge, facts, or things. In a grounded theory study, constructs include accounts collected from participant interviews, analyses, and theories (Sismondo, 1993; Ward, Hoare, & Gott, 2015).

Social constructionism is credited to Berger and Luckmann (1966) who acknowledged the influence of Mead, Marx, Shutz, and Durkheim on their thinking (Andrews, 2012). Berger and Luckmann's approach highlights the social origin of meaning through the creation of constructs and understanding between people and within societies which inevitably shape our understanding and perception of what is knowable and what is real. The word 'social' refers to the mode of meaning generation that people *collectively* attribute to phenomena with which they engage. Knowledge is not just there, rather we are born into "a publicly available system of intelligibility" (Fish, 1990, p. 186) or, to use Geertz's (1973) words, "a system of significant systems" (p. 49) that precedes us and teaches us how to see things and what to see. The social scientist, therefore, rejects the notion of coming to phenomena as a tabula rasa and instead recognises social interaction as the avenue through which common knowledge is constructed and reconstructed via discourse. The social constructionist is tasked with a 'double hermeneutic' in that he/she must first grasp the frames of meaning that individuals use in the construction of social life, and then understand how these conceptual schemes are reconstituted within the practical, collective organisation of social life (Giddens, 1976). The idea that social realities are socially constructed is widely accepted, but what distinguishes social constructionism from the positivist stance inherent in objectivism is that all meaningful reality, not just social reality, is socially constructed. Constructionist inquiry, therefore, seeks to uncover basic social processes (Crotty, 1998).

Main criticisms of social constructionism have been for its perceived conceptualisation of realism and relativism; it is accused of being anti-realist in denying that knowledge is a direct perception of reality (Craib, 1997). Hammersley (1992) argued that the solution is for social constructionism to take a midway position that acknowledges the existence of an independent reality but denies there can be direct access to that reality. He purported representation (inquiry will be from the perspective of the researcher) and not reproduction of social phenomena, thereby emphasising researcher reflexivity and influence on the research process (Andrews, 2012).

Empirical evidence for constructivism has grown in recent years and asserts that knowledge is not simply shared or transmitted between people but *individually* constructed by the learner as an active participant through direct experience (Loftus, 1975; Neisser, 1981), which, over time, becomes perceived as taken-for-granted objective realities (Sismondo, 1993). Knowledge and meaning for the individual is culturally, historically, and biographically bound. Meaning-making is achieved through individuals constructing new knowledge structures (schemes) and building (reconstructing) on pre-existing schemes through a process of assimilation and accommodation for the purpose of finding balance between the environment and emerging mental structures (Archer, 1998). Some argue a constructivist inquiry, with its focus on the participant's reality in outcomes, does not fully-acknowledge the influence of the researcher in the construction of the research process (Andrews, 2012; Sismondo, 1993) and, therefore, does not fully align with socially-constructed knowledge. Charmaz's CGT, however, argues for the acknowledgement of the researcher as co-constructor of the research process and outcomes (Ward et al., 2015). Charmaz's (2017) choice of the descriptor 'constructivist' was intended to reposition the researcher in the participant/researcher relationship against a backdrop of increasing popularity in social constructionism that emphasised the role of social structures on knowledge creation at the expense of recognising the contribution of the researcher. This distanced Charmaz from Glaserian objectivism and distinguished her from the absolute relativist stance of radical constructionism (Ward et al., 2015).

I acknowledge the role of the individual and social life in the construction of knowledge and meaning and believe that constructivism and social constructionism are not separate identities but act interdependently, each informing the other. However, while participants are expected to have some awareness of social structures and their influences, the aim of this study is to provide a theoretical explanation of how

participants construct meaning of same-sex marriage through their individual experiences and is, therefore, constructivist in its orientation.

A pragmatist and constructivism philosophy and religion

Peirce regularly mentioned some aspect of religion in most contexts (Ketner, 1998), and James (1902) and Dewey (1934) investigated the role of religion, respectively, in *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature* and *A common faith*. Yet, pragmatists can be generally negative towards organised religion, particularly toward those who assert their views are 'the truth, the only truth, and nothing but the truth,' to the exclusion of other ways of thinking, including other faiths. However, one can be pragmatically religious when basing one's views on subjective choice and what works for individuals or groups of believers. Peirce suggested faith was compatible with what he termed the scientific spirit and, in fact, identified his purpose as worshipping God in the development of ideas and of truth (Ketner, 1987). James (1907) noted the existence of "an empirical philosophy that is not religious enough and a religious philosophy that is not empirical enough" and advocated for an approach that was "both empiricist in its adherence to facts yet finds room for faith" (p. 15).

Spiritual truth as developmental, contextually-bound, based on reason, and open to multiple interpretations can pose a challenge to Christians because there is a denial of objective truth. All social constructionists, save the most radical, admit the existence of a reality; however, this reality has no structure. Whatever structures we find are imposed by our unique experiences. Hence, there cannot be a single, correct view of reality. This seems in conflict with the Christian belief that God created a real structured universe and that structure is singularly meaningful, and, therefore, experience must be in reference to a set of objective facts (Archer, 1998). Rather than being incompatible, Berger and Luckmann (1966) believed that "the sociologies of language and religion cannot be considered peripheral specialities of little interest to sociology theory as such, but have essential contributions to make to it" (p. 185). I concur with Archer (1998) that a constructivist approach can align with a Christian view in that we are created uniquely, with differing experiences and perspectives; however, in our current state, we see only part of the picture as "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12), and this dark vision is interpreted differently for each of us. We construct reality differently not because reality has no inherent structure but because we each have an incomplete and distorted perspective. For Christians, there is the belief that one day we will come to

know, even as we are known, and this moves us away from the radical perspective. The sociology of knowledge presupposes any sociology of language making a sociology of knowledge without a sociology of religion impossible, and vice versa (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Axiological positioning

In addition to the ontological and epistemological positioning, Heron and Reason (1997) argued that an inquiry paradigm must also consider a third factor. Axiology, deals with the nature of values, and captures the value question of what is intrinsically worthwhile (Heron & Reason, 1997). Charmaz (2014a) argued that from a pragmatist view, facts are linked to values and researchers' values inevitably make their way into an inquiry. The way they position themselves, by making these values explicit, is what characterises qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2013). Axiological positioning requires the researcher admits "the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field" (p. 18). This study investigated the issue of same-sex marriage within the church and began from a social justice position of attending "to inequities and equality, barriers and access, poverty and privilege, individual rights and the collective good, and their implications for suffering" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 359). It entered the field from the perspective of Heron's (1996) human flourishing; the valued process of social participation in which there is a mutually enabling balance, within and between people, of autonomy, co-operation, and hierarchy with a means to enabling all people to be involved in the making of decisions, in every social context that affects their flourishing in any way. Therefore, the primary purpose of this inquiry was practical, an action in the service of human flourishing; and is thus, essentially transformative (Heron & Reason, 1997).

This view stems broadly from the realist tradition which assumes that our knowledge is the best knowledge we have now; it diverges from realism around the issue of individualism which it shifts toward social/communal values and the concept of a process of democracy and intersubjectivity. The focus on communal values enters the social debate in trying to ascertain what is moral and helpful for our society and all people within it (Kim, 2001). While I view reality as somewhat indeterminate and open to multiple interpretations, depending on a person's values and what works for him or her, I do not support those who practice injustice, oppression, marginalisation,

discrimination, or criminal activity. Critics of pragmatism might raise concerns about tolerating those in our society with dramatically different moral frameworks, such as murderers and paedophiles. While lesbian and gay people who marry do not remotely fall into this category, the moral accusations by some professing same-sex marriage to be 'sinful' and morally wrong are not dissimilar. Regardless of who is perceived in society as having dramatically different moral frameworks, the pragmatist looks beyond the individual in this context to his or her being part of a collective group. Thus, there is no problem if the value is *to* the social group of which they are a part (Royce, 1899).

From a constructionist perspective, this inquiry refutes *a* truth or single valid interpretation and instead recognises and values anomalies, and the complexity embedded in human experience. Because of the emphasis placed on contextual interpretations, terms such as 'true' or 'valid' gave way to whether or not a phenomenon was considered 'helpful' or 'useful' (Crotty, 1998). From an ethical standpoint, I agree that there are useful interpretations, those that stand over ones that appear to serve no useful purpose. There are liberating forms of interpretations which contrast with those that are oppressive, and interpretations that are rewarding and fulfilling that are in contrast with those that impoverish and stunt human growth and existence (Heron, 1996).

From a pragmatist perspective, James's (1907) 'pragmatic method' was helpful in framing how, when taking a position philosophically, one should be able to show some practical difference between what one chooses and that of the other side. If we assume all realities influence our practice, which in turn influences our ascribed meaning, then one must ask; 'How would the world be different if this or that alternative was true?' If we can find no practical difference, then the alternative has no merit. The affirming and inclusive practices of this subset of clergy, that manifest in their supporting same-sex marriage, makes a significant difference to the lives of lesbian and gay people and builds on the Chicago heritage of pragmatism that supports and serves inquiry in the direction of social justice, and aligns with Mead and Dewey's interests in democratic reform (Charmaz, 2011).To ensure trustworthiness of any inquiry, there needs to be congruency between the researcher's worldview and values, the intended objective of the research, and the philosophical and methodological approach (Birks & Mills, 2015). Having articulated the philosophical position underpinning this study, I now discuss the methodology employed to investigate the responses of clergy who support same-sex marriage.

Methodological positioning: Grounded theory

Since the inception and subsequent recognition of grounded theory as a viable methodology for sociology researchers, it has become apparent that this methodology can be interpreted and applied in numerous ways (Charmaz, 2014a; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) purported that grounded theory is a family of methods and to ensure rigour it is important for researchers to clarify which branch of the family they adhere. As I explored the grounded theory literature it became apparent how important it was to adopt a version of grounded theory that fit the aims of the research and my personal perspective (Morse et al., 2009). This section describes the chronological development of grounded theory over the past four decades, followed by a brief explanation of why I chose CGT for this study.

The development of grounded theory

In their pioneering book *The discovery of grounded theory* (1967), American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss first articulated their research strategies from a joint study on dying (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Although rich ethnographic practice existed, ascendancy of quantitative research undermined and marginalised the qualitative tradition. A quantitative approach advocated scientific assumptions of objectivity and truth which were perceived to exist independently of the mind. Researchers aimed to verify this reality through precise, standardised instruments and quantifiable variables (Charmaz, 2000), tending to focus "on improving techniques for more effective data collection while neglecting the theorization of knowledge production, including the creation of data itself" (Pascale, 2011, p. 14). Increasingly, sociological researchers argued that methodological approaches of the natural sciences that study objects and organisms were inappropriate, ineffective, and too simplistic for studying the complexities of social life. Winch (1958) went so far as to argue that causal explanations were so limited that they "actually interfered with the ability to conduct valid social research" (p. 95). It was against this pervasive model of hypothesis-testing, which sought to apply existing theories to new data, that Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced an approach that would facilitate new, contextualised theories to emerge directly from data (Charmaz, 2014a) by asking: 'What is happening here?' (J. Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

Joining forces, Glaser applied his rigorous positivist training from Columbia University and Strauss contributed his knowledge of field research informed by symbolic interactionism and pragmatist philosophy of process, action, and meaning into empirical inquiry. Together they provided a persuasive intellectual rationale for a systematic approach to data analysis with explicit analytic procedures and research strategies in social research. Their new methodological approach challenged positivist perceptions that qualitative research was impressionistic and unsystematic and, therefore, deemed illegitimate. Glaser and Strauss gave qualitative inquiry credibility in its own right, rather than it being viewed as a preliminary exercise to more rigorous quantitative studies. After *Discovery*, Glaser and Strauss' thinking began to diverge. Glaser's (1978) *Theoretical sensitivity*, with its abstract ideas, was deemed dense and inaccessible by some; whereas Strauss' *Qualitative analysis for social scientists* (1987) made grounded theory more accessible. In 1990, Strauss collaborated with Juliet Corbin. The result, *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*, offered step-by-step strategies and clearly-defined analytical guidelines giving it a prescriptive feel. They devised a coding paradigm encouraging researchers to seek manifestations of certain patterns in the data adding a deductive element rather than using the data as a starting point. Axial coding was intended to sensitise researchers to the role of process to be incorporated into the analysis, and the authors proposed the conditional matrix which introduced higher-level constructs such as class, race, gender, and power into analysis (Willig, 2008).

Glaser (1992) responded to Strauss and Corbin's collaboration in *Basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence vs. forcing* advocating that for grounded theory to maintain its creative potential it must remain flexible, emergent, and open-ended. He criticised Strauss and Corbin's techniques as being too rigid and warned against forcing the data and undermining the original aim of minimising researchers imposing their preconceived categories or codes that would unduly influence the data. Such rigidity raised concerns that the technical tail would begin to wag the theoretical dog (Melia, 1996). In subsequent editions of *Basics*, Strauss and Corbin were less prescriptive and encouraged researchers to consider the reliability of data, interpretations, and researcher bias. Throughout, Glaser remained steadfast to a positivist paradigm; Strauss and Corbin less so. Even though Strauss and Corbin shifted between an objectivist and constructivism paradigm, they, and Glaser more predominantly, supported a realist ontology and a positivist epistemology, advocating for the role of the researcher to be

that of a distant expert (Charmaz, 2000), and encouraged taking appropriate measures to minimise researcher subjectivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005) went on to develop theoretical coding and refined processes for coding and assessing rigour. However, the Glaserian view of researcher objectivity does not easily reconcile with my own views. Strauss and Corbin advanced their version of grounded theory (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) with increased contributions on coding and analysis frameworks using axial coding. Still, I wanted to remain as open to the data as possible and had concerns that the framework was too specific and might channel my thinking down pre-set paths; thereby restricting the analytical freedom I desired.

In *The structure of scientific revolutions*, Kuhn (1970) highlighted that a positivist epistemology, in its attempts to discover the absolute 'truth' that leads to generalisations of knowledge, transcends context and discards anomalies. As people questioned what constitutes as evidence, attention was drawn to the way a positivist approach overlooked the complexities embedded in how people make meaning of their lives and gradually old paradigms were replaced with new epistemologies. This led to scholars seeking to differentiate between 'objectivist' and 'constructivist' grounded theory, and reposition Glaser and Strauss's original grounded theory method (GTM)[23] in light of contemporary philosophical and epistemological landscapes. Thus, grounded theory moved more toward an interpretive paradigm (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2014a) and Blumer's (1969) notion of an 'obdurate reality' which views reality as multiple, subject to redefinition, and somewhat indeterminate (B. Fisher & Strauss, 1979). This view built on the emergent research endeavour of its originators but recognised partial knowledge, multiple perspectives and diverse positions, uncertainties and variation in empirical experience and theoretical interpretation. This view, from the realist perspective, aims to represent the study's phenomena as accurately as possible, representing the realities of those in the studied setting with all its diversity and complexity (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Schatzman spear-headed one of the first moves away from the original grounded theory model while working with Strauss when he developed dimensional analysis (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). This approach, while not considered grounded theory per se but a way

---

[23] Glaser and Strauss developed the constant comparative method which later became known as Grounded Theory Method (GTM)

for managing data analysis (Schatzman, 1991), continues to be promoted as congruent with the tenets of grounded theory. It was Charmaz and Clarke, however, who developed grounded theory toward a constructivist and postmodern paradigm.

A new generation of grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014a; Clarke, 2005), with social constructionist underpinnings, argued that the terms 'discovery' and 'emergence' used by Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin suggested that there is something there to begin with, and that all observations are made from a particular perspective; they are standpoint specific. These researchers asserted that categories and theories do not emerge from the data, but instead are constructed by researchers through their interaction with the data (Willig, 2008). Charmaz (1990) purported, the researcher "creates an explication, organisation and presentation *of* the data rather than discovering order *within* the data. The discovery process consists of discovering the ideas the researcher has about the data after interacting with it" (p. 1169, emphasis in original). This approach assumes the researcher's decisions, questions of the data, and use of method as his or her personal, philosophical, theoretical, methodological background, shapes the research process and, ultimately, the findings. In the same tradition, Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) replaced the term *discovery* with *theory generation* indicating is it only a particular reading of the data rather than the only truth about the data.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally designed a methodology to aid researchers in studying and theorising localised social processes and their consequences, i.e., chronic illness management or the dying trajectory within a certain setting (Willig, 2008). More recently, researchers have used grounded theory to produce a systematic representation of the participants' experience and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, i.e., chronic pain or understanding gender reassignment, through identification of categories of meaning and experience for the individual. Grounded theory, in this way, is not unlike phenomenology in that the researcher is concerned with the texture and quality of the participants' perspective rather than their social context, causes, or consequences (Willig, 2001). Charmaz (1995) argued that the first approach takes a view from the outside-in while the second proceeds from the inside-out. For a full understanding of social psychological phenomena that provides an explanation of participants' perspectives within the context of wider social processes and consequences, a combination of both approaches is needed.

Adele Clarke, a former student of Strauss, articulated her version of grounded theory in *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn* (Clarke, 2005). Expanding on the work of Strauss, and influenced by feminism and post-structuralism, Clarke replaced the primacy of action-centred 'basic social process' within grounded theory's conceptual framework with Strauss' situation-centred framework (Clarke, 2005, 2009). Clarke offered three main cartographic approaches—situational maps, social words/arenas maps, and positional maps—which provide a method of mapping the data to emphasise the 'situation' as the ultimate unit of analysis. Similar to Charmaz's version, Clarke's situation analysis emerged from a background of feminism and social justice inquiry. My concern with using Clarke's version was that its post-structural underpinnings would foster tentatively-held views and might compromise a stronger voice against marginalisation, discrimination, and oppression that is often required in social justice inquiry. Furthermore, while my inquiry investigated a system—the view of clergy within the Church—analysis of the whole situation I felt might shift the inquiry from clergy as individuals to the Church as a system.

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT)

Charmaz's (2014a) CGT, expanded and deepened by other contributors (Birks & Mills, 2015; Bryant, 2002, 2003; Clarke, 2005; Dey, 2007; J. Mills et al., 2006), emphasises the notion that data and analyses are both emergent social constructions situated in time, space, and culture (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Influenced by post-modernism, CGT has a strong theoretical position due to its ontological, epistemological, and theoretical perspectives being compatible with pragmatism and constructivism. As with all other versions of grounded theory it begins with open-ended inductive inquiry, concurrent data collection and analysis, a focus on action and processes, comparative methods, developing inductive categories, theoretical sampling, and aiming for theory construction (Charmaz, 2014a). CGT incorporates theoretical sensitivity and use of literature to critically inform the research, coding, the meaning of verification, memoing, and the measure of credibility and trustworthiness. The aim is to learn about social worlds through participants' actions and processes, and understand what impacts the way they construct meaning both explicitly and implicitly. Invoking Peirce's abductive reasoning, CGT uses conceptualisation to offer something beyond a descriptive response to the research question. Explication moves CGT from its positivist roots toward studying tacit meanings and actions, supports critical inquiry by heightening our awareness of the reach and content of power and is, therefore, suitable

for social justice research (Charmaz, 2017). Because a CGT study is contextually located, a limitation of this methodology is that wider applicability of the completed grounded theory cannot be assumed; the researcher must articulate how theoretical explanations might reach a wider audience than just those within the field of study.

CGT diverges from other grounded theory approaches in a number of ways. Firstly, it emphasises the construction of meaning and theorisation grounded in the shared and reciprocal experiences and relationships between researcher and participants and other sources. Secondly, it explicates, and attempts to modify, power imbalances in the relationships between researchers and participants. Thirdly, CGT positions the author biographically in the text and how one renders participants' stories into theory through writing (Charmaz, 2014b). How I manage my role as researcher through the research process is discussed in Chapter 4.

CGT places less emphasis on specified analytical techniques, e.g. axial coding, and the constructed grounded theories are treated more as "plausible accounts" than objective theories (Charmaz, 2014a, p. 120). Charmaz argued that analysis need not rely on a single basic process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or a core category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) as this might restrict recognising complexities embedded in participants' diverse local worlds and multiple realities, and how their actions impact both their local and extended social worlds (Charmaz, 2014a).

Theoretical implications of using CGT

I was immediately drawn to CGT as its moderate view toward social constructionism aligns with my personal perspective. In providing strategies for studying social psychological processes, it fits the intended aim of the research in seeking to explore the meanings—both explicit and implicit——underpinning clergy's actions with regards to same-sex marriage, and uncover how meaning around this 'object' is constructed and interpreted. Pragmatist underpinnings in CGT are important in that they form an open-ended theoretical perspective from which to begin the study. Grounded theory research builds theory as knowledge accrues and is a good 'fit' in a field where little known (Birks & Mills, 2015). This methodological approach dovetails pragmatist emphasis on process and change. The Meadian concept of emergence recognises that the reality of the present differs from the past from which it develops (Strauss, 1964) and builds on the pragmatist emphasis on process and change. Novel aspects of present experience,

viewed as phenomena, formed and transformed in response to consequence and contingency, give rise to new interpretations and actions. This emergent character of grounded theory can sensitise researchers to study change (Charmaz, 2014b) and, in this study, will support exploration into the shifts in clergy's thinking about same-sex marriage over time. Using theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) aids in constructing an explanatory theory that is grounded in the data about 'what is happening' to this group of people and can advance the field of enquiry leading to transferable findings.

CGT invokes Peirce's (1878, 1931-58) abductive logic which accounts for anomalies and, in doing so, recognises complexities embedded in individuals' different perspectives and builds this variation into analysis (Charmaz, 2014a). Experience is viewed as being located within, and cannot be separated from, larger events such as social, religious, political, cultural, or gender-related frameworks; therefore, these are essential aspects of analyses. While not wishing to reduce understanding of action/interaction/emotion to a single explanation, developing concepts of various levels of abstraction, as delineated in grounded theory strategies, provides ways of talking about shared understandings and patterns of response (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Finally, axiologically, CGT is value related, aligning with Mead and Dewey's interest in democratic reform and development of grounded theory in directions that can aid inquiry in social justice. A critical stance in social justice research, together with the analytic focus of grounded theory, broadens and sharpens the scope of inquiry. Such efforts locate subjective and collective experience in larger social structures, such as resources, hierarchies, ideologies, and policies and practices (Charmaz, 2014b). The next section outlines the key components of a CGT study.

Key components of CGT

Data collection.

In grounded theory everything begins with the data, and data collection remains an integral process throughout analysis and theory building to ensure quality and credibility of research outcomes (Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). Glaser (2001) declared 'all is data;' however, the way data is viewed differs depending on the version of grounded theory used. Some (Charmaz, 2014a; Morse, 2007) have highlighted that not all data is equal, varying in quality, relevance for emerging sensitivities, and

usefulness for interpretation. While single method interviews are increasingly used as a method for data collection in grounded theory research, other forms include field observations, focus groups, surveys, group feedback analysis or any other group or individual activity that yields data (Dick, 2005). Intensive interviewing is considered an effective means of data collection in CGT, and Charmaz (2014a) argued for the importance of gathering rich, in-depth data that gets "beneath the surface of social and subjective life" (p. 22) to generate strong grounded theories that explain what is really happening in the substantive area. In this research, one-to-one intensive interviews in a private setting was the method of choice due to the sensitive nature of the research topic and out of respect for participants who might be cautious about making their views public for fear of retribution.

Coding.

Coding is the initial step in analysis where all relevant data that can be brought to bear on a point is broken into small sections and labelled with a name that encapsulates what is happening in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Breaking down the data is a type of shorthand that researchers use repeatedly to identify conceptual reoccurrences, similarities ,and patterns during data analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014a). Coding is an integral part of grounded theory analysis and varies depending on approach; for example, there are coding families (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and coding paradigms and axial coding. Charmaz (2014a), however, cautioned against applying preconceived codes and instead aimed for emergent, open coding of data.

Charmaz (2014a) advocated for two main coding phases: initial coding and focused coding. Initial coding remains close to the data and as open as possible to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities are identified, explicitly or implicitly. Words or groups of words are labelled with an assigned name summarising what is going on in the data. Identifying actions and processes through gerunds and noting their variations, while not defining content, is a useful starting point in coding because it emphasises what is happening in the data. Focused coding usually starts with identifying those initial codes which appear more frequently or have greater significance. The researcher sifts, sorts, synthesises, and analyses large amounts of data, making decisions about which codes fit best with the analytical direction of the data. Comparative methods are used to test codes against the data until assigned-descriptors accurately capture the essence of the data. These labels can then be used in the construction of analytical

categories. In CGT, a higher level of analysis may occur in the form of 'theoretical coding.' Introduced by Glaser (1978), theoretical codes conceptualise "how the substantive may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory" (p. 72). Theoretical codes specify possible relationships between substantive categories and can raise and integrate them conceptually so that they make the analytic story more congruent (Charmaz, 2014a). Charmaz and Glaser (1978) cautioned against imposing theoretical codes as a matter of course; advocating they needed to earn their way into analysis and only be used should the data indicate it fits.

Constant comparative analysis.

Grounded theory's inductive style of building theory from the data itself is achieved through successful employment of constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a central analytical strategy toward theory generation. Constant comparative analysis begins when commencing coding and, due to concurrent data collection and analysis, continues with the aim of establishing analytic distinctions and making comparisons of data at each stage of analysis to find similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2014a). It involves comparing "incident to incident, incident to codes, codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to categories until a grounded theory is fully integrated" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 11). Peirce's abductive reasoning occurs at every stage of analysis but particularly during constant comparative analysis of categories leading to theoretical integration. This cognitive act requires the researcher make a mental leap that brings together and connects things which had not previously been seen (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014a; Reichertz, 2010; L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005).

Memo-writing.

Theory articulation is facilitated through an extensive and systematic process of memo-writing that parallels data analysis. Memos are theoretical notes, a unique and complex research tool, that provide a crucial link between data collection and theory generation (Glaser, 2004; Lempert, 2007). Glaser (1978) referred to memoing as "the bedrock of theory generation" (p. 83), without which "a great deal of conceptual detail is lost" or left undetected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 10). Writing memos is an effective way to record ideas, hunches, and queries that arise throughout the research process, prompting the researcher to continually engage with, reflect on, question, sort, and analyse data.

According to Charmaz (2017), memo writing moves from being exploratory—personal conversation that questions the data—toward being more explanatory; what is happening between the relationships with the categories. It includes writing about definitions of categories and the justification of labels assigned to them, tracing emerging relationships, and keeping a track of the progressive integration of higher and lower level categories and core concepts. Memo-writing also highlights gaps and indicates the changes of direction in the analytic process and emerging perspectives, as well as fostering reflection on the adequacy of the research question (Willig, 2008). Memoing entails writing just about anything from free style jotting down of ideas to conceptual linking and theory development, and may be long, short, abstract, concrete or integrative. Over time, the researcher creates a 'memo bank' (Clarke, 2005) that increases the level, richness, and depth of abstraction. In addition, a written record of all aspects of the research process provides an audit trail to track developmental thinking and a storehouse for the purposes of sorting and retrieval of ideas (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014a; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lempert, 2007; Sabaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011; Willig, 2008).

Theoretical sorting and diagramming.

Theoretical sorting occurs toward the mid and late stages of analysis when categories are becoming saturated and the 'memo bank' has matured (Clarke, 2005). It involves arranging, comparing, and sorting analytic memos for logical sense, and provides the substance that forms the theory. Sorting focuses on theoretical integration of categories prompting the researcher to compare categories at an abstract level. During this stage, saturation of categories and data collection continues, carrying analytical thinking toward completion, and memos are generated to refine categories—explaining connections and fit—and record emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014a; Glaser, 1998). The process of sorting can be done manually or with the help of computer software packages such as NVivo or MAXQDA (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Many theorists (Clarke, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) treat visual images of their emerging theories as an integral part of grounded theory. Clustering, mapping, charting, and diagramming "can offer concrete images of our ideas" (Charmaz, 2014a, p. 218) and assist in organising material through grouping, comparing, and contrasting possible relationships between categories and sub-categories, from which further memos are generated explaining connections. Kathy Charmaz (personal communication, September 25, 2017) advocated for the use of clustering as a brainstorming exercise which serves as a preliminary

foundation for diagramming conceptual integration; yet, she guards against being too rigid resulting in forcing data into pre-conceived categories. Diagramming to further analysis and conceptual thinking was employed as a major part of this research (explained further in Chapter 4).

Theoretical sampling and saturation.

Where initial forms of sampling, such as purposive sampling, are helpful at the start, data collection in later stages is directed by theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014a), meaning that the sample is based on theoretically-relevant constructs with the objective of theory construction. This involves abductive reasoning and is a distinguishing feature of grounded theory methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Charmaz, (2014a) cautioned against confusing theoretical sampling with more conventional qualitative sampling which samples to address initial research questions; reflect population distributions; or find negative cases. Theoretical sampling begins with tentative not yet definitive ideas about the data and involves re-examining these ideas further through empirical inquiry. Peirce saw limits to inductive reasoning and claimed abduction facilitates the search for new theoretical explanations which account for gaps, weaknesses, or anomalies in the data. Abductive reasoning begins during inductive inquiry and provides a useful path for interacting with data when it neither fits the pattern of other findings nor can be theoretically explained in the same way. Richardson and Kramer (2006) stated that abduction is the process by which useful explanations—essentially 'an inference' from observed facts—are developed and is, therefore, an essential concept within pragmatism. Inferences for anomalies are made by considering all plausible theoretical explanations for the surprising data, forming hypotheses for each, and returning to the data to empirically re-examine or gather more data by which to subject new theoretical interpretations to rigorous scrutiny (Charmaz, 2014a). In this study, for example, I identified clergy's thinking about same-sex marriage as 'naturally evolving' capturing how their supportive views seemed to have continued moving along in the same-direction over time. But was the experience similar for all clergy participants? Subsequently, a decision was made to re-examine and re-clarify the process of 'naturally evolving' in subsequent interviews as well as expand my search to see if there were those who had experienced a shift in perspective about same-sex marriage.

A consequence of an iterative and recursive approach to data collection, analysis, and synthesis is the difficulty in judging when to stop (Morse, 2011). According to Charmaz

(2014a), theoretical saturation, a term introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), occurs when categories are saturated "and gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical concepts" (p. 213). For Strauss and Corbin (1990), theoretical saturation occurs when no new codes are identified in the later stages of data generation and collection that relate to a particular category, and categories are conceptually well developed where their sub-categories and properties are sufficiently articulated and integrated. While some theorists (Glaser, 1998; P. Stern, 2007) have advocated that theoretical saturation overrides sample size, others (Mason, 2010) have argued that sample size and saturation must take into account research objectives and quality of data. For example, expectations around saturation will be greater when hefty research claims are made compared to modest ones, and a skilled interviewer may produce significant analysis with a sample of five compared with a novice who has interviewed 50. Concerns about foreclosing analytic possibilities have been raised due to deadlines, financial constraints, boredom, or exhaustion, leading to constructing superficial analysis which can undermine the credibility of the methodology (Charmaz, 2014a). Dey (2007) convincingly challenged the claim that theoretical saturation is realistically achievable and instead proposed theoretical 'sufficiency' as being a more appropriate goal (Birks & Mills, 2015).

What is important is that researchers remain open and self-critical about saturation at multiple levels of conceptualisation (Charmaz, 2014a; Morse, 2011). Due to the emergent nature of CGT, which recognises knowledge as conditional and contextual, achieving saturation is difficult as categories continue to change and evolve over time. Developing categories means that sampling may move into diverse areas and across fields that had not been originally considered when first embarking on the research project. Rather than presenting a definitive representation of a phenomenon, researchers offer 'a' theoretical interpretation. To ensure accountability and quality, researchers are increasingly encouraged to articulate decision making about theoretical saturation of categories (Birks & Mills, 2015). The way I considered theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation is discussed in Chapter 4.

Evaluating grounded theory

As grounded theory has gained popularity, attention is increasingly turning to the quality of studies using this research methodology, resulting in a range of different criteria against which the standard of research can be judged. Ultimately, any

assessment depends on the worldview of the researcher or reader. The different versions of grounded theory fall along a continuum with positivist models valuing objectivity at one end and a phenomenological model taking the social world as being constructed by human beings at the other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (2000) argued that qualitative research cannot be evaluated on the positivist notion of validity as positivist assumptions are incommensurable with those of the interpretative paradigm. Hence, what is important is that research should be evaluated by the very constructs that were used to generate it (Elliot & Lazenbatt, 2005).

Becker (1993) and Benoliel (1996) challenged researchers to engage in the quality issue at a practical level by considering how grounded theory methods themselves can be used to ensure quality in research. For example, constant comparative methods, theoretical sampling, and theoretical coding, used by all grounded theory researchers, regardless of philosophical positioning, provide important indicators for research quality, i.e., when conformity and congruency of codes, concepts, and categories is achieved; when no new categories in the data are collected; and a full articulation of the process under which the theory has been developed (Ke & Wenglensky, 2010). Delineating how a researcher's own *a priori* assumptions might have influenced the data collection and analysis can enhance confidence in interpretative findings. Member validation is an effective tool to minimise researchers misinterpreting or misrepresenting the data, and memoing has the dual purpose of developing analytical thinking and controlling distortions during analysis by sensitising the researcher to his/her own personal biases; therefore, countering subjectivity and ultimately enhancing producing accurate research findings (Elliot & Lazenbatt, 2005).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) attempted to address the perceived lack of rigour in qualitative research by setting criteria based on the belief that "the practical applicability of a grounded theory is the ultimate measure of its value" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 144). They asserted research should demonstrate *fit* with field of its intended use, be *understandable* to those within this area, be *general* so that it has flexibility in application while allowing the user *control* over its use. Glaser (1978) amended these measures to *fit*, *work*, *relevance*, and *modification*, later adding *parsimony* and *scope* as evaluative criteria (Glaser, 1992). Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified *data quality*, the *research process*, and *empirical grounding* of the theory as being key for judging research credibility, and later added *theory quality* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The CGT accent of studying a phenomenon within a particular setting means that evaluation of

this study begins with the intended audience and purpose of the research. In this respect, Charmaz (2014a) promoted research be evaluated on and address the *credibility*, *originality*, *resonance*, and *usefulness* of the presented grounded theory, and it is these criteria that are used in evaluating this study (explained further in Chapters 4 and 9). The purpose of this research was to construct a substantive theory that contributed new insights into the perspectives of clergy who support same-sex marriage. It was anticipated that the theory increase tolerance and keep dialogue open around diversity within the mainstream Christian churches and offer an alternative perspective to those who might feel stuck or ambivalent. The findings are aimed at church leaders, hierarchy, religious policy makers, local and international researchers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the methodology chosen for this study, together with its philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of pragmatism and constructivism. A brief history outlining the development and emergence of the main versions of grounded theory has been provided and my rationale given for adopting a CGT approach. Finally, the criteria used to evaluate grounded theory was considered. In the following chapter I consider what these philosophical and methodological choices have meant in practice and discuss the methods I have used to apply the methodology.

Chapter Four: Research Methods

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the rationale behind my choice of CGT as a methodology to explore the responses of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. This chapter reviews the research methods used in the practical application of the methodological foundation; specifically, I refer to the CGT research methods that were employed for data collection and analysis. The chapter begins with the ethical considerations influencing this research and my position as researcher. This is followed by introducing the study participants alongside a discussion of the sampling and recruitment processes used. Next, the analytical methods that led to theory construction are explained and supported by examples. Finally, evaluative criteria are discussed in relation to maintaining research quality. In keeping with a CGT approach, I use the first-person pronoun to identify my active role as researcher in the research process.

Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 30 November 2015 (Appendix B). Due to my decision to expand the research location (see Participant sampling), an amended application to AUTEC was gained on 21 November 2016 (Appendix C). Key ethical considerations are outlined below.

Informed and voluntary consent.

Potential participants were sent a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D) and a Consent Form (Appendix E) following initial contact, prior to the interviews, giving them the opportunity to consider what they were consenting to before being invited to sign at the interview. During this time, I made myself available to answer any questions. The information sheet provided an overview of the intended research and made participants aware of what their involvement would be should they choose to proceed; including, time and financial costs such as the anticipated length and number of interviews they would be expected to attend, possible risks to themselves, and the intention of offering a small koha (token) of $20 to cover petrol expenses for those who travelled to interviews. Consent included agreeing to take part in the research of their own volition, for interviews to be audio recorded, notes taken, and the interview

transcribed. It clearly stated they could withdraw from the study at any stage up until two weeks after they had reviewed and approved their transcripts without any negative consequence to themselves. At the interview, the consent form was explained in person and participants were given further opportunity to ask questions prior to signing. All participants signed consent before interviews proceeded. As participants were adults and spoke English fluently, informed and voluntary consent was obtained without the need for translators.

Privacy and confidentiality.

Participant privacy occurred through implementing confidential procedures which included how I approached and invited potential participants to participate in the study and my interactions with them throughout the project. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic within churches, I chose not to approach potential participants through any public forum. Instead, initial contact was made via personal email to those whose supportive views and contact information were made available publicly. If I did not hear back after making initial contact, only one follow-up email was sent so as not to harass anyone. Transcripts and cover sheets containing participants' demographic details were assigned codes, pseudonyms conceal identities in the final report, and electronic data files were password-protected. During the data collection and analysis stages consent forms were securely stored on AUT premises separate from the data.

This study targets individuals' perspectives—not church or organisational practices—therefore, obtaining permission or information from third parties, such as employers or professional organisations, was not required. I was, however, conscious that participants might, at times, intentionally or unintentionally, divulge sensitive information about their institutions; thus, any potentially-identifiable material has been disguised or excluded that might jeopardise participants and their institutions. After completing the research, data will be stored securely on AUT premises and kept separate from consent forms, electronic data will be downloaded to an external storage device and securely stored for six years after which manually-held data will be destroyed by a confidential document destruction company and electronic data will be deleted.

Minimisation of risk.

The research topic was potentially emotive, personal, and conflictual for participants and I was concerned that engaging in this study might evoke feelings of vulnerability,

isolation, anger, anxiety and/or fear as individuals spoke of, and relived, their experiences. While clergy are likely to be more reflective and aware of their personal processes than the general population (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a) and, therefore, less likely to experience distress in an interview situation, I felt it important to safeguard against possible emotional risk. I believe my training as a psychotherapist equips me, through active listening and being attentive to body cues, to be sensitive to potential harm caused by participants sharing their stories and I was able to create a safe space where individuals felt supported. Prior to interviews, participants were informed that they could choose not to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable and discontinue the interview/digital recording during the interview process or stop participating in the research at any time without negative consequences. Where I sensed a participant becoming disquieted, I offered to stop recording and consulted with them before asking whether they would like to proceed with the interview.

Whilst recognising the benefits of my psychotherapy training, I distinguish my role as researcher versus psychotherapist when meeting participants. Separating out these roles could, at times, be challenging. I was used to following lines of inquiry into feelings rather than actions and processes which sometimes led certain participants to share vulnerable parts of themselves. Some participants appeared unsure of the researcher/psychotherapist boundaries, for instance when considering how childhood experiences influenced their current views. Reiterating my role as researcher who was genuinely interested in participants' experiences helped alleviate feelings of guilt in those who expressed regret for not doing more for the cause of same-sex marriage within their churches. These experiences underscored the importance of making my role as researcher quite clear to participants in subsequent interviews.

Where I sensed participants required further support from issues arising in the interview they were encouraged to engage in supervision with their spiritual directors/mentors, a self-care provision offered to most clergy and paid by the church. Additionally, as the need arose, information on free support services were made available, and for participants located in Auckland this included three free counselling sessions from AUT Health and Counselling (Appendix F).

To minimise risks to participants—to themselves, their positions or careers—from their institutions because of their supportive views, procedures were implemented to protect individuals (see section Privacy and confidentiality). To allay fears, I clearly stated my

commitment to the goals of the study, that of focusing on investigating individuals' lives with a view to offer an alternative perspective on same-sex marriage rather than criticising or exposing discriminatory practices of their religious institution.

Age was identified as a predictor in attitudes toward same-sex marriage by Jakobsson, Kotsadam and Jakobsson (2013) showing a propensity for older people to hold more conservative views regarding same-sex. As a result, I was keen to gain perspectives from a variety of ages. As part of my research design, I considered how to minimise risk with potentially vulnerable groups such as older adults. A plan was scripted in collaboration with my primary supervisor, a gerontologist, who has conducted extensive research with older people. Twenty-three percent of my sample was over 70 and were active socially, capable of thinking in-depth about complex issues, and brought a wealth of experience to the research topic. With these individuals, I endeavoured to remain sensitive and respectful of their perspectives, which often included earlier views reflecting societal attitudes of the time that were unsupportive of lesbian and gay people and same-sex marriage. Following CGT methods, I tended to focus on the contexts that had led to these constructions and conditions that led to shifts in their perspective. In some cases, I allocated extra time for older participants if necessary and used open-ended questions that facilitated full elaboration of their thought processes in order to ensure they conveyed all that they wished.

In my research design, I also considered possible risks to myself as researcher. As participants were clergy, I did not anticipate any harm to myself during interviews. However, interviews would be conducted at participants' homes and offices and, due to the controversy surrounding the topic and the nature of their work, I might be present when someone who posed a threat arrived at the interview premises. This risk was managed by informing a colleague I was attending an interview and texting them before entering and after leaving a participant's premises. If my colleague has not heard from me within an agreed time period, they would call me to ensure I was safe. In examining the literature on the issue of same-sex marriage, I was likely to be exposed to views that were antagonistic and hostile toward lesbian and gay people. Engaging in personal supervision and therapy helped to alleviate concerns of being adversely affected by such material and provided personal support.

Truthfulness including limitation of deception.

Communicating openly and transparently with participants was key to achieving the ethical principle of truthfulness and limiting deception. No idle promises were made to participants that were not deliverable and issues of disclosure and their impact carefully assessed. For instance, in the Participant Information Sheet a distinction was made between confidentiality and anonymity so that those taking part were aware that, while there were safeguards to ensure confidentiality, there were risks associated with being part of a small group of supportive clergy in that what they said could potentially be identified by people known well to them. In such cases, reporting was done to minimise risk, for example disguising sensitive material by using a different context. Participants were advised they would be fully informed of the findings and their intended use, and sent copies of transcripts so that they had the opportunity to add or remove anything they thought might jeopardise them. Permission was sought before using their transcripts in analyses and for using quotations in the final report.

One dilemma I faced was whether to disclose my sexual orientation and personal view of same-sex marriage in case this unduly influenced participants' responses. How would such disclosure potentially distort the gathering of data? Would participants want to protect me or restrict what they told me if they knew I was gay and supported same-sex marriage, particularly if they were previously against same-sex marriage? I wondered if some might feel shame for not doing more? I chose to disclose my sexuality and view of same-sex marriage only to those participants who asked.

Social and cultural sensitivity.

Ethnicity has been indicated as a predictor of attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Brumbaugh et al., 2008) and this research initially targeted Christian clergy from European, Māori, and Non-Māori Pacific Island cultures and social groups across Aotearoa New Zealand, and later Australia. I had hoped ethnic diversity representing local Christian clergy, for example, from the Ratana and Ringatu churches, might add value to the findings since their religious beliefs and philosophies on the topic might differ from the European/Western tradition, thereby adding complexity to the analysis. My research design, however, changed during the study because, firstly, I was unable to find suitable participants from the Ratana or Ringatu churches, possibly because these denominations are known to be conservative. Secondly, I realised the difficulty when

investigating an under-researched topic is that the scale of the undertaking can be so extensive researchers often end up pooling data from the different cultural groups and cultural variation is lost in analysis which defeats the intention of selecting a multicultural sample in the first place (Morse, 2011). I came to believe that future studies building from theoretical explanations of a homogenous sample would be better suited to eliciting comparisons and identifying cultural differences in perspective.

That said, because of Māori participation and my commitment to biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand, guidelines for Māori research ethics from Te Ara Tika (Hudon, Milne, Reynolds, Russell, & Smith, 2010) were included in the research design alongside adherence to Treaty principles of partnership, participation, and protection. These principles apply to any minority group and later, as the research location changed to include Australia, served to protect Aborigine as they move the researcher past epistemologies based on the practices, beliefs, and experiences of dominant groups to those "seeking action to deliver social change for the common good" (Bainbridge, Whiteside, & Mccalman, 2013, p. 277).

In addition to discussing cultural issues with my supervisors, grounded theory group, and therapist, a cultural consultant was identified as someone I could seek council from relating to cultural issues and sensitivities, especially in the early stages. Ian Kaihe-Wetting (Nga Puhi, Ngati Kuri) has a background in education and training, sits on numerous business and community boards, and, up until his recent relocation out of Auckland, held a managerial position with a District Health Board. Ian is actively involved in the Māori and Pasifika communities and was referred to me by Louisa Wall (MP) who was instrumental in passing the same-sex bill in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2013 (Marriage [Definition of Marriage] Amendment Act, 2013 No 20). Communication with Ian, in conjunction with my university training in biculturalism, has helped me be mindful, from the early stages of the research design, of the need for participants to be kept safe and that any engagement and interaction with Māori and Pacifica participants is conducted in a culturally-sensitive manner and adheres to Treaty commitments. This mentorship occurred through face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations to consider: appropriate protocols for engaging Māori and Pacifica participants and their communities: cultural etiquette with regards to conducting interviews; sufficient participant feedback to foster a co-construction of the data gathered and concepts abstracted.

Avoidance of conflict of interest.

As the community is small, particularly in Auckland, there was the possibility that some participants might be known to me. Therefore, it was necessary before embarking on the project to consider potential conflicts of interest likely to arise from my professional, social, financial, or cultural relationships. All participants were adults, of a professional standing like myself, and were used to talking, reflecting, and sharing their personal views. This minimised the risk of any coercive influences or power imbalances. However, as a member of two professional bodies and a clinician in private practice, coercive influences, power imbalances, and conflicts of interest may have arisen if participants were known to me professionally or were one of my psychotherapy clients, past or present. The same would apply if I knew someone socially through the gay or Christian community. Therefore, I decided to only interview individuals I did not know or did not know closely. I did know one participant from some years prior to the study who could not be considered a close contact. In this case, I was able to mitigate any potential adverse effects through emphasising my role as researcher to avoid the enactment of anything other than the intended participant/researcher relationship.

Research adequacy

Research adequacy abets in substantiating the trustworthiness of a research project. As such, a research project must have clear goals supported by a design that makes it possible to meet those goals and potentially contribute to the advancement of knowledge (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee, 2012). The research topic, its focus, goals, and rationale for adopting CGT as a suitable methodology have been clearly articulated. This chapter reviews the methods used to achieve the aims of the study. Together, they provide a strong argument for facilitating the uncovering of, firstly, how participants' construct meaning of same-sex marriage which leads them to having supportive views and secondly, how they manage their clerical positions holding these views within their institutions. Choosing a qualified and experienced grounded theorist as my primary supervisor and a secondary supervisor with substantive knowledge was integral in supporting me to achieve my research goals. My personal experience with the substantive phenomena being studied makes me well-equipped to investigate the research topic through being gay, identifying as spiritual with Christian values, and having parents who are ordained clergy. As a result, I have come to know many clergy from different denominations with varying views on same-sex marriage.

This background, combined with my involvement in the LGBTIQ+ community, has made me familiar with the thoughts, beliefs, and activities embedded in the social, religious, and cultural milieu of those represented in all sides of the same-sex debate. Completing my Master's degree in psychotherapy provided me with skills necessary for effective researching via in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2006) and my dissertation, a systematic literature review entitled *Conversion therapy versus gay-affirmative therapy: Working with ego-dissonant gay clients*, shares similar themes to this study (Kirby, 2008, 2009).

Another aspect of research adequacy relates to the benefits of a research project and, in this study, they are multiple. Clergy, whose supportive views about same-sex marriage are at odds with their institution, colleagues, congregation, and community, are at risk of feeling alienated, misunderstood, and lonely. Participating in this study will afford the opportunity to share their views in a self-reflective process that can produce catharsis, self-acknowledgement, a sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and provide a voice for the disenfranchised (S. Hutchinson, Wilson, & Wilson, 1994). Their stories will contribute to a wider study and add to a small but growing body of knowledge upon which further studies can build. Findings will be of help to any individuals and groups, religious and non-religious, straight and gay that struggle with the issue of same-sex marriage from a Christian perspective. Bringing an affirming position to this subject may foster an additional perspective and provide a new source of reference and support. The benefits to me, which were clearly stated to participants, are the gaining of a PhD on completion of the research and a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of issues related to Christian clergy's support for same-sex marriage, which dovetails with my own social justice values.

Positioning myself as researcher

CGT research situates the researcher within the study and views him or her as co-constructor with the participants in generating data. A fine line exists between interpreting and imposing one's own pre-existing frames of reference and meaning on the data and, even with the best intentions, it is difficult for researchers not to begin research from the standpoint of their taken-for-granted preconceptions; these can stem from positions as class, race, gender, sexuality, age, culture, and religion (Charmaz, 2014a). Strauss (1987) moved away from the concept of researcher neutrality (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) toward recognising that the researcher's history and

biography impacted the way he or she uses grounded theory methods. Not only does our choice of methods influence what we see, what we bring to the study influences what we can see (Charmaz, 2014a). Therefore, qualitative researchers identify and address subjective influences on the research process (Gough, 2003). The danger of not addressing researcher subjectivity is that "researchers may elevate their own tacit assumptions and interpretations to 'objective status'" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132). Charmaz argued for methodological self-consciousness which is derived from having doubt and motivates us to detect and dissect our worldview, language, and meanings, and to uncover how they influence our research in ways we had previously not realised. From a CGT perspective, for researchers to possess an awareness of what they take for granted is powerful, and this often only becomes apparent when our viewpoints are challenged. The key to achieving methodological self-consciousness is through reflexivity.

Reflexivity.

Reflexivity has been described as disciplined self-reflection (Wilkinson, 1988) or, in Birks and Mills' (2015) words, "an active process of systematically developing insight into your work as a researcher to guide your future actions" (p. 52). Charmaz (2014a) argued that the post-modern view of reflexivity obligates the researcher to incorporate it as an integral strategy in their research design. Following CGT, being a reflexive researcher meant *actively* employing a theory of knowledge and always "having that doubt" (K. Charmaz, personal communication, September 25, 2017) that prompted critical scrutiny of the research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that fully brought myself into the process. This reflexive stance informed how my interests and assumptions influenced how I conducted my research, related to participants, and represented them in the final report.

As researcher, I believe in the worthiness of the research topic and have been committed to approaching the project with integrity. However, it was important to be aware of my own preconceptions and how they might adversely influence the gathering of data, analysis, or any stage of the inquiry. According to Charmaz (2014a, 2017), delving deeper into one's preconceptions makes it easier to locate obstacles that impede developing critical inquiry and one must be prepared to revise or relinquish a priori assumptions if the data so indicated. I engaged in brainstorming sessions with my supervisors, therapist, and colleagues early on to explicate my background influences

and contemplated how these might affect what I see, prioritise, and how I interpret the data. In memos, I listed the sensitising concepts emanating from my experiences which raised awareness of my biases that, later, helped me to formulate more open and less leading interview questions. I attended an in-depth pre-project interview to explore and challenge those things I take for granted about myself, the studied phenomenon, and the world. The following is an example of a memo written after my pre-project interview.

Memo: Balancing a "respectfully-critical" approach

03 04 2015 The notion of multiple realities within pragmatism and constructivism attracts me; I try to remain respectfully open to others' views that are different to mine. However, how do we accept those who we consider morally unjust? This is easier to deal with when it's something obvious, like murder. But what about parents who, because of their religious beliefs, reject their gay daughter or son and throw them out of the house because they want to marry their same-sex partner? Perhaps, too often, I want to be seen by others as open, understanding and accepting of others' beliefs, particularly by those in the church who think differently to me around same-sex marriage. At times, I'm more concerned about keeping the status quo than speaking up. It feels dishonest… perhaps a result of some deep-rooted internalised homophobia stemming from my upbringing? I came to a realisation today that there comes a time when it's important to say, "that's not okay," and that's not just with criminal behaviour, it's when others' actions oppress, discriminate, and marginalise people in society.

The realisation that I could respect multiple realities and still have clear boundaries increased my confidence to embark on this study; a daunting task that challenged the church's traditional thinking on same-sex marriage. I also made full use of supervision, personal therapy, and the grounded theory group I attended. The latter provided an invaluable forum to seek others' opinions and reflect on my own process. The debate and peer-critique emanating from participation in this group and receiving feedback from presentations on issues such as my coding of transcripts and developing my conceptual thinking, were important reflexive strategies that provided an effective method of checking and quality assurance.

I considered how my reality might influence the construction of interview questions and how I asked them, and worked to minimise any leading questions that might distort the data I gathered. To avoid making assumptions, I asked for full explanations of

commonly-used terms and concepts to fully grasp participants' meanings. During the interviews I focused on participants' concerns rather than imposing my own and let them lead conversation, particularly in the early stage, which led to new and, at times, unexpected analytic codes/concepts arising. Early memoing, for example, highlighted the assumption I had that most, if not all, clergy had experienced a shift in perspective and had, at some stage, been opposed to same-sex marriage. This insight led me to review my interview questions. Rather than asking, "When did you start having those [supportive] views?" which implicitly assumed a shift, I enquired, "Have you held those views over some time?" reflecting more openness.

An example of a reflexive strategy used in coding was questioning if my analytical construction started from the point of what was happening in the data. Engaging in detailed line-by-line coding in the early stages as I developed initial codes/concepts helped me to remain close to participants' data; and using *in vivo* codes, where appropriate, helped minimise my a priori assumptions influencing my interpretation. Conscious of the grounded theory maxim of not forcing data into preconceived codes and categories, I identified actions and processes rather than topics, remaining cognisant of not allowing sensitising concepts, gleaned from reading the literature, to automatically slip into the analysis unless they earned their way in (Charmaz, 2014a). This was of special significance during focused coding because these codes shaped my analysis. For example, my pre-research reading about clergy assuming roles of facilitator, quiet advocate, and outward advocate (Cadge & Wildeman, 2008) meant participants' self-descriptors such as 'provocateur,' 'working to facilitate,' and 'preferring to keep my head down' did not automatically become codes; rather, led to clarification in further interviews.

Critical reflection through memo-writing, a process of discovery (Birks & Mills, 2015), was an effective means of allowing reflective questions I had of the data to be asked throughout the research. Attending a Kathy Charmaz conference during the conceptual development stage afforded an opportunity to revisit explicating my preconceptions through further brainstorming at a time when I was well into my analysis. As my conceptual ideas developed and I began writing my thesis, I actively sought participant feedback on my developing analytic thinking through member-checking; thereby protecting the integrity of the data.

Being intimately familiar with the studied phenomenon from a variety of contexts—Christian and gay (see Research adequacy)—can safeguard presuppositions from adversely influencing the research (Charmaz, 2014a). Additionally, my training as a psychotherapist and member of several professional bodies has expanded my understanding of a range of social and cultural contexts through education, clinical work, and ongoing professional and personal development, and has contributed to an awareness and commitment to seeking appropriate consultation outside any area of familiarity, such as when engaging with participants who are from a different ethnicity. To further protect participants, and support an open and transparent approach to my research, a broad base of methodological, substantive, religious, and cultural consultants have been engaged.

The next section comprises two parts and addresses the research methods employed for data collection and data analysis in this study.

Data collection and analytical pathway to theory construction

A diagrammatic explanation of the CGT pathway I followed in collecting and analysing is presented in Figure 2 (p. 90).
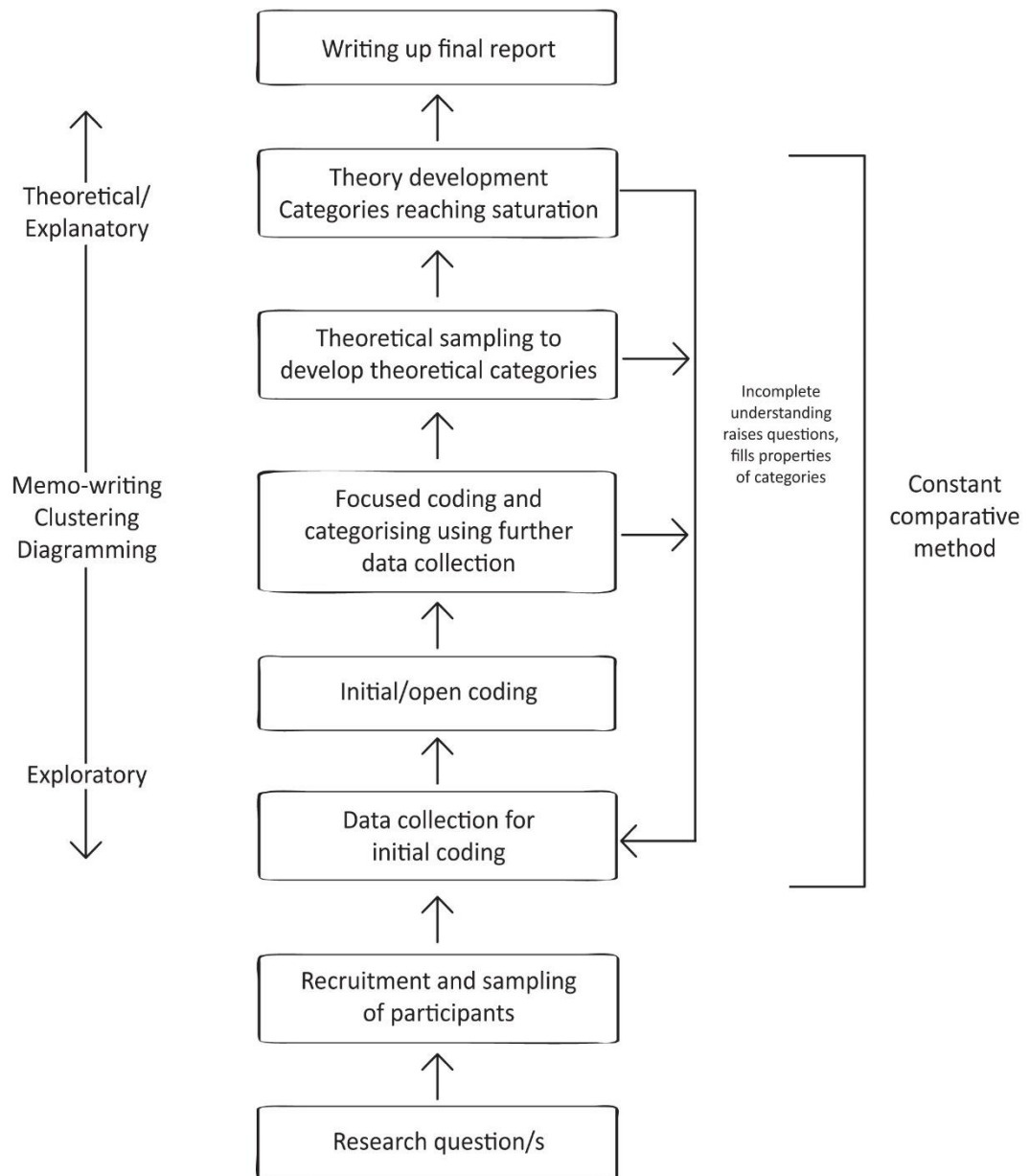
Figure 2: A diagrammatic explanation of CGT (Modified from Charmaz, 2014a)

Data collection

Participant sampling

Sampling in grounded theory research.

In qualitative research, sample selection of participants profoundly affects the quality of the research findings. Apart from sample size, the sample selection needs to fit the purpose and goals of the study and include informants who are articulate, reflective, and willing to share with the interviewer (Morse, 2011). Common sampling strategies in

grounded theory include selective, purposeful, and theoretical sampling; however, the terms can be used synonymously and interchangeably causing confusion (Coyne, 1997; Morse, 2001; Sandelowski, 1995). In the initial stages of a study, selective and purposive sampling can aid the researcher in selecting people with a broad general knowledge, or who have undergone experience that is typical of the phenomenon and will provide rich information for in-depth study. According to Schatzman and Strauss (1973) selective sampling is a practical necessity shaped by the researcher's timeframe, starting point, and developing interests. The "logic and power" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) of purposive sampling lays is selecting sources who can contribute a great deal about the issues which are of central importance to the purpose of the study (Coyne, 1997). Events, incidents, and experiences are typically the objects of purposive sampling rather than people. When people are selected, for example, for their age, gender, sexuality, role in an organisation, stated or philosophy or ideology, it is usually because they can provide sound information to advance the analytical aims rather than generalise a theory based on those characteristics (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sandelowski, 1995). Selective and purposive sampling is usually worked out in advance of the study and takes the researcher to the place where the phenomenon occurs.

Theoretical sampling, a central tenet of grounded theory, originated with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) *Discovery* and was later described as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides which data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 36). As the research progresses, and new categories grounded in the data are constructed, the researcher is led to seek participants who can specifically advance these conceptual developments. Simultaneous data collection and analysis drive theoretical advancement; therefore, the researcher is unable to know beforehand precisely what to sample for and where it may lead him. Theoretical sampling allows for flexibility as the researcher can make shifts of plans and emphasis early on with the aim of gathering data that reflects what is going on in the field rather than being influenced by predetermined notions about what it is that should or should not be studied (Coyne, 1997; Glaser, 1978). In grounded theory, including CGT, theoretical sampling is closely linked to constant comparative analysis and theoretical saturation.

Sandelowski (1995) emphasised that in qualitative research it is the quality of information obtained rather than the number of participants that is important. Certainly, insufficient sample size can jeopardize credibility of a study; yet, it is difficult to

determine in advance the number and kind of participants that will be needed. A sample size of 10 might be adequate for certain homogenous sampling, yet insufficient to obtain full variation of a more complex phenomenon to construct an accurate theory. Charmaz (2006) suggested approximately 25 interviews might be adequate to reach saturation in a medium study; whereas Stern (2007) proposed 25-30 interviews. Following Charmaz's guidelines, my research design made provision for interviewing approximately 25 participants. I ended up conducting 22 interviews in total; 21 participants were interviewed once, and one was seen for a second interview. The next section introduces the participants and outlines the sampling strategies used for the study.

The participants.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 21 clergy from mainstream Christian churches; protestant churches and the Catholic Church. I had considered incorporating clergy from different world religions—Jewish, Muslim, Eastern faiths— but decided such an expansive scope was too ambitious. Narrowing the scope to Christian clergy from mainstream Christian denominations seemed a more realistic starting point for studying a phenomenon—clergy and same-sex marriage—which is under-researched and would contribute to the growing literature at the intersection of Christian clergy, homosexuality, and gay rights (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012; Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; Olson & Cadge, 2002). The choice of denominations—Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Salvation Army—was intended to represent institutions with broad theological and ecclesiological traditions, namely hierarchical—Catholic, Anglican, Salvation Army—and more congregational models of organisation—Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. At commencement of the research, five denominations officially opposed same-sex marriage and one had recently moved to allow clergy to act in accordance with their conscience, if they had congregational support.

The Unitarian church—Unitarian Universalism and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)—have a long-standing tradition of welcoming the LGBTIQ+ community; they have officially supported clergy performing Services of Union between same-sex couples since 1984 (The New York Times, 1984), and have supported same-sex marriage since 1996 (Unitarian Universalist Association). In Aotearoa New Zealand, a Unitarian minister officiated at the country's first, much

publicised, same-sex wedding in 2013 (Deakin, 2013). I chose not to include participants from the Unitarian church in this study because my interest lay with clergy in denominations who were, or had been up until recently, struggling with same-sex marriage. I assumed this would not apply to Unitarian clergy because of the way they had dealt favourably with same-sex issues many years previously.

All participants were ordained Christian clergy—practicing or retired—who supported same-sex marriage and were actively involved within their institutions. Of the 16 from Aotearoa New Zealand, 11 resided in the North Island and four in the South Island. The five Australian participants were recruited from two large cities. In total, 18 of those interviewed were living and/or working in cities and three were from provincial/rural settings. Of the 16 participants who were not retired, 15 served full-time in the church and had no secondary source of income. Participants held the position of sole or senior minister or priest and had experience—currently or formerly—in running a parish and serving a congregation. Included in the sample were a range of ages (37-82 years), gender (9 women and 12 men), length of ordination (6-55 years) sexual orientation (15 identified as heterosexual, 5 as gay, 1 chose not to disclose), relationship status (15 married, 4 single, 1 separated), and education (8 PhD, 4 postgraduate, 5 degree, and 4 theological training through their institution). For participants' demographics see Appendix G.

Exclusion criteria included individuals whose beliefs were not typically Christian or scripture-based and/or clergy who were opposed to same-sex marriage. I chose to exclude unsupportive clergy to protect myself as a gay man from negative views and information I would likely be exposed to if I pursued that direction. This decision arose from extensive exposure to negative attitudes that pathologised same-sex attraction in a previously-conducted literature review comparing affirmative and reparative therapeutic approaches that were hurtful and emotionally battering. I believed, from sensitising concepts, that a range of nuanced positions existed under the supportive umbrella and would provide ample complexity in the study.

Research location and sample pool.

The research began in Aotearoa New Zealand, with participants being sourced from four centres nationwide; two of the nation's largest cities with populations of about 1.4 million and 496,000 respectively, and two smaller towns situated within a semi-rural

setting with populations of about 35,700 and 7,100 respectively. This geographical spread sought to investigate responses from clergy working in a range of settings, such as city-urban, small towns, and semi-rural. During the research, theoretical sampling led to expanding my sample to include clergy from the Salvation Army and extend the research location to Australia, which resulted in further interviews being conducted in two large centres in Australia, with populations of about 3.8 and 1.9 million.

Sampling strategies in this study.

Following CGT methods, various sampling strategies were employed during data collection (Charmaz, 2014a; Morse, 2007). Purposive or selective sampling was initially chosen, with the aim of interviewing individuals who represented target issues of, and had experience in, the studied phenomenon, with the intention of building in complexity (Procter & Allan, 2006). A list of potential participants who had made their supportive views publicly available through articles and specific websites was compiled. Individuals were purposefully selected across a range of denominations, geographical areas, age, gender, and, where known, sexuality, to enable a wide range of data that would enable me to fully explore the research question. From this pool, I initially used convenience sampling to select participants who lived close to me and met the eligibility criteria.

Not knowing whether I would obtain a sufficient size sample due to sensitivity around the topic and fear by some participants of making their supportive views known, I used a 'snowballing' technique, where appropriate, to ask those I interviewed if they knew of other clergy they thought might be interested in participating (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). In time, I asked for referrals for people with specific experience to shed light on certain theoretical categories. To safeguard privacy, I suggested participants pass on my contact information to avoid contacting anyone without their permission and reduce any possibility of coercing. As a sampling strategy, snowballing has the potential to infiltrate a social network and build upon itself in multiple directions. However, there is no guarantee that the people referred by participants represent the specific type of incidents or experience found in a larger population of supportive Christian clergy (J. Dewey et al., 2014).

As analysis progressed, I used theoretical sampling to identify gaps in the data and elaborate concepts, thus enabling thick rich description and theory construction until

saturation was achieved (Charmaz, 2014a). For example, early data suggested that the pathways supportive clergy took were naturally-evolving, influenced by early values that fostered an openness to diversity, and carried them in the same direction throughout their lives. Wondering if this was true for all clergy, I specifically sought participants whose experience might be different. This led to placing a notice on an Australasian Facebook page of supportive clergy, introducing me to clergy who had undergone a shift in perspective about same-sex marriage; hence, broadening the research location to Australia. Theoretical sampling continued until no new properties of the categories or theoretical concepts were forthcoming. Next, I turn to the recruitment strategies that were employed and the participants' interviews.

Participant recruitment

Recruitment strategies.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic within most churches, no attempts were made to recruit participants through advertising on church noticeboards, newsletters, or directly through religious organisations. For some clergy, sharing their views which were at odds with the view of their institution, might pose a threat. Therefore, all communication was conducted privately and directly with potential participants. To protect individuals, I selected only clergy who had made their supportive views of same-sex marriage known publicly through articles and websites or those who had heard about the research via a third party and contacted me of their own volition. Contact with potential participants was initially made via an individual's private email (Appendix H) informing them of the research and inviting them to participate. On the few occasions where I was required to call the church office and leave a message, only my name and number were given with no mention of the intended research, so as not to jeopardise anyone.

After initial contact, individuals who expressed interest were sent a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D) and Consent Form (Appendix E) to give them time to read it through and formulate any questions before being asked to sign and give their consent at the interview. Potential participants were given up to two weeks to consider the invitation after receiving the information sheet, during which time I was available to answer questions. If no reply was received after two weeks, one follow-up call or email

was made to seek a final answer. Throughout the project, emails were sent to those who had participated earlier in the study to keep them updated of developments.

Due to the emergent design of grounded theory and the use of theoretical sampling to direct further interviews, participants were advised in the information sheet that they might be requested to attend a second interview to further examine, clarify, validate, refute developing concepts or explore gaps in the data (Charmaz, 2014a; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Despite initial concerns about finding enough participants to recruit, I ended up with sufficient interviewees allowing some flexibility in that the later stages of recruitment were predominantly directed by theoretical sampling. Relevant group Facebook pages, websites, and following lines of inquiry through Google searches were all valuable resources from which to recruit participants with specific experience to expand the properties of my developing categories. Following is a discussion of my method of data collection, the interview, that enabled me to obtain rich data for analysis.

Participant interviews.

Given the exploratory nature of the inquiry into Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage, in-depth interviews were chosen as the method for data collection (Charmaz, 2014a; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The purpose of the interview was to gather rich data—a thick description (Geertz, 1973)—that, from a pragmatist perspective, revealed participants' views, feelings, and intentions, and encouraged an empathic understanding of their meanings, actions, and worlds within their specific contexts (Charmaz, 2014a). While treating what individuals said as data, a healthy scepticism was required that recognised participants' reality was influenced by a variety of conditions. Questions were aimed to explicate these conditions that led to their actions and, in turn, elucidate processes. The one-on-one interviews were conducted at a mutually-agreed location with participants offered a 'natural setting' (Creswell, 2013)—i.e., their home or office—or a neutral setting—i.e., a private, quiet space at my practice rooms for those in Auckland and a private room hired for those outside Auckland. All, except two participants in Auckland, chose to meet at their own premises. Interviews lasted between one to two hours, with the majority being approximately 90 minutes in duration. Interviews were digitally audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts used for the purposes of analyses. Initially, interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions so that interviewees could talk freely (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Later, focused theoretical questioning was introduced to explore, validate, identify gaps in the data and complexities of concepts that were being developed. Previously stated sampling strategies guided the type of participant that was interviewed and moved the recruitment process forward toward saturation; that is "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2014a, p. 213).

Consistent with grounded theory methods, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently throughout the research; therefore, the number and type of participants or scope of data could not be categorically stated in advance. The 22 interviews occurred over 30 months in seven phases of between two and four interviews in each phase, flanked either side by several months of intensive analysis. Consideration was given to using other data collection methods, for example observations, however, this was difficult because: firstly, weddings or church meetings are usually private or closed affairs; secondly, with services it was difficult to anticipate when relevant material might be witnessed as this typically occurred sporadically; thirdly, due to the sensitivity of the subject within churches I was mindful of wanting to maintain a respectful distance so that my presence at any events would not jeopardise clergy.

At the beginning of the interview the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form were discussed, and individuals were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study or their involvement in the project. Participants were invited to sign the Consent Form before proceeding with the interview. During the interview I kept a notepad for taking notes if the need arose. I also had an interview guide (Appendix I), based on sensitising ideas from my own experience and the literature, that was set aside so I could be fully attentive; yet, served as a prompt if the interview stalled. By virtue of their profession, clergy are articulate and knowledgeable in their field and participants were generous with sharing information once reassured of confidentiality, and that the intended focus of inquiry was on their individual perspectives rather than exposing problems within their institutions. In early interviews, questions were kept as open as possible to recognise, and allow for full expression of, participants' realities; such as, 'Could you tell me about your views of same-sex marriage?' I was interested in two lines of inquiry and asked, when on the odd occasion these topics were not initiated by participants, 'How did your views on same-sex marriage come about?' and 'What is it like for you to have those views?'

After transcribing and coding the first three interviews, I became aware of patterns in the codes (i.e., 'occurring naturally,' 'developing gradually' and 'evolving slowly') of how participants described their journey toward supporting same-sex marriage. This suggested a process whereby, upon encountering homosexuality and same-sex marriage, this new knowledge was incorporated and expanded participants' views as they moved forward. These codes were subsumed under the heading 'naturally evolving' to explain the nature of their process where they appeared to continue smoothly in the same direction. I wondered whether this was the experience for all supportive clergy. Returning to my data, I wondered if a possible explanation was that their first encounters of homosexuality or same-sex marriage may have occurred so long ago, or they moved through any feelings of ambivalence quickly and easily, that it might have been difficult for them to remember thinking differently. Or, perhaps participants knew or assumed I was gay and, in not wanting to offend me, tempered any negative or ambivalent views. In my next interviews, I listened for references indicating earlier uncertainty and, if so, encouraged individuals to pause, think back and try to recall what they may have felt at that time. As the interviews progressed, my questions became more specific, guided by previously-collected data, with a view to elucidating material that would develop and deepen my conceptual thinking. I, as researcher, came more into the foreground and the interview became more of an equal conversation (Charmaz, 2014a). For example, during this stage I would ask; "Others have described their pathway to supporting same-sex marriage as a naturally-evolving process. What has been your experience?"

After interviews I noted down any immediate impressions, significant points or markers about the participant, the interview or data including key language and terms, similarities and variations with previously-collected data, and gaps in participants' stories. As a visual thinker, these were often combined into diagrams of how I visualised their core experiences and processes (see Figure 3, p. 99).

Figure 3: Initial reflections after Maria's interview.

These interview notes formed the basis of more elaborate memos which explored concepts and processes that would inform future interview questions and direction of inquiry. During this time, I listed and reflected on all my interview questions, obtained from previous transcripts, with a view to highlighting the positives and flaws of my interviewing technique. This also enabled me to check that my preconceptions were not unduly influencing the data collection. After the third phase of interviews, new codes started appearing in the data (i.e., 'finding it strange,' 'noticing the difference' and 'feeling unsure,') which were later subsumed under the term 'experiencing ambivalence.' This concept sought to explain degrees of uncertainty felt by certain participants upon first encountering homosexuality and same-sex marriage on their journey toward supporting same-sex marriage.

The fourth phase of interviews was guided by theoretical sampling, resulting in expanding the research location to Australia to investigate the pathways of clergy who, unlike other participants, had not carried them in the same direction over time. This led to the development of a new concept—shifting positions—adding complexity to participants' experiences and illuminating varying contexts and conditions influencing changes to their thinking and behaviour. By this stage in the recruitment process I, at

times, felt overwhelmed by the volume of rich descriptive and conceptual material I was obtaining. During these times, I took longer breaks between interviews to concentrate on analysis. As concurrent data collection and analysis resumed, I began interrogating the data with a view to developing theoretical constructs that explained what was happening in the lives of the participants. Properties of categories and sub-categories were fully explored and relationships between them extrapolated, and abstraction (see Chapter 3) raised the level of conceptualisation. Following the earlier example, the focused codes of 'naturally evolving,' 'experiencing ambivalence,' and 'shifting positions' were subsumed under the sub-category of 'constructing a congruent theology' which in turn supported the category of 'diverging ideologies' which began taking central position alongside the categories of 'holding a space' and 'revisiting.'

A CGT approach aligns with my psychodynamic psychotherapy training where the therapist assumes an active role, viewing himself as an instrument in the therapeutic relationship with the client, unlike classic grounded theory or psychoanalysis where the researcher/therapist assumes a more 'distant expert' role. Throughout the interview process, I endeavoured to be an active listener, participant-centred (C. Rogers, 1951), and genuinely interested in what they had to say. I encouraged participants to tell their stories fully through reflecting back, clarifying, or summarising to ensure I had accurately understood what they had intended. The interviews became a reflective space for me and participants, often uncovering tacit knowledge and acting as a catalyst for decision-making, as demonstrated in the following verbatim.

> *This opportunity to talk to you is timely for me because I think I need to be more proactive within the church structure around [same-sex marriage] … and lead by example. This might be my time to become more vocal… whereas [before] I wasn't in this space… talking today gives me the impetus to be able to begin thinking: how will I progress this further within the institution of church? … which I want to do.* (Harry)

Next, I turn to the analytic methods employed in this research and the pathway I took toward theory construction.

Data Analysis

Analytical overview

Although I write in a linear fashion, the analytic pathway to theory construction occurred with the data collection and analysis reciprocally informing and shaping each

other through an emergent, iterative, comparative, interactive, and abductive method (Charmaz, 2011). Because of the recursive and overlapping nature of this method, which took me back and forth between analysis and data collection, and up and down through different levels of analysis, often simultaneously, this section should be read in combination with the previous section on data collection to gain a complete understanding of the analytic working adopted in this research. In broad terms, analysis in this study consisted of: coding (initial and focused) of data; conceptual development; constructing tentative categories; constant comparison analysis; diagramming; and memo-writing. Together, these methods helped me develop and expand three conceptual categories (diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting); explicate the relationship between the categories and sub-categories that work to support a substantive theory (staying connected through conflict); and identify a primary condition (valuing relationship) through which this social process occurs. This section begins by briefly describing my involvement in the grounded theory group, followed by discussing the analytic procedures adopted in the study.

Grounded theory group

Although my experience in the substantive area of research and reading of the literature sensitised me to concepts that helped initiate and guide the research, I had concerns that my familiarity with the subject could lead to my taking things for granted. I sought outside contribution and feedback on my analysis through the grounded theory group at my university. This methodological working group of postgraduate students, post-PhD scholars, lecturers and supervisors from various disciplines met monthly. The group structure repositioned supervision in such a way as to complement the supervisor-student relationship and offer another vehicle of educative, academic, methodological, and collegial support for research students (Giddings & Wood, 2006; Grant, 2003). Such a repositioning toward peer support provided a confidential, respectful, and valuable forum for discussing problems and checking my analytical thinking and decision-making with people outside the substantive field. I discussed with the group the role of researcher reflexivity, co-construction in data collection, use of the literature reviews in grounded theory, in vivo codes, and computer software coding programs. I presented de-identified coded verbatims, my conceptual thinking, and theoretical development for the group's consideration. At times, I shared anonymous parts of transcripts for a group coding exercise. These were later collected, complete with

comments, at the end of all sessions so I could reflect and compare others' work with my own, providing a valuable means of quality assurance.

Analytical pathway to theory construction

Transcribing.

Strauss (1987) provided a compelling account of the purpose of transcribing in qualitative research, including the pros and cons, which he summed up as a written record of the interview for making detailed coding easier. While Strauss advocated to "transcribe only as much as is needed" (p. 266), I was eager to have a full, accurate written account of all interviews so I could immerse myself in the data. I transcribed the first 10 interviews during initial coding and early focused coding phases. This provided a valuable way for me to start thinking about the data. Listening to, and typing out, participants' stories compelled me to slow down my thought process which early on deepened reflection and sparked analytical thinking (Charmaz, 2014a). Hearing the intonation in participants' voices as they spoke aided in accurately identifying participants' intended meanings and prompted the jotting down of ideas and questions right from transcribing my first interview. These notes were later developed into more in-depth memos. From the 11th interview, as coding became more conceptual, and due to time restraints, I contracted out the transcribing, after a confidentiality agreement was signed with the transcriber to maintain participant confidentiality (Appendix K). All participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts minimising my inadvertently misconstruing what they had intended saying.

Initial coding and memo-writing.

I began the coding process using initial or open coding which starts transforming data into analysis through close study of data fragments (words, lines, segments, and incidents) in the transcripts for their analytic import which could be separated, sorted, and categorised (Charmaz, 2014a). Starting with line-by-line coding, I assigned labels to data segments to define what was happening in the data; in particular, depicting participants' ideas, notions, behaviours, gestures, perspectives, and attitudes (P Stern & Porr, 2011). Using gerunds helped pinpoint participants' actions—thoughts, perspectives, behaviours—and discern processes that might otherwise remain invisible. This made it easier to explore links between codes and processes, and facilitated the

constant comparison of experiences (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1978). *In vivo* codes (participants' terms) were used where appropriate to stay close to the data and participants' meanings. For example, 'holding a space,' an *in vivo* code, ultimately earned its way into being a main category and explained how participants sought to remain respectfully open in their dealings with diverse and often competing relationships in their role daily. These initial codes led to writing exploratory memos that directed further inquiry into the contexts and conditions of this action and were compared with other data within and between transcripts. I kept analytical and methodological memos; the former recording developments in my thinking about the codes, concepts, processes, and links between them; the latter forming an audit trail of how my analytical thinking and exploration informed my decisions that carried my research forward. Discussions with my supervisors during supervision, which aided in my developing ideas, were also recorded and later transcribed into memos.

Memo: Holding similar views over time

13 04 2016 12.43 pm: I am thinking about all the ways in which Harry and George's supportive perspectives on same-sex marriage have reportedly been the same over time. Harry's desire to include fringed communities stems from his identifying with being marginalised and feeling he doesn't belong. This, in part, comes from his being an ethnic minority and adopted, making him sensitive to others in a similar position and is based on social justice values around fairness and inclusion. George has no recollection of ever being homophobic or against same-sex marriage. His openness to diversity was driven by strong familial values of justice, reason and his understanding of scripture. Despite reporting their views haven't changed, the word 'evolving' suggests a process. This is apparent in their expressions of some early un-comfortableness upon first meeting gay people which felt 'strange.' There was, however, a commitment to working with the difference rather recoiling from it. It seems, as they encountered new experiences, they simply incorporated this new knowledge and expanded their views. Despite some 'speed-wobbles' they continued in the same direction. Perhaps, because their backgrounds made them more open to diversity, combined with the fact that these first encounters of gay issues happened so long-ago, participants find it hard to recall events and feelings accurately? If similar concepts arise, I need to explore these in greater detail. Also, is this the experience of all clergy? I need to be aware of any inferences that indicate a shift or change in their perspectives and, if so, when this happened and what causes it.

During the early stages of concurrent coding and memo-writing I coded manually. However, I considered using NVivo software package as an alternative option for containing and managing the burgeoning of material I had collected. I subsequently underwent training and started using NVivo for coding on my second round of interviews as a comparison to the manual method. The strength of NVivo, for me, lay in it being: an effective data management system with efficient linking capacity to switch between codes and data source within the transcript and link these to memos; efficient in performing prevalence searches and quick ranking of the significance of codes. However, being a visual learner who values the analytical creativity that comes with the freedom and messiness of pencil and paper, NVivo felt limited in providing diagrammatic representations at a glance and I had concerns whether it would be sufficiently flexible enough to deal with the required analytical complexity. On first appearances, the potential number and choice of nodes/codes seemed endless, but I learnt that these needed to be limited in favour of proficiency. While different grounded theorists have stated their support for (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), or cautioned against (Glaser, 2005), the use of computer software for coding, increasing numbers of qualitative researchers are utilising software programs for coding (Charmaz, 2011). I concur with Charmaz in that coding encompasses more than simply assigning labels and software programs like NVivo "may fit general qualitative coding for topics and themes more than coding for process and engaging in comparative analysis" (p. 20).

For the next phase of interviews, I devised a way to combine the flexibility of manual coding with the linking capacity of a computer system by using hyperlinks in Word to link codes, notes, and questions in comment boxes in the transcripts with memos and back to the data source. This system, together with using analytical diagrams drawn on a white board, saved to a removable disk drive and stored on my computer, provided a flexible method to track and manage large volumes of material. I chose this method of coding and data management for the remainder of my research. Transcripts previously coded using NVivo were re-coded manually using this newly devised system for consistency.

During initial coding I endeavoured to remain open to hearing all the participants had said. Applying mindfulness techniques to my being with the data—childlike curiosity as if looking with eyes for the first time—helped me focus on what was in the data rather than what I thought should be there. Questions used to interrogate the data and generate codes included: What is happening? What does the data suggest? Are there any tacit

assumptions? From whose point of view does this data reflect? Asking 'When?'
questions of the data elucidated the conditions that come into play and 'Why?'
questions promoted analytical understanding of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2017).
Checking of my coding of raw data, generating analytical and theoretical questions, and
early ranking of codes in terms of their significance occurred through consultation with
supervisors and grounded theory group colleagues.

Focused coding.

The next stage of analysis involved focused coding with a view to advance the
theoretical direction of the research and allow for closer examination, comparison,
checking, validating, exploring gaps, and addressing complexities in the data (Charmaz,
2014a). Data were analysed with more of a conceptual focus using terms that held
explanatory power. Development of a structured code hierarchy identified codes of
higher importance than others based on prevalence, significance, and contribution to the
goals of the research. Codes that were awarded significance had to earn their way in
through comparing data, re-reading transcripts, and recoding earlier data. This led to
codes being collapsed into groups and subsumed under existing or newly created labels
or nascent concepts. Figure 4 shows the manual process where 184 initial codes were
elicited from an early interview; these were then cut out, spread on the floor, and
subsumed into 36 grouped code/concept names. This exercise was carried out
individually and then collectively comparing data from different transcripts.

Figure 4: Grouping codes into concepts

Word-frequency searches confirmed prominent participant terms and were included
within codes/concepts while illuminating other words that were not and warranted

further examination. Clustering was a valuable tool that was used extensively throughout this stage of focused coding and analysis to explore links between developing codes and concepts.

With the transition from initial coding to focused coding, which required letting go of the nitty gritty of descriptive detail, accompanying memos became less exploratory—driven by inductive reasoning—and more explanatory about the relationships between the significant codes and processes. I gave myself permission to write creatively and uncensored about anything that came to my mind regarding the focused codes and concepts they generated, enjoying what Charmaz (2017) referred to as 'flights of fancy' to see what I would discover. This creative experience expanded my analytical thinking and evoked questions to explore in subsequent interviews. By the time I entered the fourth phase of interviews, I had gained a substantial amount of data for analysing through focused coding and felt more comfortable with the decision to outsource the transcribing.

Constructing categories.

Through careful examination and memo-writing exploring my focused codes I began to see recurrent patterns of behaviour in the data which, according to Charmaz (2017), suggests theoretical plausibility and requires further in-depth investigation. This required making a series of decisions about my focused codes that would raise the conceptual level of analysis from descriptive to a more abstract, theoretical level by constructing conceptual categories that would advance the theoretical direction of the research. Categorising involved continuing the process I had begun with my focused codes by selecting certain conceptual codes as having overriding significance and explanatory power or abstracting common patterns in several codes into an analytic concept (Charmaz, 2014a). A hierarchy gradually took shape where tentative categories took more prominence and those with less analytical significance fell away or were subsumed under other categories. Some of my early tentative categories and sub-categories, for example, 'discerning,' 'speaking out,' 'focusing on people,' and 'shifting roles' were incorporated into the category 'enacting' that represented how participants went about their daily lives with their supportive views and included the strategies they adopted. A challenge during this stage of analysis was to refrain from moving outside the scope of the study. To contain the spread of potential avenues to explore, I pinned

my research question strategically in view to ensure the construction of my categories aligned with the intended direction and focus of the research.

I gave careful consideration to how my categories were defined and named them succinctly to reflect a significant process, relationship, event, or issue. This was achieved by explicating the hinge-pin holding together participants' stories and identifying points of convergence which highlighted common issues, concerns, or problems (P Stern & Porr, 2011). Wording was critical when assigning terms to conceptual categories because at this stage the codes are treated as conceptual categories which shape the research process rather than simply descriptive terms.

My developing categories were analysed through comparative methods that involved re-reading and re-coding transcripts to check no salient codes had been previously missed. To ensure categories were grounded in the data, thereby earning their way into the analysis, I immersed myself in the data; comparing data with data, data with codes, between codes, and data and codes with categories. This, for example, led to my renaming the category 'enacting' to 'holding a space,' which was more grounded in the data as the term derived from an *in vivo* code and it answered more specifically the CGT question of 'how' participants enact. See Figure 5: Coding process – Elevating data to categories.

Connections within each category, between categories, and properties of the categories and subcategories were examined and defined. This 'fleshing out' exercise was achieved by extrapolating the conditions under which the categories and properties were operative, came into conflict, or caused change (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Attending a Charmaz workshop at this stage of analysis further assisted me in interrogating my conceptual categories about: the meanings they held for participants; when participants became aware or concerned about them; what the consequences were; how participants handled them; and when they became relevant to participants. This workshop challenged me to consider whether my categories could travel across substantive fields, disciplines and professions, and across theological and epistemological debates (K. Charmaz, personal communication, September 25, 2017). Testing of categories and their properties, including gaps in the data, was carried out explicitly in subsequent interviews through theoretical sampling and served to explore, validate, and identify complexities, and continued until they were saturated with data and had been clearly

defined, checked, and relationships fully explained between the categories and the range of variation with and between the categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Data	Initial coding		Inter-mediate codes	Sub-cate-gory	Main cate-gory
	Line by line	Gerunds			
When it comes to this issue this is not a uniform congregation. We do have people in our congregation who might be opposed... there's more who scratch their heads and go I'm not sure. They may not all agree, but I want this to be a place where someone who has a very different view to me says I'm welcome with my different view. (Daniel)	Mixed congregational views Acknowledging disagreement Difference welcomed	Welcoming diverse views	Respecting difference	Managing diverse relationships	Holding a space
Being a congregation where there's a mix of views, even people whose views are opposite to me know they're allowed to think that. So, we are holding a space in a way. (Sharon)	Space for diverse views Holding a space	Holding a space for difference			
In the morning I was at [a] very conservative congregation and in the evening, I preached at the Pride event… the mental gymnastics around making sure you're in the right space… and find ways of talking about the things… In the morning it would have been desperately inappropriate to talk about marriage equality because they would have shut down. (Michael)	Ministering to two polarised congregations Active mental juggling Discerning appropriate approach	Respecting different worldviews	Working with difference		
One of the concerns I've had in all of this [is] what it's like to feel marginalised within your own church. I know not everyone's on the same page. So, [we've] tried hard to keep maintaining this is not something that everyone in our church thinks. This is a position we've come to and be able to hold, but it doesn't mean every single person supports same-sex marriage.	Concerns of excluding Awareness of different views Distinguishing between church/ individual views	Actively including			

Figure 5: Coding process – Elevating data to categories

Use of diagrams.

An integral aspect of analysis occurred through using the analytic tools of clustering, flowcharts, and diagramming which, for me, were visual memos that allowed me to creatively explore and clarify my ideas as they evolved, pinpointed gaps, and raised questions about the data. Clustering, as a preliminary brainstorming exercise, was used from the outset of the project. This was a useful technique to sort and map out large volumes of data such as my codes and nascent concepts by listing similarities and contrasts and drawing links between them, including collapsing smaller codes into larger significant codes and identifying those that would ultimately become redundant (Birks & Mills, 2015). Later, clustering was used to define the properties of categories and sub-categories. This invaluable analytic tool often formed the basis of more elaborate flowcharts and diagrams. An example of how clustering was used in the study can be seen in Figure 6.
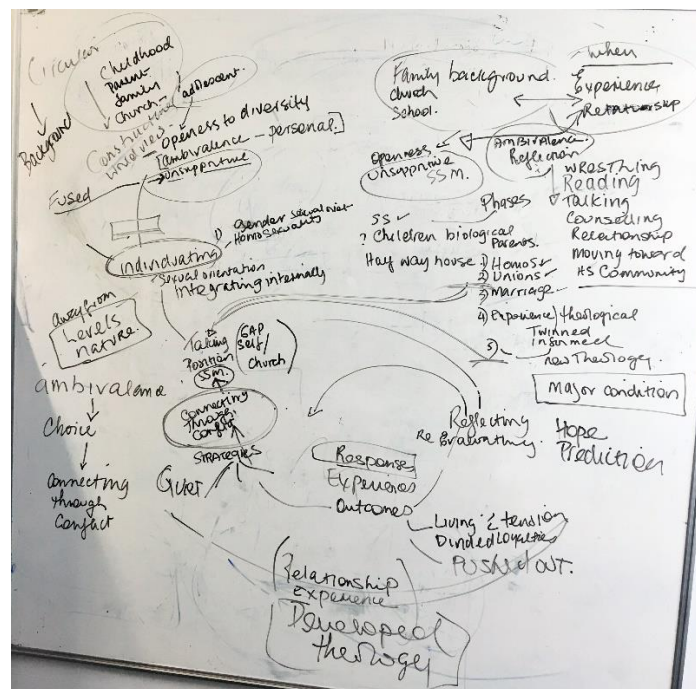
Figure 6: Early use of clustering to extrapolate the conceptual properties and process.

As analysis progressed, flowcharts and more elaborate diagrams were used to provide explanatory power of broader processes within and between my conceptual categories. This was especially valuable since CGT is about demonstrating process and diagramming contributed significantly toward theory construction and integration in a way that would have been difficult for me to achieve if solely relying on text. Figure 7

demonstrates a series of diagrammatical interpretations of how I considered participants' theoretical process in alternative ways; circular, corkscrew, interweaving.
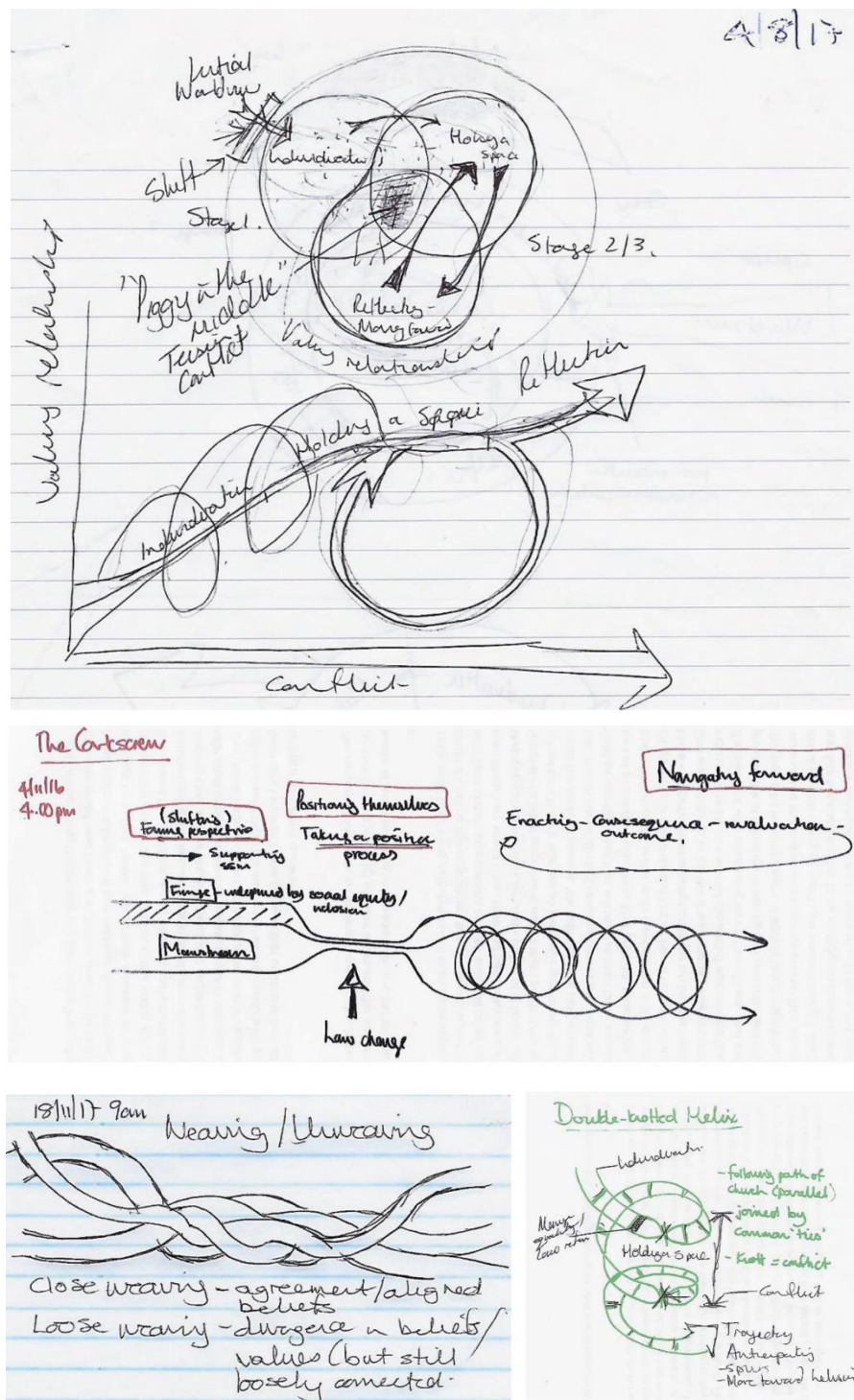
Figure 7: Exploring the developing theory conceptually using diagrams

Not all grounded theorists advocate the use of diagramming (Glaser, 1978). Charmaz (2014a), however, stated that "diagrams can offer concrete images of our ideas… enabling you to see the relative power, scope, and direction of the categories in your

analysis as well as the connections among them," but cautions they should be used in the service of the theoretical development of their analysis (p. 218). Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocated for using diagramming as an intrinsic aspect of analysis and asserted that unless the researcher is able to graphically depict the theoretical process in its entirety, they do not yet have total clarity about what is happening. From the outset of the study I kept a file of my diagrams which recorded my analytical thinking as it evolved over time.

Conceptual development.

As memos and diagrams became more organised according to categorical scheme, I considered methods of ensuring data were being presented as accurately as possible and critically questioned how I might best recognise and extract from the data elements that had relevance for theory construction (Birks & Mills, 2015). One approach to address this issue was through the notion of theoretical sensitivity (Blumer, 1969), as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), that questioned how a researcher's combined a priori assumptions—personal, professional, and experiential history—and ability to have theoretical insight into the substantive area combine with an ability to make something of his or her insights of the developing theory. While my reflexivity strategies (see Reflexivity) provided an introspective base from which to start, I considered the strategies to help raise theoretical sensitivity, suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), to guide my thinking about the categories and central concepts of my developing theory.

I recognised from a CGT perspective the benefits of 'drawing on personal experience' and utilising this to stimulate conceptual comparison with the data and, in turn, theorise. However, 'waving the red flag' whenever my a priori assumptions might unduly influence my interpretation of the data created a tension between theoretical sensitivity and forcing the data (Charmaz, 2014a; Kelle, 2007). I handled this by going back to the data to compare my developing theoretical concepts with the coded data and reading the literature to explore all possible angles of a category or concept and their relationships, specifically to find out: if, and how, they fitted; what meanings were associated with category names; what were the properties of sub-categories, and how did these play out in the data?

Using abductive reasoning (see Chapter 3) through memo-writing and extensive diagramming, I explored different ways to interpret, construct, and present the data by

shifting central concepts and main categories and examining how this impacted upon relationships and process. Holding reflexive doubt about my theoretical construction and trying new formations was exciting and unnerving in that it challenged my analytical thinking and raised concerns about whether I had understood the real essence of participants' stories.

It was helpful to remind myself, at those times, that a CGT offers just one representation of the data, where there can be many, which alleviated my fears of 'getting it wrong.' My analytic decisions during this period centred on what categories, concepts, processes, and relationships offered explanatory power and best reflected the data. While I felt my three main theoretical categories—diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting—were well defined and conceptual to a point, they were still largely descriptive and I struggled to identify and place the underlying theoretical concept that I, increasingly, became aware connected all the categories—valuing people and relationship—while participants simultaneously lived with degrees of tension in their lives because of their supportive views. Referring to what St Augustine said of the Church, Michael's sentiments highlighted this dilemma:

> *'She's [the Church] a whore, but she's my mother' … I think that captures some of that stuff … the church is incredibly important to me and I do love it but I'm also incredibly aware that it's broken … so there's a real tension.*

Identifying this dichotomy in the lives of participants led to re-reading transcripts, further memoing and diagramming until both these concepts (valuing relationship and tension/conflict) took central place in my theoretical considerations.

Theory integration

Grounded theory is not simply identifying a group of categories and concepts. Rather, to ensure credibility, the intention is to construct a theory that explains the studied phenomenon and is grounded in the data. Birks and Mills (2015) defined a 'theory' as an "explanatory scheme comprising of concepts that relate to each other through logical patterns of connectivity" (p. 108). This final stage of analysis required elucidating relationships between abstract concepts that would explain the studied phenomenon and provide an interpretation that was contextually constrained (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000, 2008, 2009; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012).

Different versions of grounded theory advocate for the use of coding methods that advance analysis toward theoretical integration. For example, Strauss and Corbin's

(1990) axial coding facilitates the development of categories through a formal frame that systematically specifies the properties of categories conceptually to generate links and themes. Theoretical coding (Glaser, 1978), a sophisticated level of codes, underlies substantive codes, showing how they relate and assist with theorising and integrating data and focused codes to advance the analytic story in a theoretical direction. Some constructivists (Charmaz, 2006; A. Hutchinson, Johnston, & Breckon, 2011) have cautioned that using such methods of coding have the potential to project a technological overlay on the data that can make analysis opaque and impenetrable, and restricts the emergent, iterative nature of grounded theory. Charmaz (2014a) stated that axial and theoretical coding, if used skilfully, can add clarity and direction to the development of theory when used in the service of analyses. However, Charmaz believed that initial and focused coding were adequate to complete theory generation through following empirical leads and learning about the experiences the categories represent; this was the direction I decided to follow. Furthermore, development of my main categories occurred relatively early in the analysis and I was concerned that imposing technical overlays, such as Glaser's theoretical coding families, at a later stage of analysis might force the data or add confusion.

In broad terms, I achieved theory integration through the comparative method of identifying central concepts that were grounded in the data and constructed from an accumulation of analytical memos that were validated through member-checking and reaching theoretical saturation of the major categories (Birks & Mills, 2015). In the lives of participants, the dichotomous link between valuing relationship and living with tension was captured by construction of the theoretical concept 'staying connected through conflict,' which the three categories—diverging ideologies, holding a space and revisiting—work to explain. This core theoretical concept uncovers a social process about participants' lives and answers the CGT question 'How?' Participants' decision to stay connected through conflict occurs because of their valuing relationship, on multi levels. Continued analysis clarified the sub-categories and the variances contained within and their relationship to each other; this is discussed in subsequent Chapters 5-8. In the final section of this chapter, I review the methods used for theory integration, namely member-checking, using quotations, and theoretical sufficiency.

Member checking.

As interviews progressed, I began to recognise some of my early developing concepts being reflected in participants' stories. Initially, these were simply recorded in memos. In time, I gradually introduced them in interviews to see whether or not they resonated with participants. According to Charmaz (2014a), member-checking refers to "taking ideas back to research participants for their confirmation" (p. 210). In the early stages of member-checking, when analysis was largely exploratory, and I was using inductive reasoning, I used open-ended questions to explore my evolving ideas with participants to avoid forcing the data. Over time, I became more specific in obtaining feedback. I was keenly attentive to participants' expressions and body language. Bland agreement with my analysis meant my interpretation did not penetrate their core experience which meant letting go of my ideas but using the opportunity for further exploration to elaborate the categories with gathering new material. An enthusiastic reaction usually signified resonance and provided validation (Charmaz, 2014a), as demonstrated in Emily's response:

> *That's absolutely correct for me, yes valuing relationship absolutely rings true, lots of this stuff sounds like a great description for me. You're giving a framework for what so many people are just feeling their way through. So much of it is a sense of relief… it's quite affirming to hear the description of something and be able to locate yourself in the description… Ah, that's so nice to think that other people have been going through this process and have questioned their belonging within the institution and yet somehow are still so committed to that sense of call.*

As the research neared completion, participants increasingly asked what I had learnt from the study, affording me an opportunity to explain my theoretical findings in more detail. Two full theory explanations were made, including to the participant I re-interviewed, providing confirmatory feedback on the theory derived. Many part checks occurred throughout the project.

Use of quotations.

The aim of the research is to construct a theory to explain the experiences of clergy who support same-sex marriage; however, for the product to be a grounded theory it needs to reflect the data. Incorporating quotations in the writing up of abstractions is a way of transparently demonstrating that the constructed theory was grounded in the lives of those who co-constructed the data with the researcher (J. Mills et al., 2006). Consistent with CGT, quotations were viewed as an integral aspect of this study. From the first

interview and throughout analysis, significant quotations were incorporated into memos to track for later reference and demonstrate analytical decisions. Participants' words contributed significantly toward theoretical construction and have been used extensively in the findings chapters to ensure participants' voices are heard. Use of quotations support the categories and capture variations within the properties of the sub-categories by preserving participants' language. They portray how individuals construct meaning and, in turn, reflect the analytical and conceptual decision-making, strengthening the study's credibility (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2014a). Permission for using quotations was sought by participants before incorporating them into the thesis. Because the spoken word is full of hesitations, pauses and repeats, some participants felt uncomfortable when they saw what they had said exactly. To alleviate their unease, I have, therefore, removed some of the repeated words. For succinctness, ellipses (…) denotes where quotations have been truncated, italics represents my comments/questions and square brackets [ ] provide clarification, i.e., they [congregants].

Theoretical saturation.

In grounded theory, theoretical saturation legitimises researchers' claims that they have gathered sufficient data related to the studied phenomenon to "build a comprehensive and convincing theory" (Morse, 1995, p. 148). This occurs not by witnessing repetition of the same stories but rather when continued interviewing neither reveals any further properties of categories nor adds to the construction of the grounded theory. Saturation is achieved by being open to what is happening in the field and guided by theoretical sampling (Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2014a; Morse, 2011). While not wanting to foreclose analytic possibilities, I was concerned that theoretical sampling, if not critically contained, could potentially extend investigations beyond the scope of the intended research. Explicit revisiting of the goals of my study, at this point, helped to confirm that further sampling was not eliciting new material. Reflecting on the degree to which a grounded theory, with its emergent design, can achieve complete saturation, I tended to resonate with Dey's (1999) preferred term, 'theoretical sufficiency.' From this perspective, I felt that my theoretical categories were adequately saturated with data to demonstrate that they were defined, checked, and the relationships including the range of variation with and between categories were explained (Charmaz, 2014a).

Evaluating the quality of the research

The quality of any research project is judged by its product (Corbin & Strauss, 1990); however, there are many ways to evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of a grounded theory (see Chapter 3). Following a CGT approach, the trustworthiness of this study is guided using the four criteria expounded by Charmaz (2014a): *credibility, originality, resonance*, and *usefulness*.

Credibility is achieved through the appropriate use of methods to achieve the goals of the study, including the researcher having "intimate familiarity with the setting or topic" (Charmaz, 2014a, p. 337); obtaining sufficient data to merit claims; presenting a wide yet relevant range of categories where systematic comparisons are well-articulated; making strong arguments that are supported by the data (Charmaz, 2014a). Furthermore, transparency about decision-making, evidenced through reflexive analytical and methodological memos and the maintenance of an audit trail that demonstrates how theory is constructed, constitute key strategies in promoting quality (Birks & Mills, 2015). I believe I present a full, multi-faceted yet congruent explanation of the substantive area that is supported by the data and portrays the complexity of participants' worlds, including those that experienced shifts in perspective which brings added depth to the findings. To this end, this chapter has provided an open and reflexive account of the methods used.

Research originality offers new insights and renderings of the data that depict social and theoretical significance, and challenge or extend ideas, concepts, and practices (Charmaz, 2014a). The research is significant as it builds on international research and offers the first theoretical interpretation of clergy who support same-sex marriage in Australasia. It provides fresh insights into the lives of this little-researched area and provides a basis for further exploration that compares perspectives of supportive clergy from heterogenous samples, for example ethnicity and culture, and clergy who have left the church.

Resonance occurs when findings are portrayed in fullness, reveal explicit and implicit meanings, make sense to participants and offer deeper insights through rendering of relevant categories, and draw links between institutions and the lives of individuals and within their context (Charmaz, 2014a). Participants with whom I shared the findings (see Member-checking) provided confirmatory feedback that the constructed theory

captured a core experience, and many who expressed feeling alone on their journey expressed relief and comfort at having been understood.

Research is useful when it contributes to knowledge and is helpful to those associated with the studied phenomena, generic processes are explicated where the data indicates, and "the analysis sparks further research on other substantive areas" (Charmaz, 2014a, p. 338). The contentious issue of same-sex marriage dividing the church has led to many people feeling stuck, hurt, and confused. Findings about how participants engaged with the challenges they face in their churches, while remaining committed, could prove advantageous for religious institutions and policy makers who hope to increase in-group respect and tolerance and better understand their clergy. Hierarchy from some international churches have expressed interest in the findings which they anticipate could help them be more effective in facilitating ongoing same-sex marriage discussions in their institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methods used to examine the responses of Christian clergy who support same sex marriage. Following constructivist principles, I discussed the ethical considerations undertaken and my position as researcher situated in the study alongside participants as co-constructor of the data. Next, the decisions and development of data collection and analytical processes were illustrated with numerous examples to endorse the research credibility and trustworthiness. Finally, the quality measures, based on Charmaz's (2014a) evaluative criteria, were reviewed. The following chapters present the research findings, commencing with an overview of the constructed theory 'staying connected through conflict.'

Chapter Five: Overview: The Theory of Staying Connected Through Conflict

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an overview of the findings. **Valuing relationship** was significant in the development of participants' supportive views on same sex marriage. Valuing relationship underpinned their decision to remain with their church, and was a driving force in **staying connected through conflict**. The conflict stemmed from participants' supportive views of same-sex marriage which diverged from traditional religious thinking. Similarly, the emphasis participants placed on **valuing relationship** was found to guide their day-to-day actions and inform the way they managed diverse relationships with differing views on the issue of same-sex marriage.

Theory of staying connected through conflict

Staying connected through conflict was a core process of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. This process refers to their decision to remain with their respective institutions and in their clerical roles, despite conflict arising from their supportive views that diverged from traditional religious thinking on the subject. The underlying condition that drove and sustained participants' core process was their valuing relationship stemming from a platform of values based on love, respect, inclusiveness, and equality. In other words, participants' overarching process of staying connected through conflict occurred *because* of their valuing relationship.

The participants' process of staying connected through conflict is presented as a trajectory that is underpinned and driven by their valuing relationship. A diagrammatic overview of this process is depicted in Figure 8 (p. 120). A trajectory, according to the Oxford dictionary, refers to a path followed by an object moving under the action of given forces. In the current study, the trajectory indicates how participants' actions moved them forward through a series of stages over time toward a destination that, for the time being, remains uncertain. While all participants' journeys took them along the trajectory in a similar direction, their individual pathways through each stage varied.

The trajectory illustrating participants' process of staying connected through conflict comprises two parts. First, the large arrow portrays three stages that participants move

through over a period of time; diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting. The stages are epigenetic in that each stage is informed by, and builds on, previous stages. Participants progress along the trajectory by absorbing and expanding upon prior occurrences. Each of the three stages has been identified as a theoretical category and contains within its sub-categories in which sub-processes occur. The first stage of the trajectory, diverging ideologies, explains how clergy's supportive views developed. The second and third stages of the trajectory holding a space and revisiting, jointly explain how participants managed their day-to-day lives while retaining their supportive views. While each stage of the trajectory is presented in a linear fashion, the process is dynamic and iterative moving individuals back and forth between diverging ideologies, holding a space and revisiting while, concurrently, the process moves forward.

A significant aspect of the trajectory reveals both early influences on participants' *initial perspectives* and on-going experiences that continued throughout their lives. This led to an *on-going process of discernment* (illustrated by the blue spiral line around the arrow) that participants continually engaged with throughout each stage of the process. Because of the topical and contentious nature of same-sex marriage, throughout the entire process of staying connected through conflict, participants constantly encountered situations, people, or incidents related to same-sex marriage that led them to reflect on how best to respond and decide upon appropriate actions. These decisions, in turn, governed future outcomes and so the process was, and continued to be, repeated. As with each stage of the trajectory, throughout this process of discernment, the prevailing condition underpinning participants' decisions and influencing their actions was their valuing relationship. The following section explains the two components inherent in the process of staying connected through conflict; namely, the nature and role of conflict, and connection as perceived by participants in this study.
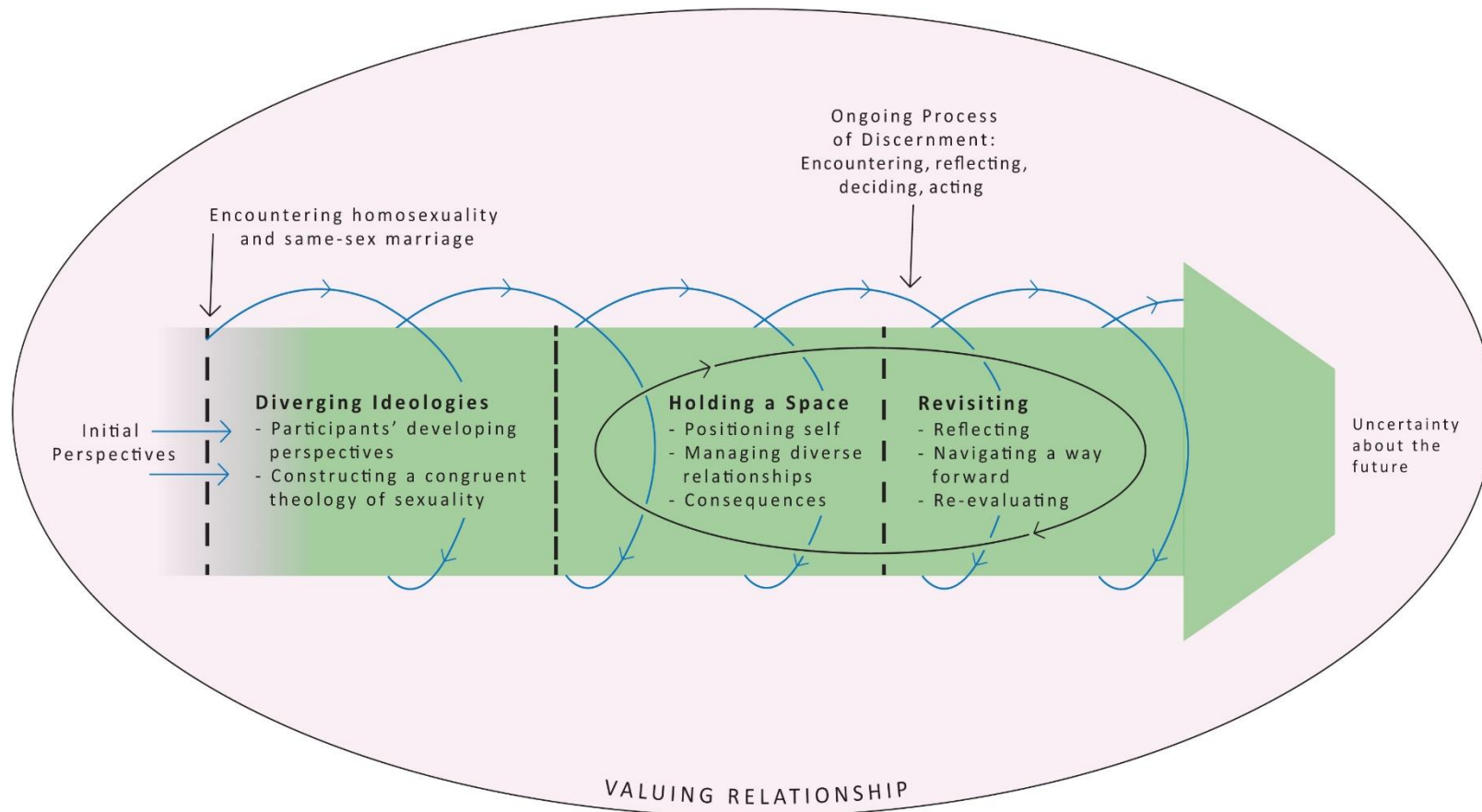
Figure 8: Diagrammatic representation of the theory 'Staying connected through conflict'

The nature of conflict

Conflict, in the context of this study, refers to an intersection of a variety of opposing thoughts and behaviours such as the clashing of competing views (supportive, unsupportive, unsure) regarding same-sex marriage. The conflict that participants experienced was both external and internal, and stemmed from their supportive views that diverged from traditional religious thinking about homosexuality and same-sex marriage and placed individuals, in most cases, in conflict with the official stance of their institution. All participants experienced conflict or ambivalence, albeit in diverse contexts, when first confronting homosexuality; however, with the issue of same-sex marriage, timing, spacing, and degree of the conflict varied. Regarding the latter, participants typically either experienced conflict with their institutions and those opposed to same-sex marriage within it or with supporters of same-sex marriage who, for example, criticised them for not doing more to be proactive agents of change. For some, their developing perspectives challenged previously-held beliefs. Still others experienced internal dissonance, feeling hamstrung by tradition as they changed their behaviour or compromised as a result of reflecting on others' reactions. Individuals influenced by feminist principles reported, at times, being conflicted over what they wondered was the relevance and appropriateness of the institution of marriage in today's society with its strong patriarchal roots; questioning why same-sex couples would even want to get married? Regardless of the cause of the conflict, all participants reported living with a certain tension in their lives.

The nature of connection

The nature of connection refers to a bringing together of two or more ideas, things, persons, or groups in such a way that a relationship exists between the entities and a degree of coherence and continuity is fostered (Oxford dictionary). Connection in this study refers to the decision participants made to remain connected or in relationship with, primarily, their institutions and those within it regardless of their views of same-sex marriage.

Of importance, too, were choices made that led to sustaining the connection with themselves, lesbian and gay people, their faiths, and their calling in a way that enabled them to live congruently and with integrity. Underpinning participants' choices of bringing together two separate, sometimes-competing, entities to maintain a connection

was the acknowledgement that first and foremost the relationship was valued over and above the conflict. Coming from a humanitarian orientation, participants recognised humans as relational beings, believing that their being in relationship with, and connection to, one another, one's place of faith, and society in general was fundamental to their wellbeing.

Participants relayed that a challenge of any healthy relationship deemed valuable was the ability to stay connected despite the conflict. In fact, staying connected held the potential for the relationship to continue, grow, and ultimately deepen through increased understanding and an appreciation of the difference that had occurred. But, in the often-challenging process of staying connected through conflict, participants talked about the need to tolerate tension arising from ambiguity about the future. This ability to tolerate tension was reported to be necessary to constructively move forward with the chance of retaining and deepening the relationship.

The role and significance of valuing relationship

Participants' chose to remain connected with the church despite the conflict they experienced because they perceived the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Their decision to stay and look for ways to work through the conflict caused by their supportive views was driven by their valuing relationship with: lesbian and gay people; the church; their congregations; God, and themselves.

Firstly, coming into, and valuing, relationship with lesbian and gay people through listening to their stories and witnessing their lives and relationships significantly influenced participants' perspectives as they developed, and in some cases shifted, their views toward supporting same-sex marriage. This meant acknowledging that lesbian and gay people's realities were different to what the traditional church had taught. Secondly, participants valued the relationship with their institutions and congregations whose broader theological views aligned with their own. For many, the history—often multi-generational—they had with their denomination was comfortable and familiar, providing a strong sense of identity, belonging, and nurturing. Allegiances to both same-sex marriage and the institution of the church created divided loyalties. Finally, participants valued their relationship with God and sought to live according to their calling that they viewed as God-directed. This meant being authentically connected to self in a way that enabled them to live congruently in accordance with their convictions and aligned with their perception of Christian values. For participants, at the heart of

who they were, as clergy, was their valuing relationship in all the forms described above and they saw this—relationship and love—as being at the heart of the Christian message and Gospel values. Therefore, to be true to these principles led individuals to valuing relationship and experience enough to allow it to inform, and in some cases change, their theology and view of sexuality. Valuing their relationship with the church underpinned participants' decision to remain connected with the church. Partly this was driven by their perspective that they needed to 'be in it to change it,' and partly because they viewed same-sex marriage as being only 'a part of a bigger picture' as it related to the Christian church.

Next, I explain the three trajectory stages participants moved through; diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting.

Three stages of the trajectory: Staying connected through conflict

The theory of staying connected through conflict was driven by the primary condition of valuing relationship and was integral to each stage of participants' process. This process is represented by three categories; diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting. The following section provides a summary of the categories and sub-categories, and explains the relationships between them and the theory of staying connected through conflict.

Early influences on participants' perspectives

As an antecedent to the process of staying connected through conflict, participants arrived at the issue of homosexuality, and later same-sex marriage, with *initial perspectives* which emanated from participants' backgrounds, namely family, school, and early church environments. Some participants reported a conservative upbringing that followed traditional religious thinking that claimed there was a 'right' way when it came to relationships and marriage; anything other than that between one man and one woman fell outside of what God intended and was therefore viewed as wrong. These participants were unsupportive or ambivalent when first encountering homosexuality. Other participants, from a more liberal upbringing, that followed a more pragmatic approach, espoused an openness to diversity when it came to viewing relationships and emphasised given conditions and contexts when making sense of a situation or relationship. These participants were more open to new experiences of sexuality. All participants had early Christian influences; hence, central to their meaning-making of

these new experiences of sexuality was how they read and understood scripture in relation to the subject; either as the literal Word of God or as an historical document which, while acknowledging inspired truths within its pages, needed to take cognisance of historical context and latest biblical scholarship (explained further in Chapter 6). While participants' backgrounds imbued them with a worldview to interpret sexual preferences this influence was not absolute. On-going experiences throughout life served to influence and deepen participants' developing perspectives; hence, the concept of initial perspectives in Figure 8 (p. 120) remains un-bordered.

Diverging ideologies

When participants first encountered the issue of same-sex attraction they began their journey through the first stage of the trajectory—diverging ideologies. In this stage, participants made a series of decisions that moved them away from traditional heteronormative religious views of same-sex attraction toward reaching a supportive position of same-sex marriage. To achieve this, participants worked through experiences of ambivalence and developed ideologies so that their belief and practice aligned. This process comprised two parts; namely, Part A, participants initial and developing perspectives and, Part B, strategies adopted in constructing a congruent theology of sexuality.

Two sub-categories were identified in Part A, namely *contexts influencing participants' perspectives* and *recognising a failing theology*. Regardless of their initial perspectives, all participants experienced degrees of ambivalence when first encountering same-sex attraction in others or themselves, although the context, timing, spacing, and degree of ambivalence varied. For example, some participants reported their conflicted or ambivalent stance about homosexuality and same-sex marriage, others about the church's negative response to lesbian and gay people, and still others questioned the appropriateness and relevance of the institution of marriage in today's society because of its strong patriarchal roots. The primary condition that influenced, and in some cases shifted, participants' perspectives to being supportive was *coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people*. As participants came into relationship with lesbian and gay people, they simultaneously perceived traditional religious teaching on sexuality as an exclusive theology that was failing to reach and offer hope to all. This led to their conviction of requiring a theology of sexuality that was biblically-based, congruent with their experience, and inclusive.

In Part B, participants worked through any ambivalence by constructing a congruent theology of sexuality where, through viewing homosexuality as a healthy variation of sexuality, they came to accept and support same-sex marriage. Two sub-categories were identified; *informing self* and *valuing relationship*. Participants' achieved this congruent theology by acquainting themselves with current substantive knowledge and latest biblical scholarship, and valuing relationship and experience enough to allow it to inform their theology. An important aspect involved knowing and trusting self, sufficiently to reposition authority away from traditional doctrine. For those with an openness to diversity, the process through this stage was relatively smooth and naturally evolving, whereby they simply absorbed and expanded their view and entered the next trajectory stage. Those who were initially unsupportive or ambivalent experienced greater difficulty over longer periods of time before shifting their perspectives to a supportive stance. Ultimately, participants came to the end of the first stage of the trajectory, diverging ideologies, by reaching a position that involved assuming one of the nuanced positions falling under the supportive umbrella.

The emphasis participants placed on valuing relationship was a force that directed them through the first part of the trajectory. Participants' valuing relationship with, and between, lesbian and gay people provided the impetus for their developing perspectives that led them to diverge from traditional thinking on sexuality. Similarly, the value placed on the relationship with the church underpinned participants' decision to stay connected despite the conflict that their diverging ideologies created.

Holding a space

On reaching a supportive position about same-sex marriage, participants were faced with the challenge of how to carry out their clerical role in the church. At this point, they entered the second stage of the trajectory, holding a space, in which three sub-categories were identified: *positioning self*, *managing diverse relationships*, and *consequences*. The purpose of this stage—a period of enacting—was to establish operational boundaries and adopt a suitable approach by employing a range of strategies that would enable participants to function optimally in their vocational roles within their environments with their supportive views. Initially, this involved positioning self, by, firstly, choosing a preferred role where participants primarily identified along a continuum of being a provocateur/outward advocate of same-sex marriage or a quiet advocate/facilitator who preferred working privately behind the scenes. Secondly,

through assuming a stance, participants determined the degree to which they would adhere to church rules and regulations. Here, participants primarily chose one of three positions: conform and follow the institution's regulations and rules; 'dance along the edges' looking for opportunities to push boundaries; a preparedness to break rank. These decisions were made after assessing risk to self and others, and were conditional on the individual's personality, his or her institution's official stance regarding same-sex marriage, and the ecclesiology and structure of the institution.

Once positioning themselves, participants went about their clerical roles within the institution, parish, and wider community, which required they manage diverse relationships with a range of people with differing opinions on the issue of same-sex marriage. These relationships included supportive, unsupportive, and ambivalent hierarchy, colleagues and congregants; lesbian and gay individuals; and groups inside and outside the church, community members, and wider society. In addition, participants worked to make space for themselves and their own views while upholding the faith amid competing relationships. Rather than assuming a neutral position, participants, in holding a space, were agentic actors acting with intent to make room for everyone, regardless of their view on same-sex marriage. The aim of participants was to actively hold a space where, first and foremost, faith was preserved while respectfully responding to diverse relationships in a way that did not compromise the issue of same-sex marriage.

Participants managed their diverse relationships by employing a range of strategies related to degrees of speaking out and participation (explained further in Chapter 7). Depending on the situation and relationship they encountered, participants shifted roles along a continuum—between facilitator, quiet or more outward advocate, and provocateur—moving them, at times, away from their preferred role or self-identified approach. The primary condition influencing participants' shifts in roles was their aim of focusing on people and relationship. As such, in situations where, for example, there was a conflict of interest, participants responded pastorally meeting individuals where they were at and in a way that acknowledged their context rather than defaulting automatically to church doctrine and regulation.

Participants' handling of the diverse relationships elicited a variety of responses leading to a range of personal and professional consequences. These ranged from covert support and tolerance to being ostracised, vilified, threatened, punished, and having their faith

called into question by hierarchy and colleagues. In turn, these reactions evoked an array of feelings for participants. While some felt cautiously hopeful and optimistic of the future, participants commonly reported feeling alienated and alone. Many resigned themselves with the fact that they felt their stance had jeopardised any chance of a future career within their institution. Others felt disillusioned, angry, embarrassed, and deeply saddened by the reactions of opponents in the church expressing frustration and impatience while they waited for the church to catch up. Trying to respectfully bridge the demands of diverse relationships through holding a space came at a cost; all participants reported living with, and tolerating degrees of, tension and conflict in their daily lives that occurred from feeling caught in the middle.

Revisiting

The third stage of the trajectory, revisiting, is where participants entered a period of reflection and contemplation about what had occurred during the earlier stage of holding a space. Whilst I have presented the three stages of the trajectory in a linear fashion, participants moved back and forth between the stages of holding a space and revisiting as they moved through the on-going process of staying connected through conflict. In Figure 8 (p.120) this permeation between the second and third stages is illustrated by a loosely dotted line demarcating the two. Due to the ongoing contention around the same-sex marriage debate within the church, participants sensitively and reflectively monitored their actions in the light of the situations in which they found themselves to make sense of and plan a way forward. Three sub-categories were identified in the third stage of revisiting: *reflecting*, *re-evaluating*, and *navigating a way forward*. Participants were found to go through a sub-process where they circulated between the sub-categories while at the same time moving back and forth between this and the earlier stage of holding a space.

First, participants reflected on their situation in the light of reactions they encountered and endeavoured making sense of opponents' behaviour, particularly negative responses. This reaction was reported by participants in terms of opponents' perceived fear and risk to self, their belief system, the future of the institution, and the unknown. In addition, and central to participants' meaning-making of opponents' behaviour, revolved the notion of a 'plurality' that exists in biblical hermeneutics and influences the way scripture is read and interpreted. Second, participants underwent a period of re-evaluating. Most participants, especially those with greater degrees of conflict and

whose daily experience consisted mainly of 'firefighting' and 'surviving,' had, at some stage, considered walking away and leaving the church. During this stage, motivations for staying or going were re-assessed in the light of future predictions. While some participants anticipated splits between liberal and conservative factions in the church at local, national, and international level, others felt that the church would eventually move toward being more inclusive and accepting of same-sex marriage. Participants believed they were on the right side of history in the fight against exclusive beliefs and practices and all trusted that the Spirit would guide the change. Through re-evaluating their motivations for remaining, all participants re-committed to staying connected to the church. It is important to note that the process of revisiting, particularly the phases of reflecting and re-evaluating, refers to the way in which participants continually monitored their actions and strategies employed in the light of reactions from others and came out of their valuing relationship.

While remaining open to new learnings, participants did not return to the first stage of diverging ideologies and none changed their supportive perspectives of same-sex marriage. However, because individuals viewed their perspectives as evolving and were open to new learnings, the line demarcating stages one and two in the trajectory (Figure 8, p. 120) is not solid but tightly perforated. As time went by, individuals reported increased confidence in their views about supporting same-sex marriage. This is illustrated in the diagram by the increasing density in colour of the arrow as participants' process of staying connected through conflict progressed.

The final part of the sub-process within the stage of revisiting involved participants making a series of decisions about navigating a way forward. This was the result of reflecting on and re-evaluating the reasons and motivations for their actions and typically consisted of choosing between three options: either continuing acting as they were, changing how they had been operating, or making compromises to appease competing loyalties.

Trajectory toward uncertainty about the future

The types of conflict participants experienced throughout the process of staying connected through conflict remained the same, as were the diverse and often-competing relationships that they valued. The choice to stay connected despite the conflict and because of their valuing relationship was also present throughout the entire process. The on-going disputatiousness of the debate about same-sex marriage within the church

propelled individuals forward on a trajectory that led towards *uncertainty* about the future. This uncertainty, which is likely to remain until such times as churches reach a uniformed position, is about their own future and those of supporters, the future of the church and those opposed to same-sex marriage, and the future of lesbian and gay people who are either currently, or who wish to be, part of the life of the church.

The three theoretical categories—diverging ideologies, holding a space, revisiting—are explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters (see Table 3, p. 130).

Conclusion

The beginning of this chapter provided an overview of the findings of the theory of staying connected through conflict and explained the role and significance of valuing relationship as a primary condition that drove participants' core process. The second part of the chapter presented a synopsis of the three main theoretical categories— diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting—and outlined the relationships between them to explain how they work to support the overall theoretical construct. In the following three chapters (6-8), I explain the three theoretical categories, their sub-categories and the sub-processes that occur in each stage of the trajectory in greater detail. Together, they form the theory of staying connected through conflict.

Table 3: Outline of findings chapters

Chapter	Topic
Chapter Five	Overview of findings
	The theory of staying connected through conflict and the role of valuing relationship
	Summary of the three theoretical categories: diverging ideologies, holding a space and revisiting
Chapter Six	Theoretical category of diverging ideologies
	Part A: Participants' initial and developing perspectives
	Sub-categories: contexts influencing participants' ambivalence and recognising a failing theology of sexuality
	Part B: Constructing a congruent theology of sexuality
	Sub-categories: informing self and valuing relationship
Chapter Seven	Theoretical category of holding a space
	Sub-categories: positioning self, managing diverse relationships, and consequences
Chapter Eight	Theoretical category of revisiting
	Sub-categories: reflecting, re-evaluating, and navigating a way forward

Chapter Six: Diverging Ideologies Part A - Participants' Initial and Developing Perspectives

Introduction

This chapter explains the first trajectory stage—diverging ideologies. This stage begins with the perspectives participants bring to their first encounters with homosexuality and same-sex marriage and lasts until they position themselves under one of the supportive positions. This chapter comprises two parts. In Part A, I explain participants' initial and developing perspectives and contexts influencing their ambivalence about same-sex marriage. In Part B, I delineate the process by which participants reached a supportive position, namely through constructing a congruent theology of sexuality.

The nature of diverging ideologies

In this study, the term 'diverge' refers to moving, extending in different directions or becoming different in character or form (Oxford dictionary). Ideology refers to opinions or beliefs groups or individuals hold about human life or culture. Hence, 'diverging ideologies' explains the process whereby participants' beliefs and views of sexuality and same-sex marriage shifted from the traditional views upheld by most religious institutions.

Although all participants travelled through the stage of diverging ideologies (see Figure 9, p. 132), they began from different positions with varied pathways in terms of context, timing, spacing, and intensity, depending on given conditions. While the findings are presented sequentially, for ease of explanation, the participants' process was recursive moving them back and forth toward reaching a supportive position. Whereas some reported their journey as a naturally-evolving process, others shifted their perspectives from initially unsupportive or ambivalent to supportive. Significant to their initial positioning were perspectives developed from family, school, and early church environments.
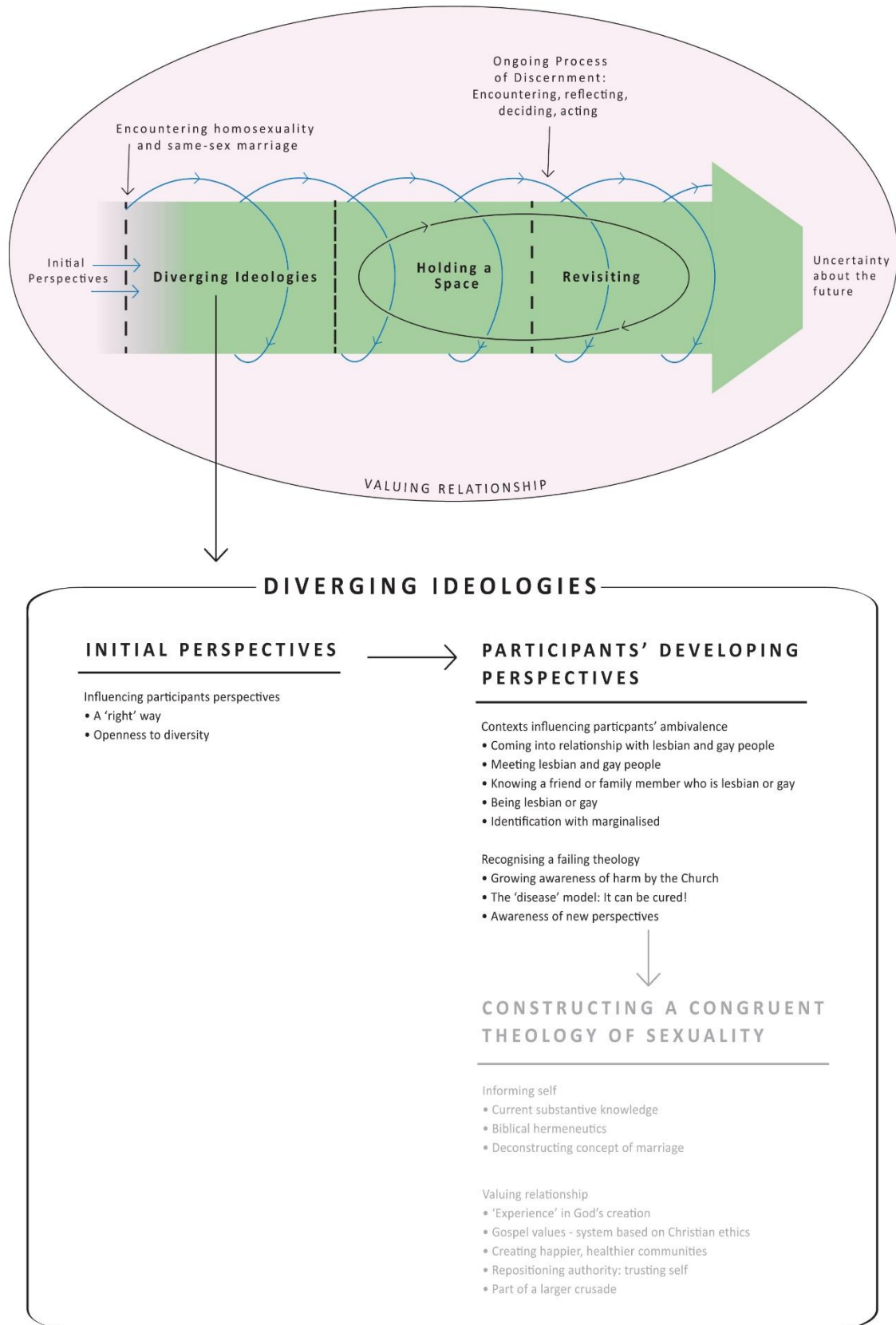
Figure 9: Stage of Diverging Ideologies: Part A – Participants' initial and developing perspectives

Early influences on participants' initial perspectives

Participants grew up largely unaware of homosexuality, and their first encounters varied; either at school, college, or during their working life.

> *At the time we didn't know anyone who was out, in terms of school. That was probably because it was generally understood that there was no such thing, and issues around gay communities were kind of hidden … It just wasn't on the radar.* (Arthur)

Consequently, participants arrived at the issue of homosexuality with an established worldview, developed through families, church, and school environments that influenced their initial response. These worldviews fell across a continuum, from conservative to liberal, and played a significant role in the way individuals initially engaged with the issue of homosexuality and later, same-sex marriage. As Maria stated, "*It's kind of in me. It's in my DNA.*" It is important to note that while these initial perspectives influenced how participants made sense of their new experiences, an on-going process of discernment also played a significant role in participants' developing perspectives. "*Much of my perspective comes from exposure to new experiences, new knowledge–it's a much bigger base–that is added to, feeds into, and incorporated*" (Emily).

Conservative influences: 'a right way'

Participants shaped by conservative backgrounds tended to align with their institution's ideology regarding morality. Daniel recalled being:

> *Shaped and formed by that tradition, therefore, raised in a context which saw any diversion from the sexual norm of a man and a woman as outside of the will of God. I was raised, enculturated in that perspective, [I] simply accepted as this is God's plan and God's will for people.*

This meant certain stipulated moral values were viewed as existing independent of one's perception or beliefs, feelings, or attitudes towards them. Elevation of doctrine over extant 'worldly' knowledge saw these participants encouraged to respect and value traditional institutional doctrine based on long-held scriptural interpretations. The Word of God, perceived as God's actual words and transcribed by the authors without error, was viewed as containing unchanging meanings for all time. To question or offer an alternative interpretation, even if based on certain developing biblical scholarship, meant one's faithfulness could be called into question. Reflecting on his upbringing, Ethan recalled:

Traditionally we weren't taught anything about it at all, because it was denied. I can't remember it ever being preached, but I heard it stated and you'd hear it in the scriptures and things. We just thought that it wasn't right.

Similarly, Emily does not recall hearing anything about homosexuality from the pulpit but admitted, "*there was certainly an assumption in the circles that I moved in that that wasn't the way God wanted things to be.*"

Some conservative participants, however, demonstrated an openness to explore and critically question traditional teachings against life experiences. An important marker in Philip's spiritual development was a safe and openly exploring youth group which debated socio-moral dilemmas:

They used to argue about anything, not argue but debate and it was fun. You could get up and say heretical things … not because you believed it, but you just wanted to see what people said. … People would then argue if it was serious and you'd learn a whole lot of stuff. (Philip)

However, there existed a strong pull to conform to traditional ways despite some freedom for participants from conservative backgrounds to think differently. Philip added: "*Your thinking is often bouncing between just trying to look at the subject rationally and separate from anything else, but also wanting to belong so it curves towards conformity to … the organisation's [thinking].*"

Liberal influences: an openness to diversity

In contrast to those from conservative backgrounds, liberally-raised participants were encouraged to critically question everything they were taught, as George reported, "*Always ask the next question!*" As a result, they developed a perceived healthy scepticism of religious and social authority structures. Open and frank family discussions around the kitchen table regarding what had been preached that Sunday were the norm. From this, Rachel learned "*it was okay to have a different opinion from the minister.*" These individuals grew up valuing independent thinking and importance was placed on reason to logically defend the acceptance of any new knowledge, even if this meant thinking differently to the mainstream. Elizabeth said of her father:

His background was rational, scientific and he was always very open. He would say I don't agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it. His line – people had right to difference of opinion. And I went through girls' public school where I think we were encouraged in open views I suppose. So, I guess I was just raised that way.

Participants from liberal backgrounds spoke of being thrown into a world of difference from an early age; new ideas and new kinds of people such as going to school with, and having, friends from different ethnic groups, classes, and faiths. A learnt respect and appreciation of life's varied contexts and complexities imbued these participants with a flexibility that fostered openness to diversity and taught them that "*People are people are people. We are, in whatever our given predilections are, left-handed, right-handed, blond hair, brown hair, gay, straight, black, white, whatever. We're people, and that's where you begin really*" (Grace). This humanitarian approach gave rise to an openness to 'the other,' as distinct from an 'openness to others.' The former acknowledges that people, regardless of beliefs, gender, ethnicity, or any other characteristics, should be treated the same and carries with it a preparedness to open yourself up to another's experience that might be different to yours. The latter relates more to a generic tolerance of other people without necessarily respecting and/or valuing their experience.

> *My liberal background and early formative years… just branded me with that openness… something in my family or past that kind of normalised all that [difference]. But I think probably the kind of upbringing and faith that we were taught was always very open and accepting*. (Jessica)

Unlike the judgementalism sometimes associated with evangelism, those from liberal backgrounds tended to evaluate socio-moral issues pragmatically, perceiving them not as necessarily reflecting objective/universal truths but, instead, relative to social, cultural, historical, and personal circumstances[24]. George reported never hearing his stepmother use the words 'right' or 'wrong' or 'bad'; instead:

> *she positioned herself in terms of the particular situation, the particular people involved, and what was the appropriate and most helpful thing. She would use 'helpful,' or 'wise,' or words of that sort about situations… I think I soaked that up without realising it.*

Biblical interpretation, like those from conservative backgrounds, was central to how participants from liberal environments made sense of the world around them. Interpretation of scripture, perceived to be inspired and containing certain universal truths, was Christ-centred and contextual in conjunction with latest biblical scholarship that acknowledged extant knowledge. Focus was on how you interacted with and treated people in the world around you, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised.

> *I got brought up in a local church which essentially would have said Christianity's about ethics: Jesus talks about ethics. The bible is not about, not*

---

[24] These tenets provide the basis of moral or ethical relativism.

> *so much about God, or that stuff out there. It's about how we live, and treat people, here and now, and the God-stuff, if you like, is part of that.* (George)

Growing up in a liberal environment fostered a resilience enabling individuals to tolerate the tension that comes from thinking independently while simultaneously remaining connected to a larger, mainstream faith or social system, especially when these views collided: "*Thinking differently to the majority of people but totally committed to being part of the local community, the local church, working with all sorts – that's the model I grew up seeing happen with my family*" (Sharon). A significant thread in the reports of some participants raised in liberal backgrounds was the influence of feminist values on their initial perspectives regarding homosexuality.

Feminist influences

Some participants' views on gender, race, and interfaith conflicted with traditional religious thinking before they encountered the issue of homosexuality. Feminism significantly influenced a number of participants' developing perspectives directly impacting how they understood sexuality. The values inherent in feminism—social equality and non-discrimination—played an important role in Emily's journey:

> *The critical markers in that evolution [toward supporting same-sex marriage] were my own understanding of feminism and how that impacted my reading of the bible or in my understandings of church traditions, and also my understanding of homosexuality or perhaps more broadly, sexuality.*

Raised in a sheltered rural town meant Thomas only encountered homosexuality at theological college. By then, he was able to apply the logic and understanding he had gained about the "feminine texts of terror" to the six homosexual "clobber passages[25]" in scripture. This took into account context, the patriarchal lens through which accounts were understood and written, and evolving knowledge:

> *The feminine texts of terror were pretty ghastly… [from] a feminist point of view. We had a lot of discussions around that and there was all the unpacking of that stuff going on. So that was all part of my theological education so, therefore I could quite easily apply the same stuff in my own head around the clobber passages.* (Thomas)

When Rachel encountered the gay debate, she perceived this as "*another example of feminism*" and how people, especially those in the majority, struggle to accept the other. "*It's the same situation, different people. Women are seen as other, gay people are seen*

---

[25] Six bible texts traditionally used to condemn homosexuality: Genesis 19:1-38, Leviticus 18:22;20;13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Jude 6-7, Romans 1:25-27.

as other." Her strong sense of fairness that all people being treated the same extended beyond women and LGBTIQ+ people to all those who were marginalised from mainstream society.

Participants arrived at the issue of homosexuality with initial perspectives already in place, influenced by their backgrounds from a spectrum of conservative and liberal views. Regardless of background, all participants experienced degrees of ambivalence when first encountering homosexuality and later same-sex marriage.

The significance of ambivalence

A central concept in the stage of diverging ideologies involved participants working through, and managing degrees of, conflict or ambivalence when they first encountered homosexuality and later same-sex marriage. Regardless of their initial perspectives, all participants reported experiencing some ambivalence although the context, timing, spacing, and degree varied. Some participants experienced low levels of discomfort and working through ambivalence was comparatively easy and confirmed already-established beliefs. For others, the intensity of ambivalence was significantly higher; yet, certain conditions led them to shift their positions as they came into new experiences and understandings about sexuality, relationship, and marriage. Despite these various paths all participants found ways of tolerating and working through the tension the ambivalence caused, choosing to address it rather than ignore it. The term 'ambivalence' has been used to encompass both subtler forms of tension as well as more severe conflict.

The nature of ambivalence

Ambivalence refers to simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings, such as attraction and repulsion, toward an object, person, or action. Individuals in this state of conflict continually fluctuate between one thing and its opposite (Oxford dictionary). In this study, ambivalence was caused through participants questioning: Is homosexuality right or wrong, good or bad? Is it innate or a choice? Is the orientation or just the behaviour a sin? How do I explain biblical texts that appear to condemn same-sex behaviour? How much credence do I give extant knowledge that contradicts traditional interpretations? Can long-held religious views condemning homosexuality be challenged? How does the church's exclusive beliefs and practices stand up to the

Gospel values of love, inclusion, and acceptance? Will my faithfulness be questioned if I hold a different view?

Despite the prevalence of ambivalence, participants did not remain in this state of flux permanently. Instead, the ambivalence appeared to function as a catalyst that propelled individuals to address and work through conflictual feelings, which moved them further along the stage of diverging ideologies. Working through the ambivalence comprised two phases; when they, first, encountered homosexuality and, second, same-sex marriage.

Phases of ambivalence

The issue of same-sex marriage was not something participants dealt with in isolation and, therefore, could not be studied as a separate issue as I had initially, and somewhat naïvely, thought. As all participants were over 35, and same-sex marriage is a relatively-new concept in the West, they all encountered homosexuality before the issue of same-sex marriage. First, participants worked to make meaning of what it meant to be homosexual before processing the idea of legitimised same-sex relationships within society, i.e., civil unions and same-sex marriage. "*It [Homosexuality] had to be dealt with first because same-sex marriage was so far off in the distance, it wasn't the issue*" (Daniel).

First phase of ambivalence: homosexuality.

Analysis revealed that the context, timing, and degree of ambivalence experienced when participants first encountered homosexuality was primarily influenced by their initial perspectives.

Those with an openness to diversity

Those with an openness to diversity reported relatively low levels of ambivalence about homosexuality and for shorter periods of time. Heterosexual participants typically became aware of homosexuality later (late adolescence/early adulthood) than gay participants (early teens or before), although some failed to pinpoint a specific time. Some individuals, both heterosexual and homosexual, only encountered homosexuality well into adulthood, after theological college or around ordination. Earliest awareness came through hearing the subject mentioned in a sermon or subtly depicted on

television or in a movie; however, the topic was seldom discussed and remained relatively hidden.

At one end of the continuum, Michael, who acknowledged same-sex attraction was unfamiliar, reported low levels of anxiety on learning a family member was gay:

> *I don't remember any moment of great epiphany. It just kind of made sense, like it wasn't a great revelation or a great shock. I don't remember having any sort of visceral reaction except, oh okay! I think I've always assumed just people are people and there's a diversity in that.*

Similarly, for Elizabeth, homosexuality posed little challenge. If anything, her concern lay with the church's response to gay people:

> *In my early 20s, I visited a bookshop and picked up a [church] report on homosexuality. I remember reading it and thinking what is the problem here? I couldn't perceive a problem. Young and naive as I was, [I] thought, well, it will get better.*

Others, slightly further along the continuum, experienced a level of discomfort around homosexuality being strange and unfamiliar. These responses prompted hesitation, intrigue, and curiosity. For some, this meant taking a step back from something they perceived was different, which included dealing with their "heterosexual un-comfortability about being in that context" (Arthur), rather than thinking it was wrong, as George reported.

> *There was no theoretical antipathy… nothing that led me to feel that I should run away. I didn't go in there thinking this stuff's all wrong… but I had to work at it at those first steps. But it wasn't that hard for me, any harder than a lot of other questions have been for me in my life.*

These early encounters with same-sex attraction led some to question their own sexuality and binary thinking around sexual orientation.

> *It was all personal discomfort about difference, and strangeness, and it forced me to think about my sexuality because I was confronted with a fair range of expressions, some which were very overt. I remember I worked through at that stage questioning my own sexuality. And, around that time, I formed the perspective that for me, sexuality was basically a continuum and most of us are somewhere on that continuum.* (George)

Emily attended a progressive school with strong feminist role models. A lesbian couple with children were invited to talk in class challenging what she, until then, considered 'normal.' She admitted, "*I probably took a step back from that within myself.*" But that exposure started a process of reflection that ultimately led to Emily reconsidering and expanding what constitutes family. She added: "*It was helpful being exposed to that at*

school and being exposed to really nice normal thoughtful women who have very different perspectives on the issue and who were living very different lives. That was a good thing."

A primary and increasing cause of ambivalence in participants from liberal backgrounds pertained to the church's negative response and its exclusionary beliefs and practices toward lesbians and gays, raising ethical questions about whether or not to stay. Thomas stated, "*Where there was discrimination based on birth or based on just the nature of your particular expression on humanity then that wasn't good enough… Is this institution one we want to be a part of*?"

Common in the reports of those raised in liberal environments was how they tended to absorb these new experiences of homosexuality which led to them expanding their perspectives carrying them in the same direction over time. These participants encountered homosexuality early on and, when they did, tended to work through any dissonance relatively quickly, making it difficult for individuals to accurately recollect.

Those believing there is 'a right way'

As with participants from liberal backgrounds, ambivalence among those from conservative environments also varied in timing (from late teens before ordination through to adulthood after ordination), spacing and intensity (some reporting much higher levels of ambivalence and for longer than others). While participants from conservative backgrounds generally experienced significantly higher levels of ambivalence about homosexuality for longer periods of time, some reported little ambivalence initially. Because their worldviews aligned with traditional religious beliefs that refuted homosexuality as spiritually and morally wrong, these individuals experienced little doubt that homosexuality was not what God intended. Therefore, they gave little thought to the issue. Arthur recalled being 'matter-of-fact' on the issue:

> *If someone had asked me, I would have said women shouldn't be ministers and that being gay was a sin. They [the church] just assumed that any sex outside of marriage [between a man and woman] was wrong. So, I would have been in that category.*

Similarly, Daniel was enculturated in that perspective from his church. Over time, certain conditions such as meeting gay people, acquiring new knowledge, changing public opinion and law reforms, led Arthur and Daniel to question the previous institutional teaching about sexual orientation which created uncertainty and indecision, significantly increasing their ambivalence.

Some correlation existed between the onset of ambivalence and age of participants: older individuals (semiretired or retired) experienced ambivalence about homosexuality at a later age than younger participants. Shifts in perspective, from being unsupportive toward uncertainty, tended to occur in line with public opinion shifts and law reforms that normalised homosexuality and increasingly challenging participants' views.

> *Our attitude to homosexuality has changed. You know we're 75, so we were brought up in a situation thinking that, well not even knowing that there were people there that even were homosexual. Then, we realised that people were struggling to be accepted. I mean we were ignorant. Then we were ambivalent. Then we weren't sure, then we became surer… I put that down to a lot of maturing of thinking.* (Ann)

As conservatively-raised participants' perspectives were increasingly challenged, they reported feeling caught in an impossible bind using descriptors such as 'divided loyalties,' 'embroiled in a long struggle,' 'constant battling,' 'wrestling,' and 'highly conflicted,' often for many years. Philip captured this high level of ambivalence:

> *You struggle with the stuff that you've grown up with all your life: there's the ideas that you have… rationally thought… and there's the wanting to belong, all of those things competing. There were long periods where I was thinking it [homosexuality] was not right… then I felt uncertain about lots of it… that confusion about what I think and what the organisation thinks, and what I'm telling myself so I can be who I need to be in the organisation.*

Lesbian and gay participants

The journey for lesbian and gay participants becoming aware of their own sexuality in a hetero-normative religious environment was a personal issue that carried greater risks. Most became aware of their same-sex attraction during childhood, although coming to label and fully understand their sexual orientation only came later, usually in their early teens. This awareness initially generated significantly high ambivalence due to the negative messages they had received about homosexuality often leading to the denial and disavowal of unwanted same-sex attractions. Harry divulged, "*Before marriage, I knew I was gay. But… got married.*" Others ignored their being lesbian or gay because of a lack of affirmation around them.

> *I didn't really come out until I was at college. And only then in a fairly low-key sort of way, probably because at that time, in the 80s… there wasn't a lot of role models and there wasn't much in the way of options that you could see.* (Thomas)

Lesbian and gay participants reported experiencing significantly high ambivalence early on over seemingly-conflicting beliefs about their sexuality and their call to the priesthood. For these individuals, coming out to themselves first, and others later, went

beyond holding a different view to traditional thinking; it cut to the core of belonging and self-acceptance based on how the church deemed them to be, or not to be, worthy Christian examples. Reaching a decision to stay with the church then was, for most lesbian and gay clergy, difficult and arduous as Shane poignantly captured:

> *Having experienced what I've experienced, I know there are two things that don't go away. The first, after about 43 years of not going away was my sexual orientation. It doesn't go away, you can try make it go away, you can ignore it, you cannot nurture it in the hope that it might whither… it doesn't go away. The other thing for me that hasn't gone away is a desire to serve God through ministry. Vocation. They don't go away. So, what do you do if they don't go away? You have to find a way of working with them together.*

Regardless of participants' conservative or liberal upbringing, or their sexual orientation, all experienced degrees of ambivalence when they encountered homosexuality. Their different paths——some easy, others long and arduous—brought them to a place of accepting homosexuality before moving to the next phase of dealing with the issue of lesbian and gay relationships, namely same-sex marriage.

Second phase of ambivalence: same-sex marriage.

Same-sex marriage did not sit in isolation; rather, it existed within the context of how participants understood homosexuality. Having worked through the first phase of ambivalence, individuals continued on to a second phase of ambivalence as they encountered civil unions and same-sex marriage. Although George had come to accept lesbian and gay people many years back, he admitted, "*I wouldn't have thought about marriage until the last… how recently has it been on the agenda? I don't know. A decade, possibly less really as a very high-profile issue.*" While heterogeneity existed in participants' initial approach to homosexuality, there was more homogeneity regarding their meaning-making of same-sex marriage. As a result of working through the first phase, they arrived at a common place of acceptance in which their developing theology of sexuality incorporated the view that homosexuality was a natural healthy variation of sexual expression. Building on this premise meant participants experienced lower levels of ambivalence encountering civil unions and same-sex marriage. Because they had "*moved to a more substantial theological position then marriage equality becomes a natural extension of that*" (Daniel). Although generally easier, variations still existed in timing, pacing, and intensity of ambivalence experienced.

For some, transitioning between the two phases of ambivalence happened easily, whereby legitimising gay relationships felt like the next logical step. "*The leap to*

marriage equality was not a leap at all. It was just a natural out flow of having arrived at a different theology of sexuality which made same-sex marriage a kind of, of course!" (Daniel). For others, the idea of civil unions or same-sex marriage "*pushed the boat out further*" (Philip) by challenging the time-honoured heterosexual institution of marriage perceived as the cornerstone of families, communities, and society. Civil unions and same-sex marriage also brought the physicality of same-sex relationships to the fore, thus making homosexuality more confronting and harder to ignore. While Philip had arrived at a place of acceptance of his gay son, he recalled thinking, "*Oh, I hope he doesn't get into a relationship, I'm not ready for that. That's like another step!*"

Rachel was disappointed for lesbian and gay people because she felt civil unions would not be seen equally with marriages. However, she added, "*When the gay community felt that they needed marriage as well as civil unions, I thought in my political ignorance that civil unions was enough.*"

The second phase of ambivalence for some feminist thinkers revolved around the meaning and function of marriage, raising questions about its relevance and appropriateness in today's society.

> *As a woman working hard with the feminist movement marriage wasn't a comfortable thing for me. I would have not wanted to get married if I hadn't been part of the church which required its priests to be married or not be in ministry… Marriage was never a part of my feminist agenda. It was always quite the opposite. So, I was puzzled by why same-gendered people would want to get married?* (Grace)

In addition to questioning the relevance of marriage in contemporary society, many participants, in acknowledging the origin of marriage as separate to the church, believed that the solemnisation—legal aspect of marriage—should remain separate from the church's role, which was to bless the union of those who asked for it: "*My hesitation is in relation to the church because I don't think the church itself today should be involved in the actual legal aspect of marriage. I think it's a state function*" (Grace). These sentiments were echoed by Thomas:

> *I'm one who thinks all marriages should be civil marriages that we bless. Like what happens in Europe where people go to the courthouse or mayor's office to get married, and then choose if they wish to have it blessed by the local priest or imam or… I think there's a lot of confusion that comes by putting the two together.*

Participants from liberal backgrounds transitioned the first and second phases of ambivalence earlier, easier, and each phase tended to follow closely from one another

because their newly-acquired knowledge dovetailed into an already-established value and belief system. Participants from conservative backgrounds, in some cases, deliberated for longer periods than their liberal counterparts; however, the projection forward of all participants carried them in the same direction. As participants journeyed through the stage of diverging ideologies, certain contexts and conditions led to either the creation or reduction of ambivalence, as discussed in the following section.

Contexts influencing participants' ambivalence

Alongside individuals' initial perspectives, when participants came into relationship with lesbian and gay people ambivalence was either heightened or ameliorated.

Coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people

Coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people was a primary condition that created or reduced participants' ambivalence depending on their context. For most, this occurred during adolescence or early adulthood and before ordination (through school, college or work, and before ordination). However, for a few, it happened later in life after ordination (through their congregations, friends, or colleagues). Coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people comprised four elements: meeting lesbian and gay people; knowing a family member or friend who comes out as gay; being lesbian or gay; and identifying with other's experience of being marginalised.

Meeting lesbian and gay people

Prior to meeting lesbian and gay people, participants were unaware of, removed from, or viewed homosexuality as theoretical. Meeting lesbian and gay people was a significant condition for both fuelling and reducing participants' ambivalence depending on their initial perspectives. Despite some reports of initial discomfort, those with an openness to diversity reported lower levels of ambivalence as the experience of coming to know lesbian and gay individuals solidified an existing belief system that valued diversity, inclusivity, and social equality. "*It was a kind of gentle introduction and mixing with people who were neat people and different. And difference was interesting. It was just a discovery, an expanding world*" (Sharon). Such introductions to different people required participants to consciously open themselves up to the other's experience and, by doing so, challenged fears and prejudice through listening to stories and witnessing peoples' lives in a way they might not have done so otherwise. George met lesbian and gay people through volunteering to preach at a gay church, a

courageous act disapproved by most churches at the time. "*Out of that experience I was aware that the differences are, in a sense, not as different as all that. Once you got to know the people, difference went out the door…. we are all humans in this environment*" (George). If anything, the only increase in ambivalence with these individuals concerned religious institutions' negative response to, and in some cases maltreatment of, gay people. Rachel explained, "*My education went ahead in leaps and bounds when I really started to meet individuals and understand some of the hard times they were having, and some of the arguments and tensions around it.*"

For individuals raised in conservative environments, meeting lesbian and gay people often increased ambivalence initially. Lesbians and gay men were no longer abstract but real people with lives and experiences that challenged previously-held perceptions. "*In reality, these people that you were coming into a relationship with, or coming to know, their reality was different to what you had been taught growing up*" (Ethan). These sentiments echoed Daniel's thoughts, a youth pastor in a conservative church, who became filled with "*a great sense of compassion and sadness*" over how the church had misunderstood them.

Philip first met lesbian and gay people through his work with addictions. While not condoning same-sex behaviour then, a growing empathy developed from the link he saw between their experience of rejection and alienation by society and the church and their use of drugs and alcohol. "*One day I actually prayed that I'd meet a gay person, outside of my work, because I felt like all my understanding of the subject was really more intellectual and not knowing someone*" (Philip). Shortly after, Philip met a loving, committed lesbian couple in a long-term relationship challenging his stereotypical perceptions about promiscuous gay lifestyles and led to him to begin questioning the appropriateness of same-sex relationships within the church.

> *How does God view that? If they've got a stable relationship, over 18 years– some heterosexuals can't match that–what do you do with that? If they came to church, would you tell them that they had to split up? How could you do that? It was that kind of thing I had never had to confront… But I do remember thinking, surely God thinks more about the love than the physical things. Often, with evangelicals they'll focus on the sexual stuff, and you're thinking well, even in the heterosexual marriage that side of it's not unimportant but, actually, it's somewhat less important than the rest of life and love.*

Knowing someone, a family member or friend who is lesbian or gay

A second aspect of coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people involved participants knowing a family member or close friend come out as gay. "*There's nothing like getting to know people. Faceless people in the distance, ah, you can believe anything about I suppose. But, when they're friends or family… it becomes personal*" (Ann). For Jessica, it was a good friend, her husband's best man, who came out as gay. Whereas, for Elizabeth, it was her godson: "*He must be 30 now. We are very close to him. So those personal things obviously they make a difference, you know relationship matters.*"

Philip attributed his shift from uncertain to supportive to his son's coming out, which caused him to reconsider and ultimately change his perspective of homosexuality. He had been saddened to learn that his son's decision to stop going to church was because he felt rejected: "*he was at that age where he began to be aware that there'd be things that people were talking about in church, that he was 'that' kind of person.*" For years, Philip was in great turmoil as his traditional views of sexuality clashed with concern for his son's happiness and spiritual well-being. Seeing his son's depression lift upon coming out and being accepted by friends and family caused Philip's ambivalence to fade over time and, increasingly, he was drawn to taking a more proactive approach in challenging the church's exclusive beliefs and practices he believed were keeping people from God. Though reaching a supportive position, Philip remained cautious about speaking openly about his son to protect him and the family from the stigma that he felt exists within the church.

> *I think that [son's coming out] really did change it [views on same-sex marriage] because I got inside somebody's head. In every interaction you have you see someone's pain and they are able to tell you what it's really like. It changes you. People who don't know gay people can easily sit in church and be out of touch.*

Seeing the pain and vulnerability in his son's struggle to accept his sexual orientation and how better mentally, emotionally, and spiritually he was after coming out, helped Philip move toward an understanding of his son's desire for companionship.

> *… that helped with the same-sex relationships because when he starts talking about his yearning [for company] …. first of all, I was thinking oh God, you know, don't keep pushing. But then you realise for him what it means, that it may well be that he'll find his fulfilment, and if he can…*

A loving, caring same-gendered couple's right to marry is a simple justice issue for Michael; the significance of which can be lost at times in the often heady, intellectual debate between theologians:

> *It [my view of same-sex marriage] comes out of a personal experience, of knowing and loving people who are in gay relationships. My sister and her partner have been together for 30 years… For my children, the issue is very simple; it's about justice, they say it's absolutely not fair that their aunties can't get married. There are levels of complexity for some people but, at another level I think it's absolutely simple.*

Being lesbian or gay

For lesbian and gay participants, 'coming into relationship' meant connecting with their authentic self. These individuals, who typically grew up in heteronormative environments, reported confusion and internal dissonance over the disparity of what they experienced (same-sex attraction) and the negative messages they received about homosexuality. Most institutions these participants attended used traditional interpretations of scripture condemning homosexuality. "*I had to think about all those anti-gay scriptures in the bible… you have to think about that stuff*" (Harry). This led to denial, repression, and disavowal of these individuals' feelings at different stages along their journey. Harry added:

> *To be myself has been a challenge… and for quite a while in my marriage, I wasn't. I lost Harry somewhere along the line. To retrieve him I'd say, 'Where is Harry in all of this? Ah, there he is, two miles back. Let's get on and bring him forward.*

Meeting other like-minded people over time provided reassurance they were not alone, making it increasingly difficult to deny their true selves. Coming into an awareness of their same-sex attraction, occurring, in most cases, before meeting other gay people, tended to initially increase ambivalence. Accepting themselves and coming out to family and friends, in conjunction with knowing other lesbian and gay people, significantly reduced their ambivalence. However, for gay participants, coming into relationship with their authentic selves carried greater risks to them personally, their jobs and careers, creating fear. While some participants openly disclosed their sexual orientation, others were more cautious preferring to keep it hidden. Shane highlighted the dilemma many gay clergymen and women face:

> *When you are in ministry within a culture that's pretty conservative and struggles in the main with gayness, and when you rely on your job not just for income but also for housing, you [can] lose that. So, I think there's a whole lot of things in terms of fears and needs that makes it easier to remain in denial.*

Even as an openly gay man, tension around disclosure remained.

> *When do you make a point? When do you turn on a light? When do you let it go? Do you have to be coming out to everyone every day? It's a bit wearying... When do you plunge into going back into denial and getting into your closet when you feel you'd like to be able to say some things, but you choose not to. Yeah, I'm not satisfied I'm on top of that perfectly well.* (Shane)

To reduce internal dissonance, some participants sought professional help to explore alternative, less judgemental perspectives that normalised same-sex attraction. Others, who belonged to institutions where sexual intimacy was forbidden, chose celibacy as a way to continue holding their clerical positions with integrity, while still affirming non-clerical lesbian and gay people. Working through these personal matters helped these participants develop empathy whereby, through identification, they could support other LGBTIQ+ people.

Whilst there was some concern about the conservative thinkers in rural settings, there was more tolerance within the rural communities because of the emphasis small towns placed on relationship. Valuing relationship fostered more tolerance and acceptance around difference making is easier for lesbian and gay participants to disclose their sexual orientation. According to Sharon:

> *...[it's] all part of that strength of the rural thing; they were all committed to the community and committed to the people they disagreed with totally. The basic thing in country living: you've got to live with your neighbours, you can't choose who you get to mix with.*

Identification with those marginalised

Coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people and witnessing how they were marginalised, excluded, and discriminated against often mirrored participants' earlier experiences or affected them in ways in which they could relate. These experiences, primarily around gender and ethnicity, caused individuals to identify and empathise with lesbian and gay people's fight for inclusion and social equality. Harry, an ethnic minority and adopted, was sensitive to the needs of others who felt abandoned or excluded:

> *Growing up, I didn't feel a sense of belonging, personally. One of the fundamental things about my faith is about the minority communities and inclusiveness. So, when I read from the scriptures the lens I have is about inclusiveness regardless, about the fringe communities and including them and going out of your way if you could to include them into something so that loneliness wasn't their issue.*

Maria echoed other participants' views in identifying her own experiences of gender discrimination as relatable to the stories of lesbian and gay people.

> *I've always been aware of inequities [and] it was the injustices I saw that were a problem for me. When I was a young woman and part of a feminist group, I remember I was a misfit in the church. Having known some discrimination in the church, having that sense of what it feels like, and thinking how much worse that would be for the whole of your life, to be subject to discrimination. I wouldn't wish that on anybody, even in the small measure I experienced it.*

Depending on the context, coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people– meeting them, knowing someone personally, being lesbian or gay, or relating to their experiences–was a primary condition that initially increased ambivalence in some people, but ultimately led to a significant decrease in all participants' ambivalence. The presence of ambivalence prompted critical thinking and challenging of societal and religious norms in ways that might not have happened if it were absent.

> *If you're in relationship with people who are whole, wonderful, gifted, delightful people, and their sexuality is different to yours, that's when you sit up and go, 'Oh, so what do we do with this? What do we do with this bible verse that says such and such you know?' And I think for me that's been natural. Experience does prompt people and push peopl*e. (Daniel)

Recognising a failing theology

As participants came into relationship with lesbian and gay people, they simultaneously experienced increasing discomfort around what they came to recognise as a failing theology based on traditional interpretations about sexuality. This occurred through participants' growing awareness of the harm to, including the ethical treatment of, lesbian and gay people by the church and mindfulness of new perspectives on homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Growing awareness of harm by the church

Before civil unions, participants reported that homosexuality was seldom spoken about and remained easily hidden in the church. "*It wasn't mentioned, but it wasn't vilified either*" (Rachel). With the introduction of civil unions, clergy within most congregational churches were awarded liberty of conscience, giving them the freedom to conduct same-sex blessings as they saw fit. Legalising same-sex marriage changed that because it was seen to challenge and be a direct threat to Christian marriage. Religious institutions tightened their laws defining marriage as between one man and one woman, forbidding clergy to be involved. Rachel stated:

> *I was surprised at the conservative backlash that marriage was only for men and women. I thought that that was a fairly strange piece of theology. I can see where they get it from but that's a very literalistic reading of the bible, which I don't tend to do.*

As same-sex marriage gained momentum, conservative and evangelical churches became increasingly outspoken and, at times, extreme in their responses. Participants, including those who were unsupportive or ambivalent about same-sex marriage, reported being troubled by vitriolic and hateful anti-gay church rants, which they perceived as unethical and contrary to the Christian message of love and inclusiveness. Of concern in these often-heated debates was opponents' elevation of doctrine at the expense of peoples' feelings.

> *And, of course, the debate happened, and an overwhelming majority of people voted to affirm these. Afterwards, there's this you know a round table of people clapping and clinking their glasses with Tom sitting right there. And it just breaks my heart. That's what they don't get. This is not an issue, this is people, this is Tom.* (Daniel)

Participants' understood this disregard for lesbian and gay people's vulnerability as responsible for fuelling shame and guilt experienced by gay youth, contributing to their depression and isolation. Public institutional statements vilifying same-sex relationships compelled some participants, irrespective of their views on same-sex marriage, to speak out in protection of lesbian and gay people and counter the perception that the church's collective voice represented all its members on the subject.

In the tempestuous run up to the Homosexual Law Reform Act (1985) in Aotearoa New Zealand, Ann and Ethan, married and both clergy, were entreated by their institution to protest and rally up signatures to oppose the intended legislation. While not condoning homosexuality at that time, certain actions by their church symbolising such loathing created turmoil and uncertainty for them, "*We were sent this petition to have people sign it, and personally I didn't know what to do. We had it up [in the church entrance] if anybody wanted to, but other [clergy] went knocking door-to-door*" (Ethan). Ann added: "*But we were in a state of ambivalence ... I think though it laid the seeds of us looking more critically at the whole of our attitudes.*" The detrimental impact of the same-sex marriage public debates and the Christian Right's negative reactions—as with the Australian plebiscite vote on marriage equality (2017)—was emphasised by Michael:

> *In public conversations around marriage equality at the moment, we need to remember that there's been a 40% increase in young people ringing Beyond Blue to get mental health counselling. All those counselling services have been*

peaking because it is so upsetting to people that here's this public debate around whether or not their relationship's somehow as good as other relationships.

Rachel poignantly pointed out, echoing the views of others, the tragedy associated when religious institutions exclude lesbian and gay people through its beliefs and practices instead of being a welcoming place offering hope to all.

My husband rang me as we were about to start a staff meeting… and I went back into the staff meeting and I said, um that my nephew had killed himself and that I wondered if it was because he was gay. And I said, of course I couldn't really refer him to the church for help, could I? (Rachel)

Negative responses by religious institutions toward lesbian and gay people and their relationships impacted participants either by motivating them further to be an alternative voice of love, compassion, and acceptance; or contributed toward shifting them from an unsupportive or ambivalent stance to becoming more supportive.

The 'disease' model: it can be cured!

Daniel came to know and work with lesbian and gay teens as a youth pastor. Filled with compassion, he followed his institution's support program by escorting them to reparative therapy in attempts to help them change their sexual orientation. The more he observed the more uncomfortable he became.

There was so much of what was said that on one hand made sense; but there was this deep discomfort in me that this, this is just not right. There's something fundamentally wrong with this but I couldn't articulate it, I couldn't put my finger on it in an articulate theological sense.

Witnessing his lesbian and gay congregants struggling unsuccessfully to disavow what he came to understand was an inseparable part of who they were, led him to identify the problem not with individuals' same-sex attraction but with the church's rejection of it. This, Daniel believed, lay at the heart of their self-loathing, guilt, shame, sense of failure, and depression.

I knew of half a dozen [gay youth] for whom this was a struggle, and I use the word struggle in their perception, just this wrestling, this sense that this is wrong, and who I am is wrong… and it was walking with those people I think where I just became deeply pained and deeply convicted about the failing of my theology to have anything of real hope to say to these young people. (Daniel)

Ann, also a medical doctor, came to a similar realisation through another church-related reparative therapy program.

It was awful what they were doing… I thought this is wrong. This is not behavioural. You're not going to change and alter this. This is the essence of a person. I saw young people suffering in the church because they were trying to conform to belong, and they couldn't. People expected it, but it wasn't going to happen. So, then we realised that that's the way life is for many people.

A turning point in Daniel's journey that led to him shifting his perspective occurred when one of the gay youths he was supporting through reparative therapy committed suicide:

I think that was a moment for me when it was just… a thump to the chest saying, we've got to do something different about this. It seemed that the answers that the church gave was almost as simple as 'well just stop it and be normal'… there was nothing to stop, it was sexuality… as much a part of their identity as human beings as my heterosexuality might be… so to ask them to stop it would ask them to stop being human. It seems to be an impossible thing that we're asking of people.

Negative responses by some churches and harms caused to lesbian and gay people filled participants with a deep conviction that Christianity, based on traditional views of sexuality, was a failing theology. "*The church seemed like it was failing to reach all sorts of people*" (Philip). Conversely, these experiences highlighted the need for developing a new theology of sexuality that felt more congruent with Gospel values of love and relationship and aligned more closely with experience and extant knowledge.

Awareness of new perspectives

Participants' backgrounds played an important role in their initial perspectives about homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Over time, exposure to new experiences, awareness of new perspectives, and shifting public opinion on the subject caused individuals to critically reflect their taken-for-granted assumptions. In his first job, Daniel worked with rehabilitating addicts, some whom were lesbian and gay. Despite the disorder-model inherent in the treatment program, he was encouraged by his supervisor to treat the lesbian and gay residents empathically and with respect. This made a lasting impression and started him on his journey, lasting many years, to becoming supportive of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

I remember the [supervisor]… talking about how we need to treat homosexuals well… at the time, I thought oh… It had never struck me before, but it was the way he framed it… of giving help without discrimination. It wasn't that I at that point was thinking homosexuality was right, but mainly that as people we should treat them well. So that, that was a starting point. And he gave me a book to read which made me think about some of the issues they had. So, that was critical. (Daniel)

Ben enthusiastically rallied to get signatures, on behalf of his church, to oppose the proposed homosexual law reform bill (1986). An unexpected confrontation with a lady he respected for having sound judgement jolted his somewhat naive expectation that all Christians were against homosexuality. Her reaction, "*I'm not signing that thing!*" challenged Ben. "*I came away and I thought about it. If she isn't going to sign it, she will have her reasons. You think about this mate! She would never realise what a significant moment it had been.*" A simple interaction instigated a change which, over many years, culminated in Ben moving from being adamantly against homosexuality to becoming an advocate of same-sex marriage.

The inevitability of law reforms "*coming down the tracks at us*" (Arthur), made it difficult for participants to ignore shifts in public opinion toward accepting homosexuality and same-sex relationships. The Civil Union Act (2004) and Marriage Reform Acts in Aotearoa New Zealand (2013) and Australia (2017) reflected the widening gap between secularism and Christianity, where a growing population perceived the church as lagging behind on important ethical and socio-moral issues. Participants, increasingly, were thrust into religious debates placing pressure on them to consider theirs and their institution's preparedness for this shifting landscape. Some individuals acquainted themselves with developments in the fields of science, psychology, and theology, and their relevance to the same-sex debate to better equip themselves. Others reported talking to a wider range of people to explore alternative theological explanations on the subject. For many participants, who were unsupportive or uncertain, their perspectives evolved alongside social policy changes.

> *When the bill came out for civil unions, I campaigned for civil unions. But had you said back then gay marriage, I would not because I thought it was going too far. Civil unions is enough. Then later on when it came to the marriage equality bill, by which time my views had definitely changed from before, I was then ready to support it and get behind it.* (Ben)

As participants came into relationship with lesbian and gay people, they simultaneously recognised how a theology based on traditional interpretations of sexuality failed to reach everyone. Various conditions caused participants' ambivalence to either increase or decrease and the timing, spacing, and intensity of their dissonance varied depending on the different contexts. All arrived at a position of desiring a theology of sexuality that would reflect the Gospel values of love and inclusiveness to all. The following section, Part B, explains how participants went about constructing a congruent theology of sexuality enabling them to support same-sex marriage.

Chapter Six: Diverging Ideologies Part B - Constructing a Congruent Theology of Sexuality

Introduction

In Part B, I explain how participants achieved constructing a congruent theology of sexuality. Participants sought a theological perspective that would accept and affirm lesbian and gay people, their relationships, and same-sex marriage. This came with the stigma associated with challenging traditional interpretations on sexuality while still claiming moral Christian identities. Participants sought a theology of sexuality that would integrate with the wider Christian view, based on reasoned theological understandings of scripture about homosexuality and same-sex marriage that was grounded in extant knowledge and relatable in contemporary society; and value experience and relationship that supported the diversity evident in God's creation, while remaining faithful to His Word. There needed to be consistency in the values underpinning their belief-system and the way they treated people.

> *There has to be a connection between the Word and what we do. I don't care if everything gets deconstructed and reconstructed. For me, the greatest sin is unreasoned conformity. So, the right decision has got to have at least a semblance of a solid argument behind it otherwise it crumbles the moment attitudes change or whatever else.* (George)

Participants achieved a congruent theological perspective through, first, informing themselves and second, valuing relationship (see Figure 10, p. 155).

Informing self

Participants informed themselves by exploring current substantive knowledge, biblical hermeneutics, and deconstructing the concept of marriage.

Current substantive knowledge

As leaders, participants wanted to be well-versed if confronted by colleagues, congregants, and wider community on the controversial topic of homosexuality and same-sex marriage against a socio-political backdrop of shifting public opinion. This involved extensive reading of latest scientific and psychological viewpoints and talking to people from all sides of the debate to gather a range of perspectives.
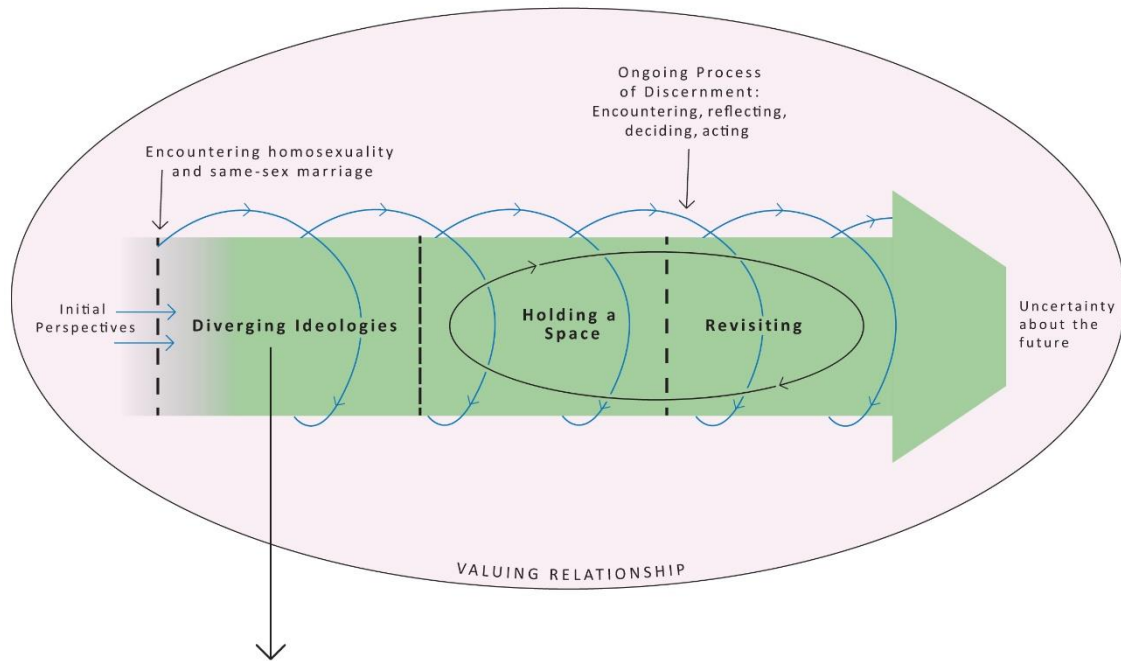
Figure 10: Stage of Diverging Ideologies: Part B – Constructing a congruent theology of sexuality

For Ethan, it included learning of the fluidity that existed in relation to sexual

orientation: "*the change of our understanding from the assumption that things are*

binary to the understanding of a continuum and the variety and so forth… at that point, you just can't be dogmatic about things anymore." Emily explained, "*my perspective was informed by what gay people in my church thought, I was interested in people's perspectives. So, that definitely had a big influence on me.*" Participants engaged with gay people through listening to their stories to fully understand their experiences in a deeper way. Consciously, they put their own assumptions aside and fully opened themselves to others' realities. "*It's a risk to decide to open yourself to other people and other people's experiences, and to truly, compassionately enter into what other people's experiences are like*" (Emily).

Some participants, while accepting same-sex relationships, initially questioned whether same-sex marriage was necessary in order to have a happy and fulfilled relationship. Others were uncertain why lesbian and gay people would want to align themselves with an institution rooted in patriarchy and traditionally-gender-assigned roles. Through reading, and talking to people for whom it mattered, Emily shifted her viewpoint:

> *… if I didn't particularly know gay people who had told me what their perspective was, I probably would have been one of those people who said, well of course same-sex relationships are important and valid and should be honoured, but it doesn't require a marriage to do that. But I talked to a lot of people for whom it really mattered, the terminology, the shared understanding of joining that tradition of relationships being honoured or understood in that way. I'm fairly sure I wouldn't have come to that understanding without the input of other people for whom it personally mattered.*

Analysis showed that the process of informing self to gain a boarder and deeper understanding of homosexuality and same-sex marriage was a slow evolving process requiring a safe space in which individuals could critically explore new knowledge without pressure, expectation, or fear of retribution from either side. Those from liberal backgrounds tended to find such a free-thinking space early in their familial, school, or early church environments. Others, from conservative backgrounds, found this later on through trusted friends, colleagues early in their careers, or when travelling abroad attending theological college where independent critical thinking was encouraged.

Apart from reading extant literature and talking to others, some participants sought help with integrating a variety of complex issues into their belief-system from the field of psychology:

> *I went through my own psychological issues related… and had some therapy for a while. I think somehow through that process, understanding better this sense of what it means that we are made in God's image as being a much*

> *broader… embracive and inclusive experience, which I could begin to articulate theologically.* (Daniel)

In addition to investigating the substantive area, key to participants constructing a congruent theology of sexuality was informing themselves with latest biblical scholarship.

Biblical hermeneutics

While a theological review is outside the scope of this research, this section has been included because hermeneutics and biblical interpretation were integral to participants' understanding and meaning-making of same-sex marriage.

> *How people read the scriptures… it's that fundamental question of hermeneutics that affects people's understanding of women's ministry, of sexuality, of marriage… So, while we argue about those things, it's actually that question of the scriptures that is at the heart of all that*. (Michael)

When it comes down to the real divide in views about same-sex marriage, participants believed, it was not about sex at all: "*it's what you believe about the bible rather than what you believe about sex*" (Ethan). The existence of biblical plurality, credence given to contemporary biblical interpretation of the 'clobber passages' and an appreciation of the evolving concept of marriage, all contributed to participants' reading of scripture in relation to same-sex marriage.

Biblical plurality.

Participants spoke of a plurality that exists influencing how Christians read and interpret the bible. This plurality accounts for the diverse thinking across religious institutions, not just restricted to the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. "*The trouble with the bible on these issues [same-sex marriage] is that you can use the bible to argue on the subject any way you like*" (Jessica). Arthur explained:

> *What's emerged since the early 1980s till now… are two sound biblical and theological ways of interpreting the bible and tradition; one supportive of gay relationships and gay marriage, and one not. Certainly [my denomination] in New Zealand has come to that point of saying there are two ways of reading the bible.*

One view, emphasising biblical literalism, assumes the Word of God is God's actual words dictated 'as is,' without error, providing definitive answers about unchanging universal truths. George asserted, "*it goes back to how you're educated to interpret, read and be with the bible, and a lot of people have been taught parrot-fashion just to*

accept what is, and its literal translations." Biblical literalists or traditionalists found this plurality hard to comprehend as it acknowledged subjectivity when interpreting scripture: "*a lot of my colleagues find that really difficult, saying, 'there has to be a right way'*" (Arthur). Arthur continued

> *Even for somebody who's considered very liberal, if you stick with the bible and [traditional] theology, yes you can with integrity read it opposite to me on this issue… I don't agree with you. I think there's a better way to read it. Now that's huge, particularly for evangelical people, to come to see the bible can be read in more than one way.*

Refuting biblical literalism, participants approached scripture with a sense of realism or a degree of verisimilitude they claimed was informed by latest theological scholarship. They viewed scripture as inspired and containing universal wisdom applicable throughout all ages to all peoples. However, they recognised it as a constructed and contextual historical document written over thousands of years by man, strongly patriarchal, erroneous, contradictory, and at times confusing, reflecting the complexities of life. Elizabeth explained:

> *To me it is not possible to read the bible as the inerrant and infallible word of God. There are too many discrepancies… multiplications of the same thing in different ways. Things that were clearly incorrect. So, that's not possible. So, what do we have? We have a spirit-guided, humanly-formed set of documents that have been given weight and authority over the centuries as the only real records that we have of the life of Jesus in particular that we have to work with and interpret with loving eyes. It is Christ himself, not the bible, who is the true word of God. The bible, read in the right spirit, will bring us to Him.*

Key to participants' reading and interpretation of scripture were accurate translation and context:

> *Hermeneutics, context, and the impact on contemporary society has to play a large part, none of those factors can be disregarded. I can't even begin to think how you would read the bible literally because who does take the whole thing literally? You can't… Even literalists accept some bits and not others and make excuses and play games with other verses. Those stories are contextually-located, and they are dealing with a particular time and a particular understanding.* (Grace)

For Grace, interpretative consistency was essential: "*I can't pick and choose. For me it's being congruent with my bible interpretation, with my faith journey, with my personal relationships, with my world, my worldview. I'm old enough to have worked hard at that over the years*." Similarly, Emily cautioned against 'cherry-picking' verses to define definitive answers that are universally unchanging:

So much of it [one's view of same-sex marriage] comes down to how you see scripture in most general terms and whether you do think God has planted 'the right' answer for all time in there somewhere, and you just have to dig it out. Or, whether you think it's more mystical or complicated than that. My view of scripture is that it is inspired by God, and it is always relevant for the life of the church and for Christian people. But I don't typically see me going to a verse and pulling it apart and then giving the definitive answer on a subject. I think the bible needs to be taken in much bigger chunks... and I just think the bible does contain many different ways of looking at things. I don't think every verse in the bible has one and only one purpose. I just can't see how that could be the word of God. It's just so narrow and so human to see it that way.

Latest biblical scholarship: the 'clobber passages.'

Participants' interpretations of the six biblical texts called the "clobber passages" that had traditionally been used to condemn homosexuality were an important aspect of constructing a congruent theology of sexuality. These texts had been a sticking issue for those from conservative or evangelical backgrounds sustaining their ambivalence for long periods of time. Others, like Michael, were able to work through this initial ambivalence quickly:

Because I've always been someone who's questioned stuff um, I think when I did run into those parts of the scripture, it was very easy for me to think, well culturally and historically you know we need to understand what was going on. And, I guess for me in terms of my faith, a literal reading of the bible has just never been part of that... so there weren't those huge obstacles some people focus on.

George believed these texts needed to be read in context so as not to obscure the overall message imbedded in scripture of love, life and abundance:

It [the issue of same-sex marriage] was never one for me that was ever constrained by biblical or theological reasons. Instead my biblical and theological worldview would ask me to move in the other direction. It was always about asking the question, 'What's right here?' and what's right here is not about restriction, it's about whether people are able to live full lives in the world.

Informing their understanding of the clobber texts was biblical research which convincingly argued that inaccurate translation of certain terminology in early Greek texts had led to incorrect interpretations about same-sex behaviour and, in some cases, shifted intended meanings. For example, the word 'homosexual' (only introduced in the 1900s) was used to denote a 'catch-all' phrase for all same-sex behaviour missing the nuanced meanings in the original text; this included variety of same-sex activities common in Roman times, such as pederasty, male-temple prostitution, male rape, and promiscuity; rather than referring to loving, committed, consensual same-sex

relationships. Arthur purported that the real meaning behind the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was in reference to inhospitality and male rape—both considered an abomination in biblical times—rather than the city's inhabitants being gay.

> *What was the actual crime? It was actually heterosexual men, homosexually raping these two visitors. So, the judgement was on rape more than them being gay, and they weren't gay, I mean they might have been bisexual [but] the Greek words for passive partner and active partner… the condemnation was really about homosexual rape rather than a participatory, consensual relationship.* (Arthur)

In the light of extant knowledge, George believed the church had taken a few "*wrong turns*" through history which needed rectifying.

> *One thing that is very strong in the bible and strong from the words of Jesus is 'Thou shalt not divorce.' Now the church has moved away from that… for good reason. I think gay relations are a little bit of a different category, but there are times when we put the bible aside and we say, actually… [it's] an historical document that contains wisdom but certainly not… the words dictated by God… its historical documents that are quite wonderful. I still have a kind of love affair with the bible, always have since way back. But I want to respect it for what it is and not try to create it into a moral code for today without sifting through a whole lot of things.* (Arthur)

In addition to biblical plurality and latest hermeneutical scholarship, participants read the clobber passages in context of their relationship with scripture as a whole evaluating their importance in terms of prevalence and predominance with other socio-moral issues.

> *If we took out of the scriptures all the verses about care for the poor, our bibles would be reduced by about three quarters. If we snipped out of our bible the six versus that could conceivably be considered to relate to the matter of having sexual relationships only one of which, the one from Romans, could even at a stretch be considered to relate to modern day understandings, well you wouldn't notice really. So, what is actually important here?* (Elizabeth)

Similarly, George stated, "*there's much more in the bible about economic injustice than how we handle sex. Yet, how much does the church talk about economic injustice by comparison with how much it talks about sex? Let's get our priorities right.*"

Participants pointed to the way in which the church had long been involved with socio-moral issues, many of which are not addressed directly in scripture. When dealing with complex contemporary socio-political dilemmas, i.e., women's role in the church, slavery, racism, biculturalism, and same-sex marriage, theology alone is not enough. In these instances, it was necessary to use one's God-given logic and reason in conjunction with other spheres of knowledge. In theological college Maria recalled being

"*encouraged to be political and think theologically and to bring the two together.*"
Similarly, George described his church's approach to one such contemporary socio-political issue:

> *We picked up biblical stuff, we used liberation theologies and contextual*
> *theologies to talk about the theological framework in this country for the race*
> *stuff. We used feminist theologies and science for the feminist stuff, and then in*
> *each case what we did was take specific structural changes into the life of the*
> *church. So, we didn't just work with the ideas. We worked with a series of*
> *specific changes to the way the church did its life. Theologies are not enough*
> *for this case, they are used in conjunction with practical changes that have/are*
> *taking place within the church.*

Assimilating these new hermeneutical insights enabled participants to reinterpret and reframe traditional views of homosexuality into a theology that both recognised same-sex attraction as a healthy variation of human sexuality and celebrated same-sex couples who were in loving, committed and God-honouring same-sex marriages, reflecting the diversity evident in God's creation.

God's original plan for humankind

Participants' understanding of same-sex marriage in relation to the notion of God's original plan and 'the fall of man'[26] varied. Some believed all loving, committed, and God-honouring relationships, regardless of gender, were part of God's original plan. Others, concerning God's relationship with mankind, took a more incarnational view (God makes every human being in His own image and we are all loved) over a redemptional one (God made us in His image, but we went astray; we are always sinners and it is only because of Jesus that we are acceptable to God). These individuals argued that as our knowledge has evolved, many beliefs and practices had undergone change since creation, often for the better. These developments, more evident in recent times, do not automatically make them part of mankind's demise. Elizabeth elaborated:

> *I don't think much about God having an original plan. I really see God as a*
> *creative artist who continues to create, so God's sort of always putting new*
> *touches to the picture. It's not as though God had this plan, we messed it up,*
> *now I've got to come to put it right again. Really? I think, God continues to*
> *evolve with what is happening and we evolve with God and it continues on. We*
> *have evolving universes. We can get very stuck in a human-centred some kind*
> *of linear notion of time. That, I think, is all completely irrelevant to the God*

---

[26] A term used in Christianity to describe the transition of the first man and woman from a state of innocent obedience to God to a state of guilty disobedience. Although not named in the Bible, the doctrine of the fall comes from a biblical interpretation of Genesis chapter 3.

*who sits outside time. I think we need a bigger God. I think humans have plans.
God just is.*

Deconstructing the concept of marriage.

Participants also informed themselves by exploring scripture and critically
deconstructing the concept of marriage, particularly what constitutes Christian marriage.
They reported that the bible was surprisingly vague on the subject. What was evident
was that biblical marriage and our understanding of Christian marriage today—a
committed, God-honouring relationship between a man and a woman built on love and
equality—were two very different constructs. "*Our understanding [of] marriage as we
know it today looks very different to what it looked like even 100 years ago and 500
years ago*" (Michael). Emily explained:

> *People who have the eyes can see its [same-sex marriage] actually not just
> been this enormous abrupt change to marriage that's just happened. Things
> have been changing slowly and steadily over a long time but if you don't want
> to see that then you just feel like, no, marriage was always about a man and a
> woman. And to some people it's just a huge horrific change.*

From a feminist perspective, the history and development of marriage, for most
participants, needed to be conceived from the patriarchal context from which it arose.

> *I didn't see [marriage] as something that God had designed once and for all,
> as something static and then handed to humanity on a golden platter and said,
> 'This is marriage.' I understood it as an evolving, changing, at times
> disgustingly patriarchal human construct.* (Emily)

For some participants, investigating the history and meaning of Christian marriage was
instigated by reasons other than same-sex marriage; yet, contributed toward them taking
a supportive stance. This included two participants, as divorcees, having to argue their
case to the church to be able to remarry and still retain their clerical positions. In a
separate incident, one participant supported a heterosexual couple in constructing a
compelling case to challenge the institution's rule that unmarried couples could not hold
leadership positions.

> *We did a lot of work publicly on marriage. We looked at some of the real
> questions about the nature of marriage and how the church perceived
> marriage, and understood it, and from the backgrounds that we, each of us,
> and others that we knew, had in terms of biblical and doctrinal kind of
> questions. We really came out with a very open interpretation.* (George)

Exploration around what constitutes Christian marriage required untangling the often-
confusing involvement between the church and State in marriage. George elaborated:

> *For many people their argument about what the bible said was in fact a reflection about the law of the land as much as it was about any reflection on relationships, the love and care of those relationships, the quality of those relationships, rather than signatures on a piece of paper.*

Through a process of deconstructing and reconstructing the concept of marriage, participants strove to understand this societal construct in a way that was rational, supported by extant knowledge and espoused biblical values. Emily explained:

> *I've followed with a lot of interest different exegetical things particularly on big texts about homosexuality. I just don't believe that the bible was written to give a definite answer on this is what marriage should be, for anyone, whether they are gay or straight. I think there's all sorts of stuff in there that applies, but I just don't think that there's that one magical verse that's just going to tell us whether we should or shouldn't, could have or couldn't. So, my general outlook on how scripture works and how people interact with scripture as guided by the spirit that it won't be coming across a pretext or the exegesis of one little part that's going to tell you the definitive answer.*

Deconstructing and reconstructing the meaning and purpose of Christian marriage for some was painstakingly difficult, for other relatively easy. All, however, arrived theologically recognising that what mattered in any marriage was the Christian qualities with which it imbued. From there, "*it wasn't a big leap then to think that people who weren't male/female could be part of that*" (Emily) understanding of marriage. Rachel encapsulated this when she stated:

> *I've become more and more convinced that we should be spending a lot more time on the quality of relationships rather than who is in them, and we could do some really good stuff in the church on non-violence in relationships, mutuality in relationships, faithfulness in relationships, you know a whole lot of good stuff [about] any relationship. How are people feeling in this relationship? How are they being treated? How are they able to flourish? And when we only concentrate on who's in and who's out then we don't get to do that. Only heterosexuals get that advice!*

In addition to participants developing a congruent theology of sexuality through informing themselves—current substantive knowledge, latest biblical hermeneutics, deconstructing the concept of marriage—they also emphasised *valuing relationship*.

Valuing relationship

In this study, the term 'valuing relationship' extends beyond the connection between two people (i.e., a same-sex couple) or groups (i.e., participants and the LGBTIQ+ community) to include 'experience' of others' realities sometimes outside those defined through traditional religious contexts and as they relate to same-sex attraction. For

example, it also applies to what is observed in 'God's creation' or the world around them. In this section, therefore, the terms 'experience,' 'relationship,' and 'God's creation' are used interchangeably depending on the context. In addition to valuing experience, participants' valuing relationship as a means of constructing a congruent theology of sexuality also included: establishing a value-system based on Christian ethics and Gospel values; committing to creating happier, healthier communities; recognising same-sex marriage is only a part of a larger crusade; repositioning authority and trusting self.

'Experience' and God's creation

When Arthur was asked what influenced his supportive view of same-sex marriage considering traditional biblical interpretations that have been used to condemn homosexuality, he answered, "*It was probably experience before reading scripture*." Giving credence to experience when this contradicts traditional views, even if delivered logically and rationally, has the potential to create conflict and, therefore, required participants possess a strong sense of self to think independently. George explained the reasoning behind his approach:

> *Increasingly, I [challenged traditional ideology] because for me I saw something unreasonable, inappropriate, outdated, or something else in there. So, in no way will I hold to tradition for the sake of tradition. Same as social conventions. If there's value in it, great. If there's not, then let's not worry about it, let's go somewhere else… after all we're here to think as seriously as we can about stuff.*

Apportioning value to experience in the face of religious interpretation to the contrary was especially difficult for those affiliated with hierarchical institutions and/or those that awarded scripture sole authority, particularly when advocating biblical literalism. Michael explained that when dealing with certain complex contemporary issues, a robust theology draws from all spheres of extant knowledge, "*the scriptures don't have the complete and final word, we read them in the light of those other things*." Elizabeth elaborated:

> *I do not regard, though some [colleagues] would regard them, as a hierarchy with the bible at the top. I regard them as a three-legged stool and if reason and medical science are telling us something different, then we need to revisit our scriptures with spirit filled eyes, re-read them in a way that makes sense of the new information.*

Coming to a place of valuing relationship and experience meant placing theology in context of experience and relationship so that each informs the other. In that way, they are connected and interdependent.

> *One speaks to the other. I wouldn't like to suggest that experience is more important than theology. I think for me theology is connected to experience so it's not as if you can have an experience and then have a theology... theology has to bubble up out of, experience for it to have any integrity.* (Daniel)

Participants' valuing of relationship included seeing value in the relationships between others, even if this experience was different. Rather than reacting from fear to difference, some participants reframed the meaning of 'other.' For Arthur, this meant, instead of trying to fit people into his reference of 'normal,' it became about "*appreciating otherness, not trying to change it, just being comfortable with otherness. Now,*" he added, "*people who are outside of my experience... I just take it as a gift.*"

Valuing the experience of others' relationships appeared to have brought together participants' theological perspectives and created change in a way that rarely happens when stemming purely from a theoretical approach. Shane stated:

> *I've had the real pleasure of observing some of my friends loving each other in beautiful ways, in a long term highly committed honourable fashion... it impressed me tremendously. Put that kind of experience next to conservative arguments about why gay relationships fall short of the glory of God, and it's just not working.*

Valuing relationship and experience had a powerful effect on participants' lives and contributed significantly to them developing a congruent theological perspective. Asking Daniel what had made the difference in shifting his views from being unsupportive to an outspoken advocate of same-sex marriage, he simply stated: "*it's all about relationship... being in relationship with people has just made all the difference in the world.*"

Gospel values-system based on Christian ethics

Participants positioned themselves philosophically, theologically, and ethically on Jesus' example who they perceived embodied the values of love, inclusiveness, and justice; consistently laying the foundations of Christian ethics. They saw Jesus of the gospels as radical in his approach by challenging traditional laws and religious elites and bringing about a new order that broke down social borders. For participants, Jesus' reaching out to people, especially embracing the marginalised and outcast in society, demonstrated love in action upon which they desired to model their lives. Arthur

highlighted that when responding to many contemporary socio-moral issues like same-sex marriage "*we live in a world where we're talking to each other across things like ethics.*" Based on George's upbringing and understanding of scripture, ethics were never black and white, rather 'situational'[27] where "*things are not right or wrong intrinsically, they are helpful or not helpful by context.*" Therefore, rather than following absolute rules or a universal law, they follow the law of love.

Love was key: "*you're starting from the first principles of compassion,*" said Sharon, "*whether it's in thinking logically or thinking biblically in terms of the way Jesus did.*" The all-embracing, inclusive love evident in the Jesus of the gospels provided a lens through which participants read and understood scripture and underpinned their perspectives and actions relating to making sense of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

> *The key thing for me is the love… the reflection of Christ's love. I believe in that love and I believe in Christ and teachings of the Word, and the bible is inclusive. If two people love each other, then why not share that love? If they want to do that saying let's get married and have a few people around and we can celebrate our love for each other, I have no issue with that… whether it's two guys, two women, or a male and a female. What's important for me is that it is love. I link it to scripture and the love of Christ.* (Harry)

Philip believed people's fixation on what is right and what is wrong when it comes to same-sex marriage can override the more important issue of God's love. "'*He loved the world so much,' so how does love get shown in this situation?*" he asked. "*If all you can say is what's not right, well that's actually not much, is it really?*" (Philip).

Inclusiveness, another important value underpinning participants' perspectives and actions, was referenced by participants in the way Jesus touched the undesirables and embraced those excluded from society and by religious elites. Harry reported, "*One of the fundamental things for me and about my faith is about inclusiveness… when I read from the scriptures, the lens I have is about inclusiveness regardless. My mission and faith is to find pathways that include.*" With Australasia being a front-runner in the history of women's' rights[28], principles of fairness, inclusion and non-discrimination inherent in feminist thinking played an important part in helping to reduce participants' ambivalence and contributed significantly to their process of diverging from traditional

---

[27] Founded by Joseph Fletcher in the 1960s, situational ethics incorporated the principles of Christian ethical theory which takes into account the particular context of an act or situation when evaluating it ethically, rather than judging it according to absolute moral standards.

[28] Aotearoa New Zealand was the first self-governing country to give all women the right to vote in 1893, followed by Australia in 1902.

religious perspectives of inequality. Identification through gender discrimination fostered an empathic understanding in many participants.

> *I was aware how hard I struggled for inclusion in those all male bastions I wanted to part of. Like being ordained because there was no ordination of women. So, I was struggling to get into some things and could understand why, if you're excluded, it was important to be in. So, from that point of view I began to think about it [same-sex marriage].* (Grace)

Espousing values of love and inclusiveness did not mean accepting everybody, without boundaries. "*There are limits to my inclusivity,*" Maria emphasised. This included "*something displayed in cruelty… an absence of God… it's about how people can treat other people, rather than a category… a total lack of care and concern*" (Sharon). Participants challenged and held accountable those whose actions oppressed, marginalised, discriminated, or hurt others. Traditional meanings of what was considered abhorrent were reframed, as Sharon explained:

> *That can happen when it comes to gay and lesbian relationships and that gut feeling of abhorrence, which I acknowledge exists for people, I can't relate to that if I'm being drawn out of my own regular understanding of things but living in a predominantly heterosexual world. Then that's just a challenge to my experience… because it's the unknown.*

The emphasis participants placed on valuing people and relationship came from the gospels and a strong sense of social justice and Christian ethics: "*at the heart of the faith there's some really important stuff about justice and equality and love*" (Michael). For George, supporting same-sex marriage was "*a gospel-based justice issue… [about] people who were not being treated fairly, who by one characteristic of their self-identification, they were either marginalised or restricted in some way.*" Similarly, Arthur advocated,

> *[it's] a straight justice issue… if any of my kids come out gay and want to get married and want to have a lifelong partner, I want them to be able to get married in church like their brothers or sisters who might be straight. So, there's that level of justice.*

Some participants recognised the historical role power and privilege played in a predominantly white/male-controlled tradition like the church from where much of perceived knowledge and 'truth' stemmed. Participants were committed to social equality through addressing power balances so that those of a minority sexual orientation would not suffer oppression or marginalisation any more than they should be because of their gender or eye colour. Reflecting on what underpinned his support of same-sex marriage, Ben stated:

> *[It] would be the equality of people, the acceptance that we are as we are and somebody who is gay has no more reason to feel a bit put off the fact that they're gay than I have for feeling that I'm male. I'm not a man who apologies for being a man, I'm a man, that's it, and a gay person should not feel apologetic about that.*

The values-system of love, inclusion, equality, and justice espoused by participants extended beyond their interest and commitment to the individual lives of lesbian and gay people to creating happier, healthier communities.

Creating happier, healthier communities

Participants embraced literature that convincingly argued legitimising same-sex marriage minimises physical and psychological risks among lesbian and gay people and increases stability within society. They believed that not legitimising same-sex marriage fuelled promiscuity and unhealthy sexual behaviour which can, and does, endanger the lives of the LGBTIQ+ community. Participants reiterated their belief that a value-system advocating love, inclusiveness, and equality, that fought discrimination and marginalisation, builds healthier communities. Same-sex marriage encouraged stability through societal structures that supports two people to commit. Arthur recalled a time before civil unions:

> *A gay couple couldn't publicly declare their love [and] commitment into the future and be surrounded by the supports of society which is friends, and churches, and institutions. I think all that confirming apparatus is really important in a society to affirm a relationship, and it's because I have a view of society that is not just a bunch of individuals. It's important to have 'institutions' for supporting what you really want in society.*

While acknowledging some lesbian and gay people did not want to be bound by societal expectations around commitment, which underpin the concept of marriage, some participants believed a choice of such apparatus for those who did would not only encourage stability for gay couples but create safer, healthier environments in which to raise children: "*A lot of gay couples have got children and we need stable structures for those children. And if their parents love each other and are committed to each other then why not use the word marriage?*" (Arthur).

Philip's opinion was that "*We are forcing gay people to sin by not allowing them to have a legitimised relationship.*" Participants shared the belief that through their being supportive of same-sex marriage, they and other church-goers had an opportunity "*to be agents of healing and wholeness in the community*" (Maria) by tackling loneliness

arising from societal alienation and not being connected and accepted into mainstream societal and religious institutions. "*When talking about same-sex marriage…what's the bigger picture that surrounds them, that brings them to this point where, 'Hey, we want to make our lifetime commitment to each other?'*" (Harry). For Harry, it was relationship: "*taking away loneliness… offering companionship.*" Grace's words encapsulate other participants' sentiments: "*accepting gay marriage into society by all would get rid of stigma, challenge non-acceptable norms and create healthier communities with everyone being beneficiaries…we're all beneficiaries.*"

Repositioning authority: trusting self

For participants, valuing relationship and experience included valuing connection to self, enough to make decisions in line with their convictions in an authentic, congruent way. Descriptors like 'knowing self' and 'strong sense of self' demonstrated an inner strength where participants trusted themselves to make informed choices, even if this meant thinking separately from the prevailing moods and external expectation of church tradition. Participants' well-developed sense of self served as an internal moral anchor providing surety, even amidst tension, that increased their resilience to tolerate ambivalence.

> *I'm aware… that a certain degree of understanding of self, enabling me to stand against a prevailing mood is also something that's been valuable. If I didn't have that I might have believed things and shut up. I've never felt the need to be secure in anything external to my own judgement… that may be a really bad thing and it may make it hard for me to understand other people who use crutches of one kind or another externally. That's never been where I have been.* (George)

Similarly, Emily stated:

> *I don't feel I need to conform in environments that don't align with my own values … You can't control what people think of you. You can only control who you are within yourself. You have to find that centred place within yourself. That conviction. That calling, whatever you call it… because if you're looking for it externally then you'll just be pushed around by whoever loves you or hates you that day.*

This internal locus of control, or being led by their values, gave participants courage to hold different views to their institutions, families and friends, colleagues, congregants, and wider community. Distinguishing self and institution was reflected when Harry said, "*When we put a collar on… we must be sure of who 'we' are and how 'we' see things.*" Trusting self and thinking independently came easier to individuals from liberal backgrounds who had been encouraged to think independently from an early age

169

compared to individuals from conservative backgrounds who reported a greater struggle in not conforming.

Certain life experiences and events, for example illness or ageing, were also responsible for shaping participants' views and prompting them to act more authentically. Harry underwent brain surgery causing him to "*sift through all the stuff*" that was critical to him, his family, and his partner. This critical life event led to Harry choosing to be more open about his relationship; "*I've chosen to live life to the full. So, yeah, that was a catalyst for change.*" For others, aging brought fresh perspectives making them more spontaneous, caring less about what others thought. "*Life humbles you so deeply as you age*" (Arthur), and your values change. Relationships came to the fore with an appreciation of life's complexities, power imbalances, and constructed social structures, with some individuals reporting that they had become less judgemental and dogmatic and more open to difference. Others reported being less hasty in getting politically caught up in institutional games as they aged which previously would lead to anger or upset. As participants aged, they revealed it became easier to follow their conscience and outwardly support same-sex marriage; fearing less about the consequences to their positions and careers.

Part of a larger crusade

Participants did not view the issue of same-sex marriage as separate from other topics that raised questions about oppression, marginalisation, discrimination, injustice, and inequality. Their valuing relationship, which underpinned their perspectives and directed their actions, was part of something bigger: the Christian message of humanity.

> *My concerns are broader. I don't see the gay, lesbian issue as a narrow issue. To me it's an attitude to human beings. It's a part of the way you relate to people. It's a part of the way of how you accept, engage, love, support people. And this [same-sex marriage] being one issue among many, where the church must act differently you know, in light of justice and hospitality and grace.* (Grace)

For Sharon and Thomas, it was a about "continuity" whereby, once a sound theological position had been established and was consistent with a personal value-system, there was a flow-on effect to other justice and socio-ethical-related issues. Some participants referenced this approach as reflecting the Treaty principles of partnership, protection, and participation, inherent in biculturalism within Aotearoa New Zealand.

The process of reaching a supportive position on same-sex marriage

Although participants' pathways through the stage of diverging ideologies varied, they arrived at a supportive position of same-sex marriage. Their journeys were a process requiring them to make a series of decisions while tolerating degrees of uncertainty. On reaching a supportive position they chose to stay connected with their institutions despite their supportive views which created degrees of tension because these were, in most cases, at odds with their institution.

Evolving process

For all participants their journey was a process. Some, like Jessica, described it as naturally-evolving, carrying them in a similar direction over time: "*it was an evolutionary thing, just a growing understanding.*" Similarly, Emily explained, "*For at least 15 years it's been a natural journey or evolution.*" Others experienced a shift in perspective. Some, like Daniel, recounted that after a long struggle: "*I've been able to both theologically and pastorally come to a very different position than which I was raised with.*" Whereas the shift for Arthur occurred through a gradual realisation, he was now in a different position: "*it wasn't like a major enlightenment or anything. It was like a stupid prejudice from my childhood that just vanished, like the sun coming out and the snow vanishing.*" There was no conscious decision to be accepting, "*it just kind of happened*" (Arthur).

Getting off the fence

In working through ambivalence to reach a supportive position, several participants who were unsupportive or unsure oscillated indecisively for long periods of time: "*I was trying to avoid committing to any [position],*" exclaimed Philip. Daniel wrestled through his ambivalence until finally reaching a point of standing alongside gay and lesbian youth in his church despite "*not having worked out all the theology to take me any further than that.*" Theological understanding and articulation came later. "*To some extent you just make up your mind. You make a decision and you just have to move on… or move forward with the decision*" (Emily). This required inner strength stemming from a strong sense of self and spiritual conviction: "*you only find what you need to find from within yourself, and a sense of God within you*" (Emily).

Through their journeys, some participants spoke of "*constantly being nudged and pushed*" (Daniel) as they were confronted by the reality of pastoral ministry. Others

reported significant turning points in their lives. Sharon literally took a stand during an assembly meeting when her institution passed a motion to oppose the homosexual law reform bill (1986): "*There was a point where you become aware, I have to stand.*" She elaborated:

> *It's a church where you take sides because we vote, and that's the first time the thing came to the floor at assembly… somebody … stood up, others were standing too, and I realised I needed to stand, so I stood.* (Sharon)

An incident that convinced Rachel and put her unequivocally onside was through meeting a fellow ordinand, Doreen, while training for the ministry:

> *During that period the church passed that gays and lesbians shall not be ministers rule. So, at the graduation ceremony she was sitting at the end of the row of the graduands and during the ceremony the graduands all walked out because they were going to get the communion elements, but that left Doreen sitting exposed next to a row of empty chairs. So, I got up and sat next to her. I don't know that I knew her that well but yeah, that would be a very defining moment; that this person who was skilled and as trained as anybody else was not going to be allowed to be a minister because she was gay.*

For Elizabeth, a turning point was hearing a sermon referencing Peter's vision of the net of animals, clean and unclean, descending, and how everybody's ministry was unacceptable to God whether male or female, gay or straight.

> *It was a very courageous sermon and I certainly, as a woman, received it with open arms because it was a very difficult time for the women at that stage and he was recognising that the same hermeneutical tools that were used to oppress him, as a gay person, were used to oppress the female students also. I recognised that hermeneutical link at once and I thought he was right.*

Degrees on certainty

On taking a supportive position, most reported being comfortable with little doubt or ambivalence that same-sex couples have the right to marry. Descriptors used included, "*it is a non-issue*" (Grace) "*entirely comfortable with it*" (Maria), "*in favour*" (Arthur), "*strong supporter*" (Jessica), "*absolute supporter*" (Michael), "*I think it's a good idea*" (Rachel), "*I've no reason to be against it*" (Elliot). Sharon emphasised life as an on-going process, therefore, expressed being as certain as one could be:

> *As a good philosopher… I always pull back from the word 'certain' because… you get into a debate on absolute knowledge. But where it is right now, there's no lingering uncertainties … The fact that on the current understanding of things this is where I am now. At another stage, I might be somewhere different.*

Emily questioned whether her certainty of same-sex marriage being right might, in part, have been reinforced because of the incredibly difficult time she had endured with strong opposition within her institution:

> [When] you are under so much attack, I think there must be some psychological phenomena where you don't really want to notice any cracks in your thinking because you might just feel they might suddenly put you on shaky ground or make you feel unsafe ... but you have to find something within yourself because if you're looking for it externally then you'll just be pushed around.

Even as a supporter who married lesbian and gay couples, Ben acknowledged his "*hormone-driven perspective*" of being "*locked down towards the heterosexual side of the spectrum*" which instinctively made recoil from the idea of two men being intimate. But, he expounded:

> [For] someone who claims, and tries, to be a Christian, what comes first is the prejudice gets seen for what it is, pushed aside, and the right thing to do is to support, in any way that I can, the fulfilment of the lives of these gay people and lesbian people. (Ben)

Having said that, Ben highlighted that as same-sex marriage was a relatively new social construct, nobody knew how it would play out in society in the future; it still needed to be tested. Despite gradients of certainty, having travelled through the stage of diverging ideologies and reaching a supportive position, none went back and changed their minds. "*You can't just go back... once you've met people who have experienced life differently*" (Emily).

Participants' constructions of same-sex marriage

Participants' constructions of same-sex marriage began with the premise that gender and sexual orientation were not binary but fell along a continuum and could be fluid, and that homosexuality was an intrinsic part of an individual's identity. From this understanding, same-sex attraction was considered a healthy, normal variant of sexuality, evident throughout the natural world in God's creation. Same-sex marriage, as a loving, committed, consensual, and God-honouring covenant was viewed as a natural outflow, with a belief that valuing love and relationship within this context enabled humans to live full and abundant lives as God intended.

> Homosexuality is not a dysfunction, it is an expression of the functional whole human being made in the image of God, if you start from that proposition, then to provide the right, the ritual, the opportunity for full covenant commitment in marriage is a natural extension of that conclusion. (Daniel)

Marriage was recognised as an ever-evolving human construct and participants emphasised the relationship, not the people in it, were important: "*It's [marriage] likely to change again as humans' circumstances changes. So, for me marriage in itself is not the be-all and end-all. It's what I am in that relationship*" (Grace). Philip recognised, through his son's coming out as gay, that individuals' desire and need for companionship and connection are the same in everybody regardless of sexual orientation.

> *When you look at a loving relationship that's long term, and intimate, which is what my son desires, it makes you think. I can see something beautiful in it and I can't see anything really wrong with it. And if God is love, wouldn't God want that? ... hearing my son's yearnings for company... he's on his own and wants someone who's going to share his life with him... and I can understand that. It's not like they're getting special treatment, it's just that you're trying to find ways to include.*

Shane perhaps encapsulated the views of other participants when he said:

> *I think human beings are relational. They do fall in love. And when that happens to them, what can be a tremendous strength and blessing to them is to have the option of declaring that before other people, saying we love each other, and we commit ourselves to each other in a serious way. I think that must give people such a sense of pride but also security... There was marriage before the Christian church and there's marriage outside the Christian church, there's nothing particularly Christian about marriage as such. But, if people come to a Christian community saying this is our love, we want to celebrate it and commit ourselves to each other, I know what a Christian response to that is. And it's not to say we can't, it's in the bible. Our Christian response is, we will help you. We will offer you exactly what we offer the straight people who ask us for the same thing. Because we are committed to everybody being equal before God.*

Choosing to remain connected through the conflict

Having assumed a supportive position of same-sex marriage, participants' views were, in most cases, at odds with their institutions on the subject. Clergy from more liberal churches that awarded liberty of conscience were not exempt from tensions with colleagues, congregants, and wider community who remained unsupportive. Despite this conflict, all participants chose to stay connected with the church and true to their vocational calling. Daniel explained, "*You've got to stay talking, even when it's painful.*"

The reason participants chose to stay was because of their valuing relationship with God—honoured through their calling and vocation—and their relationship with the church through which they felt a strong sense of connection and belonging. While not

minimising its importance, participants also considered the issue of same-sex marriage as just one among many other issues where change was needed in the church. From this perspective, they saw an opportunity to influence that change from within. Speaking of her reluctance to leave, Jessica revealed:

> *There's a sense of authority, a sense of belonging to a bigger whole that, most of the time, is a good thing because it means that we don't just make up our own theology, we don't do stuff on our own. Most of the time I would be saying it's a good thing. So, we're really caught in that… we willingly buy into the corporate ideal so it's pretty hard then at the end of the day to turn around and say well I know better.*

Because of "*gay-excluding legislation*," Shane, an openly gay clergyman, did not see any kind of future with his institution so took time out to reflect on what he wanted. He reached a point of saying, "*Okay, well I'm gay and I'm part of your community. I'm not over there, I'm here… so, it's a process… becoming part of both worlds.*"

Reaching a decision to stay with the church brought participants to the end of the stage of diverging ideologies. Next, individuals were faced with a series of decisions about how to continue in their clerical roles with their institutions and manage their daily lives with their supportive perspectives. These decisions and actions are discussed in the following chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the stage of diverging ideologies, a process whereby participants diverged from traditional religious views of sexuality and formulated supportive views of same-sex marriage. The role of initial perspectives in shaping participants' responses as they encountered homosexuality and same-sex marriage were identified. Contexts influencing participants' ambivalence about homosexuality and same-sex marriage, namely coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people and recognising a failing theology, were discussed. Steps toward participants constructing a congruent theology of sexuality through informing self and valuing relationship were outlined. Finally, the process whereby individuals reached a supportive position, including their perspectives on same-sex marriage and decision to stay with the church, was delineated.

Chapter Seven: Holding a Space

Introduction

This chapter explains the second stage of the trajectory, holding a space, and demonstrates how participants enact their day-to-day clerical roles with their supportive perspectives on same-sex marriage. I begin by outlining how participants initially position themselves within the institution through a series of decisions that inform their subsequent actions. Next, I elucidate the diverse relationships participants are required to manage and the strategies they implement, including conditions that contributed to participants shifting their roles. Finally, the consequences and experiences in response to their actions are delineated.

The central concept of holding a space

Valuing relationship drove the process of holding a space which describes the way participants respectfully managed the diverse, often-competing, and difficult relationships around them. In their clerical roles, participants engaged with a wide range of people with differing views of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

> *A couple of weeks ago I was at one of the very conservative congregations and in the evening, I preached at the Pride event. And you know, the mental gymnastics around just making sure you're in the right space for that congregation.* (Michael)

The valuing relationship, leading to participants being supportive of same-sex marriage, was evident in the relationship they had with their institution, and those within it, and underpinned their decision to stay connected. By prioritising their spiritual relationship, participants aimed to uphold a space where everyone, irrespective of views, felt safely and respectfully heard and encouraged in their faith. Sharon captured the essence of this: "*If we can provide, as a local parish, the space in which the faith can continue regardless of what happens to church then that's probably the best we can do. So, we are holding a space in a way.*" Caught in the middle of what could, at times, feel like a tumultuous tug of war between competing sides, analysis showed that participants endeavoured to make space for: hierarchy, colleagues, congregants, and wider communities who were supportive, unsupportive, or unsure about same-sex marriage; lesbian and gay men who were colleagues, congregants, or members of the LGBTIQ+

community who felt marginalised by the church; themselves so they could act according to their conscience and live with integrity.

In the context of this study, the notion of holding a space does not refer to a neutral positioning the way moderators might do when, for example, facilitating a meeting; this would suggest impartiality where their own views might be obscured or hidden. Instead, participants were agentic; actively managing diverse contexts through a process of discerning as they reflected on new situations they encountered and decided appropriate courses of action to be taken. How participants held a space depended on how they positioned themselves within their institution and what context—situation, people, or incidents—they were dealing with. Figure 11 (p. 178) represents participants' process of holding a space.

Risk: A contributing factor to participants' decision-making

Risk was a contributory factor influencing participants' decision-making throughout holding a space. Many institutions—particularly the hierarchical, conservative, and evangelical—do not easily tolerate those whose views fall outside doctrinal law. Speaking of his denomination, Arthur stated: "*Part of the culture is when you disagree, you leave. They don't have a DNA of being a broad church.*" Lucy had vicariously witnessed the fallout between the church and lesbian and gay people, and was aware of the risks associated with having supportive views: "*The same-sex couples that I've known and the response I've heard from so many Christian people… part of that makes me afraid of being outwardly outspoken about it [same-sex marriage]…because of the backlash from it.*" Grace echoed these concerns: "*If you're going to make statements about [being supportive of same-sex marriage], if you preach on that then there are risks. Somebody could call you into line.*" Individuals who were older, from liberal backgrounds, and/or affiliated with congregational churches reported being less fearful about making their supportive views known compared to those who were younger, from conservative backgrounds, and/or affiliated with hierarchical institutions. However, all participants faced risk to varying degrees; therefore, their actions were considered in the light of perceived consequences.
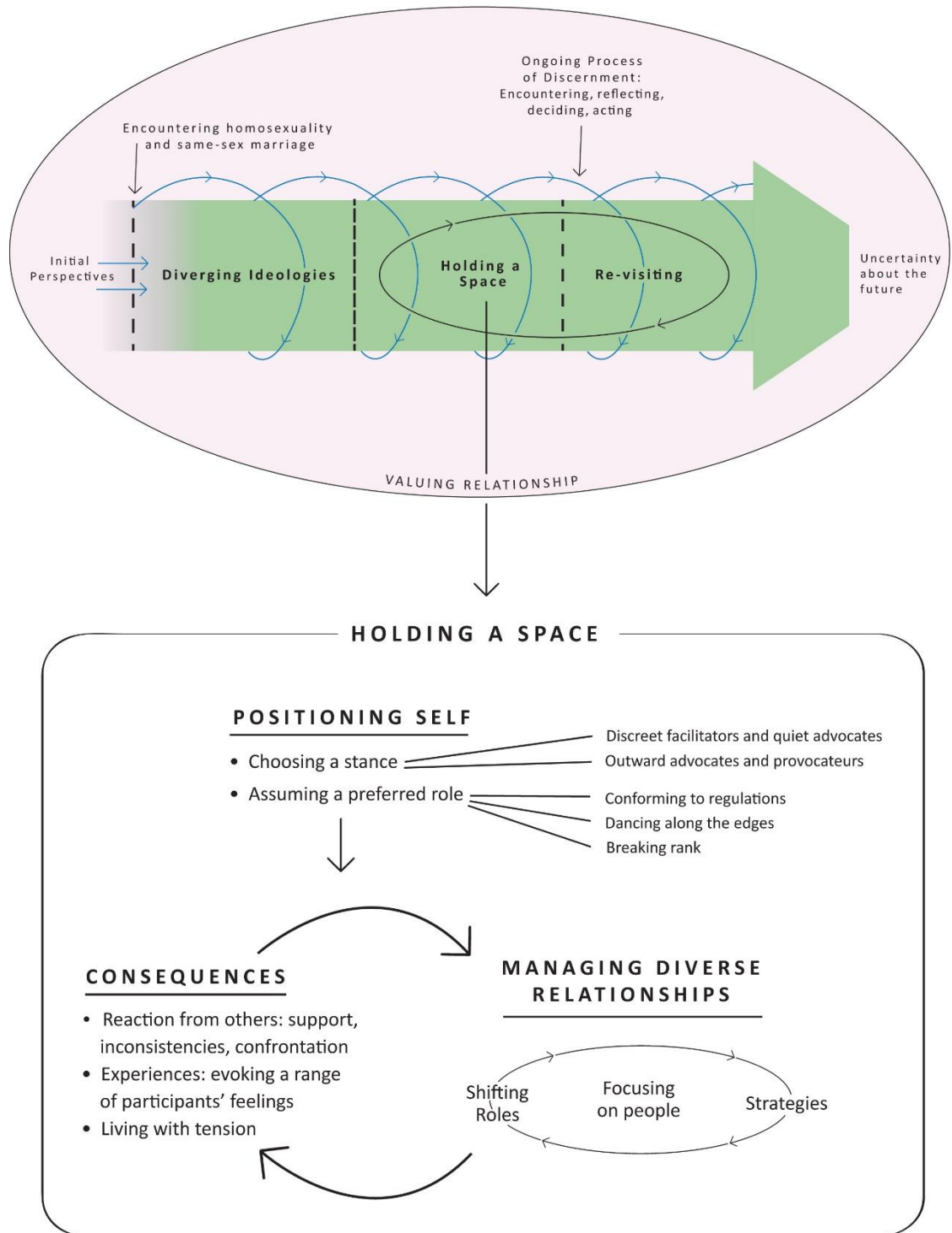
Figure 11: Stage of Holding a Space

Risk was assessed in different ways. For some, it was evaluated in relation to self, i.e., position and career. Anticipating the inevitability of marriage equality reforms in the future, Elizabeth pondered the risks:

> *I think Australia will pass this [Marriage Equality vote] and when they get there, then we all have the problem of what do we do with the gay couples in our congregations who say, 'who's going to conduct our wedding?' We would very much like to do that, but we can't. We would lose our license there's no question about that because it's become so political.*

Jessica who ran an overtly supportive parish reported, "*People joke that once you become the vicar here you can never become a bishop. Your career advancements are turned off once you either come here or take those kinds of strong positions.*" Emily had come to a similar conclusion:

> *If I had expected some bright and shining career path within [this institution] then I would have had to have come to the speedy realisation that that was over. I've very much resigned myself to thinking I don't have a future in the (denomination) churches of New Zealand.*

Other participants assessed the risk to those around them, including within their parish and congregation. In appraising each situation, participants considered, and were sensitive to, protecting any affected parties. For example, regarding conducting a same-sex wedding, Grace explained:

> *If we agreed together that was appropriate, … yes, I would. But I wouldn't want to put the whole of the congregation and vestry and the vicar all at risk because of my action. That doesn't seem to be fair. I would be prepared to act in that way, but I wouldn't be prepared to act in a way that put a lot of other people at risk.*

Gay and lesbian participants were in a particularly vulnerable position when considering risks as they potentially faced discipline or expulsion for their supportive views and sexual orientation if found out. Consequently, they were more cautious and discerning about disclosing either. Working part-time in ministry and not relying solely on the institution for income decreased Harry's risks enabling him "*to be more outspoken, more vocal … hold a different view.*"

Although the type and degree of risk associated with participants' actions varied, individuals remained resolute in their convictions about same-sex marriage. Even those preferring to be more discreet, in most cases, did not hide and chose to disclose their supportive perspectives when challenged.

Positioning self

As participants entered the second stage of the trajectory, consideration was given to how they would position themselves and act within the confines of their institutions which, for the most part, forbid clergy to be involved with same-sex weddings. Their dilemma, in Michael's words: "*how to maintain my own integrity in an institution that is quite broken in lots of ways but working out how I can walk that path and be faithful to what I think and believe but aware of the constraints that the institution puts on me.*" In positioning themselves, participants chose a stance regarding institutional regulations and assumed a preferred role from which to enact their chosen stance.

Choosing a stance

Participants chose one of three stances: conforming to the institution's regulations, dancing along the edges, or breaking rank.

Conforming to regulations.

In all cases, except one, choosing to conform to their institution's regulations meant participants were unable to conduct or participate in same-sex marriages. Some individuals appeared to reach this decision relatively easily and were prepared to sit it out and wait for the "*slow beast*" to catch up (Thomas). Others wrestled, feeling frustrated and hamstrung by the imposed rules that were contrary to their personal convictions. Jessica explained her conflict:

> *I could technically legally marry them. I could use the church because it's my church … but the bishop would have no choice in this hot climate but to take away my licence which would mean I would lose my job… So that's very tough and I've thought long and hard over this last year about whether I would test it and see, and just try and take the risk. But I've decided at the end of the day that going down in flames over one ceremony–where does that leave me personally? It doesn't leave me very well (laughs). But it actually doesn't help the long-term cause either because then it's one more voice lost.*

While a few churches in Aotearoa New Zealand initially agreed in principle that each local congregation should determine its own policy on the issue, when tested some participants were severely threatened or disciplined. Yet, one participant, affiliated with a church permitting clergy liberty of conscience, embraced these institutional rulings.

Dancing along the edges.

Some participants, while careful not to break church law, were more opportunistic, looked for loopholes, and admitted "*dancing along the edges*" (Arthur); a compromise between respecting church law while finding ways to appease their convictions. Shane explained:

> *If I'm solemnising same sex marriages, then I would be breaking a law of the church and open myself to discipline. So, we worked out solemnising … meant the legal declaring of the marriage to exist … We thought well it doesn't say praying for the couple or celebrating with them in church or reading the bible together or praying for the future … So, we [would] tell them to go off register your marriage with the state and then come to church.*

Arthur explained the vagueness of his institution's regulations enabled him to seek out a similar compromise:

> *It wasn't a rule, it was a murky thing. I've never knowingly broken a rule … … I was still taking risks and taking licence on the rules … I was saying if you're going to be murky on the rules, then I'm going to take liberty … Yes, it's being creative rather than deliberately breaking the rules (laughter).*

Having been asked to conduct his first same-sex marriage, Harry commented, "*I've got to find a way of doing it. We'll have to work through the church, but I'll be looking for how can I get around that.*" Reassuring the couple, he said, "*don't worry it'll happen, we'll make it happen.*" Where it was unclear whether the ban was an all-out ban on same-sex marriages or just related to using church buildings, some participants found other wedding venues: "*I've done same-sex marriages, but not in the church*" (Grace). Others circumvented church policy by choosing to be removed as a church celebrant and becoming a civil celebrant instead. Arthur had been advised, "*if you become a civil celebrant, come off the [denomination's] licence roll and go on the civil list it confuses the legal waters and you can proceed. So, I did.*" While not breaking the rules, taking liberties and seeking compromise brought increased risk of retribution; although the risks remained lower than for participants who decided to break rank altogether.

Breaking rank.

A preparedness to follow their convictions and break rank was something some participants felt forced into, and, wary of the risks, was not something they did lightly. Referring to the church's decision to ban their participation in same-sex marriage, Grace questioned: "*What position have you left us in? What are the choices we now have? And, of course, one of those choices is to be disobedient.*" Participants who reported

breaking rank were affiliated with congregational churches and made their decision in full or majority support of their congregations. While some individuals reported making blanket decisions to conduct all same-sex weddings they considered were appropriate, others only married members of their congregation, an act they saw as an extension to their pastoral roles:

> *Our church was really keen to make a blanket decision in time for the law change because the leadership and I could see this issue coming. [If we didn't] then we'd end up making decisions on a case by case basis which I think would be really unfair to couples because you'd end up with a church that is essentially deciding whether this gay couple was worth the risk.* (Emily)

> *We decided, and this was my preferred position, that I would marry same-sex couples who were in the congregation and part of the community, the faith community. Because I saw that as being ... a minister, a minister marries, baptises, buries the congregation you know.* (Rachel)

Having undergone much soul-searching and fully aware of the risks associated with breaking rank, participants were courageous and resolute in following their convictions regardless of the costs, even if this meant losing their licence. Grace was unwavering when she reported: "*If someone wants to be married, marry them. If somebody feels that they want to have their marriage or their relationship blessed, well bless them. If I can do those things, then do it. I don't have to wait for permission.*"

Another act of breaking rank involved participants publicly speaking out in support of same-sex marriage and, where necessary, calling the church out on their exclusive policies.

Assuming a preferred role

Once participants had chosen a stance, they considered how to action or enact that stance within the institution. This required assuming a preferred role or leadership style pertaining to how open they were and in what ways they might or might not assert their supportive views within their clerical roles in the institution. Participants linked this approach largely to personality and how they felt about conflict. They believed that a variety of different approaches were necessary when working toward change in a conflicted environment.

> *Change works through a mixture of things. It works through the lawyers. It works through people who work on those inner committees. It also works on the people on the outside of the gates who make a lot of noise. So, there's multiple influences.* (Arthur)

In the fight for change, within the church, participants tended to identify with a preferred role along a continuum: as an outward advocate and at times even a *provocateur* through to a quiet advocate and discreet facilitator. No correlation was found between individuals' preferred role and the stance they took. For example, participants who broke rank did not necessarily identify as outward advocates and/or provocateurs; similarly, those who chose to conform to church regulations did not necessarily identify as quiet advocates and/or discreet facilitators. Risk, as with decisions around stance, was a factor influencing participants' choices. The outcomes of assessing risk as influencing action depended on the individuals' age, their institution's particular stance on same-sex marriage and its ecclesiology, among other things.

Outward advocates and provocateurs.

Some participants assumed an advocating role that was bold and outspoken on any issue where they saw injustice and inequality. They proactively argued for and supported same-sex marriage, and promoted the interests of the LGBTIQ+ community. They expressed their views clearly and directly, pursuing their cause fervently.

> *It's all about being really clear, taking a clear stance and allowing a process for people to feed into it. So that's my style. Not doing the sitting on the fence thing just to keep everyone happy. Most clergy do, and I think that drives them to an early grave. But that's just not my personality type.* (Jessica)

Jessica echoed views of some of the other participants when she stressed the importance of the supportive factions of the church being visible in the public arena to offer an alternative to the church's collective voice that stood in opposition to same-sex marriage.

> *It's important to me how we are seen in the wider community, that some people see us as standing up and fighting for [acceptance of same-sex marriage] and that we're not all just going along with what's happening. And that's part of the PR image here too, making sure that our brand is out there very clearly.* (Jessica)

Maria stated:

> *I've never hidden what my views are. I've always, as long as I've been in ministry, been on the very left edge politically and theologically ... If there was an issue, I was involved in it really. I'm always welcoming of people who are wanting to join this congregation and make sure that they do know that we're proactive in our stance about homosexuality and same-gendered marriages.*

The data revealed that some individuals, in certain situations, acted provocatively with a preparedness to shock people and challenge the status quo in an attempt to urge people

to think differently. In fact, there was an element of enjoying being challenging and, at times, confrontational. Some divulged their perversity was evident in their families over generations suggesting such a quality was perhaps a learnt behaviour as well as being a personality trait.

> *So always, from quite young, if I thought I had a perspective on something I was very happy to speak that perspective even if I was the only person who thought it. If it went against the prevailing way of doing things, so much the better actually. So, some things I did for purely provocative reasons.* (George)

Similarly, Maria admitted:

> *Well there's a bit of a buzz (laughter) being politically involved … I come from an argumentative family so… just taking it into a wider arena really. I'm also sufficiently extroverted that the attention doesn't put me off. A certain amount I thrive on.*

Others attributed their bravado to their environment, in particular being leaders of very liberal congregations with histories of taking a stand over socio-moral justice issues. Arthurs's "*in your face*" approach caused him to be "*seen as a bit of a provocateur*" by hierarchy and colleagues. The reasons for his and his parish's actions were, in part, because, "*we were strong enough to do that as [a parish], and the congregation had a culture of 'we love controversy*" (Arthur). Similarly, Jessica elucidated, "*We're kind of one of the flagship churches and people know our position and we're very strong on it, in a sense that gives me permission to speak very strongly.*" However, mindful of the effect of their actions on others these provocateurs emphasised the importance of choosing their battles and discerning situations where such behaviour might be unhelpful or inappropriate.

Discreet facilitators and quiet advocates.

In contrast, there were individuals who, while being resolute in their support of same-sex marriage, preferred to be discreet about their views and actions. These participants reported: "*I'm quietly supportive*" (Lucy), "*I tend to play things down*" (Harry), "*I don't like to make a show or a fuss, I never draw attention to myself*" (Emily). Unlike the provocateurs, there was no pleasure in being caught up in the political fray. Elizabeth stated, "*I'm not a political animal. I don't enjoy that stuff.*" Similarly, Emily said:

> *I'm not an outspoken person. I'm not good at sticking my neck on the line because I am a kind of keep your head down… I don't go looking for arguments. You know I don't find a good argument on a subject satisfying. I don't enjoy it at all.*

Assuming a quiet advocate/discreet facilitator role did not mean these individuals were any less steadfast in their support of same-sex marriage. Rather, avoiding confrontation felt more congruent with their personality and arguing with opponents was largely seen to be pointless, as often both sides became more entrenched and polarised in their view. Quiet advocates, while espousing the principles of advocacy, reported being more discerning about when and where to speak out, but did share their views publicly, such as in a sermon, blog, or general conversation. Discreet facilitators, on the other hand, sought to provide a neutral yet supportive space in which people could explore and work through matters on their own, only offering their view if asked. Being a quiet advocate/discreet facilitator did not necessarily equate with being conformist as some participants demonstrated a preparedness to break rank and remained unwavering even under extremely punitive pressure from their institution. What was important to Emily was quietly getting on, living with integrity and according to your values: "*I've got very strong opinions and ideals but generally I'm quite happy to process them for myself or with people who I know and trust and just quietly get on with being myself and living them out*."

While recognising the need for different approaches, some, who took a quieter approach, admired those who were more outspoken, questioning whether they should be more proactive and wondering about the potential harms of not challenging people more. Lucy asked rhetorically, "*I'm not sure if that's cowardly of me?*"; while Emily confessed, "*I do sometimes struggle with at what point would or should you actually say something. I mean 'live and let live' isn't actually good enough because it could be really harmful to others*."

Choosing the quiet advocate/facilitator role appeared to be influenced more by personality than risk to self. Minimising risk to their lesbian and gay colleagues and congregants, and wanting to honour the sanctity of same-sex marriage rather than "*sensationalise or 'freak-show-ise'*" (Emily) it by drawing unnecessary attention to lesbian and gay couples in their parish was, however, a contributing factor. Having adopted a stance and preferred role, participants adopted a range of strategies to enact their clerical roles within their institution.

Managing diverse relationships

In their clerical roles, participants engaged with a wide range of relationships at different levels—institution, parish, congregation, and wider community. Often, like Ethan, they found themselves in the middle of widely varying views of same-sex marriage:

> *I was sitting beside a clergy member who said I really can't see any difference between a faithful homosexual relationship and a faithful heterosexual relationship. And on the other side of the table was a man whose response was, 'they'll burn in hell!'*

Participants managed these diverse relationships by employing a range of strategies that emphasised focusing on people and led to them shifting roles depending on the context of the situation.

Focusing on people

Focusing on people underpinned participants' actions as they engaged with diverse relationships. Concentrating on 'working in the trenches,' participants looked beyond institutional politics and traditional policies seeking to put the needs of people in their parish and communities first. They viewed their focusing on people around them as fundamental to their ministry. However, responding to individuals' needs regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage often put participants in conflict with institutional expectations. Referring to these institutional pressures, Harry stated, "*sometimes I accept it, and other times I don't. But my focus is more with people*." In trying to balance the often-competing needs of some of his parishioners, for example same-sex couples, with those of his institution, Thomas looked to Jesus' inclusivity and radical call on peoples' lives which transcended religious law: "*He dealt with the people who were marginalised within his society as well as being part of the mainstream at the same time*."

The way participants focused on people was through building relationships by working pastorally. In instances where participants ran into conflict with the views and expectations of the institution, they prioritised authority in their convictions over traditional perspectives.

Working pastorally.

Pastoral care refers to the act of providing spiritual care or guidance especially to a congregation (Mirriam-Webster), and participants perceived working pastorally to be a valuable component of their ministry. Upon leaving a community he had served, Shane reported that his pastoral role was the thing they valued the most: "*They identified that as the main thing that I brought to that community.*" Participants responded pastorally primarily through the first principles of love and compassion, to show the love of God through their relationship in every situation. Participants sought to respect and value everyone and relate in ways people felt heard and understood. At times, this meant a preparedness to put theirs and their institution's views aside to meet people where they were at: "*[It's] what being Christian is, it's not self-serving ... less about winning people for Christ and more about loving people, whoever they are and wherever they are and working with them*" (Maria).

Participants aimed to provide a space where people might feel safe and supported to explore spiritually. For Grace, this meant:

> *Something they can relate to. Somewhere they can, in whatever way, express their humanity. A place they can explore their humanity and lived expression of that in a spiritually-accepting and hospitable place and find the stories that enable them to link to traditions.*

Working pastorally meant relating to people through being sensitive to use of language, which could pose challenges when interacting with different congregations with differing views on same-sex marriage:

> *It's always been my struggle in the church to find ways of talking about the things I want to talk about in language that doesn't cause people to shut down. In that [conservative] congregation it would have been desperately inappropriate to talk about marriage equality stuff because they would have shut down, yeah, and there's no point.* (Michael)

Similarly, Harry emphasised the importance of using relatable language when talking spiritual matters with people who had been hurt by the church because of its exclusive practices or because of their originating from different cultural backgrounds: "*The challenge is trying to be able to be a voice within that, that uses language that not only I guess appeases the institution of church but also a reflection of the communities we work within.*" Talking of God, for example, "*I will either say the Creator that you believe, or the Power that you believe in…the key for me is to get people to acknowledge the Spirit within them*" (Harry).

Institutional bans on same-sex marriage, especially for participants at liberal parishes that welcomed lesbian and gay people, were viewed as impeding participants' effectiveness to minister pastorally. Rachel had challenged her institution arguing, "*if you're–the church–going to expect me to say no to marrying a same sex couple in my congregation it would blow my pastoral relationship with my congregation out of the water ... that felt like a very high danger.*"

Prioritising own convictions as authority.

Responding pastorally sometimes brought participants into conflictual situations arising from a difference in view with their institutions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage. When this occurred, participants' decisions were guided by scripture, in particular Jesus' example of working with people, and trusting self. This resulted in participants choosing to use their own discretion, following and prioritising their convictions as the authority over institutional perspectives. Grace explained:

> *If I get into a conflict situation, I'm going to ask myself what does my integrity demand of me, or what do my commitments demand of me? And if they're different from the institution's demands, then I'm more likely to go with mine than I am with the institution.*

Choosing to follow their convictions in conflictual situations, when working pastorally, was reported by individuals from congregational and hierarchical institutions. However, participants from the former were particularly clear about being answerable first and foremost to the needs of their congregants rather than the needs of the denomination. Emily relayed:

> *I don't feel torn between the denomination and my church or who should I be pleasing or serving. There's no question. I'm called to serve my church, and the way our church has developed to be, and to be true to who we are.*

Participants' focusing on people, working pastorally and, at times, prioritising conviction as authority within their parishes and communities provided impetus for, and strongly influenced, the choice of a wider range of strategies. These strategies were adopted for the purpose of managing their day-to-day lives.

Strategies

The strategies participants adopted to manage their day-to-day lives were operable at all levels—personal, institutional, parish and congregational, wider community—and were guided by how participants positioned themselves, their institution's stance,

ecclesiological structure, and degree of risk. Driven by their focus on people and relationship, participants' actions broadly fell into two categories: holding a space and degrees of speaking out and/or participating.

Holding a space.

Holding a space refers to the way in which participants enacted their clerical roles within the institution. A commitment to their calling and the organisation to which they belonged led to them remaining respectfully open to everyone they interacted with to ensure all felt heard and understood. This was achieved through the responsibility of their position, working to retain unity, separating the institution from people, and reframing.

Responsibility of their position

As leaders, participants believed their position came with a moral responsibility to fight injustice and advocate for the rights of all people. "*I've tried to use what influence I have in places where it might make a difference,*" exclaimed Grace. Those participants whose voices were well established and respected in their communities identified an opportunity to use their power to lend their support for those without, as with the case of lesbian and gay couples looking to marry. Some individuals drew parallels of the fight for women's and Māori rights to that of LGBTIQ+ rights. "*A few hundred years ago people of better social standing than a female were doing that on behalf of women*" (Emily). George had been challenged by a Māori individual who said: "*'Unless you Pakeha[29] guys, with positions of power, deal with our issues, they won't change.' People in power have got to start using their power to make the change for people who don't have the power at the moment.*" Applying the same framework to LGBTIQ+ rights, George elaborated:

> *Stand up and be counted, and not allow simply the gay and lesbian community to be the people to have the voices spoken. Not to say that we should speak for others, but we can often speak into where the power is and use that role. So that's the justice type framework for me.*

Working to retain unity

Participants' motivation to respectfully hold a space for all, underpinned by their valuing relationship, drove their commitment to working toward unity; not in the sense of everybody thinking the same, but increasing tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

---

[29] Denoting "non-Māori New Zealanders" (Ranford, 1985, p. 12).

This was, in part, motivated by their having witnessed and/or experienced marginalisation and being sensitive to those who held different views. Emily contended, "*That's been a really big concern for me in all of this ...what it's like to be, to feel, marginalised within your own church. Because I understand that feeling, I know what it's like.*" Referring to some in her congregation, who might feel less certain or comfortable about same-sex marriage, Emily reported "*we can certainly try and hold a space that says we don't all think the same, and we don't all agree on this.*" Similarly, Maria emphasised, "*we've worked very hard to retain unity with that diversity of theological view.*" This commitment to unity and holding a space for all led Emily to have conversations within her parish to encourage tolerance for those with different views on same-sex marriage.

> *One thing the leadership and I have tried really hard to do is keep maintaining this is not something that everyone in our church thinks. So, we've tried to have a discourse around difference within our church, and that has worked to some extent.*

Endeavouring to ensure all congregants felt heard, Maria worked for several years to restore relationships with certain conservative factions within the institution—namely members of the Pacific Island community—who were initially opposed to same-sex marriage. Such work required sensitivity to a range of cultural and religious views; and an understanding that for the community to hold a different view to the leader was considered disrespectful. Maria's commitment to engaging with cultural leaders in a way they felt heard and understood led to this group's shift in perspective toward being more supportive. "*The leaders said quietly to me afterwards, 'you know, Maria, you'll find most of us don't have an issue with [same-sex marriage]. We just don't like talking about it in public.' Their way of dealing with it was just quite different.*" Within her own parish, when voting whether to allow same-sex marriages, Maria ensured the opinions of those opposed were registered: "*While it was not a unanimous decision, there was a majority in support, and these people [that were opposed] said they felt as if their views had been heard.*"

Separating institution and people

Despite the church's history of sometimes being intolerant and oppressive, participants guarded against generalising where the institution became viewed as a large, unsympathetic and impenetrable "*beast*" (Thomas), guilty of injustices. To avoid splitting their thinking into 'good or bad,' differentiation was made between "*faith-seekers and hierarchy or institution*" (Harry) or structure of the institution and the

people within. Participants remained mindful of not allowing the institution's sometimes negative collective stance overshadow the good work being carried out by individuals.

> *You have to make a difference between the institution, the structures of the church, and the individuals who embody that. There are many, many people in the church who fight and struggle for the rights of gay and lesbian people to be married.* (Grace)

Choosing an integrative perspective that distinguished people from the institution bolstered participants' hope for the future.

Reframing

Some participants challenged conventional connotations, especially when they unjustly problematised people, reframing them in ways that shifted their meanings to more accurately align with their ideology. During the interview, Grace challenged my use of the term 'the issue' when talking about same-sex marriage within the context of the church:

> *I don't want to keep talking about 'the issue' because for me its problematising rather than normalising, and I'd rather get on with the business of normalising gay, lesbian relationships. That's where the marriage issue becomes a crunch point for me. As I said marriage is not such an issue for me, but it becomes an issue when people are excluded from it. It's exclusivity and homophobia that are the abominations, not homosexuality.*

Aware of the history of negativity in the church toward homosexuality, some participants chose to value their relationship with lesbian and gay people *because* of the difference: "*people who are out of my experience, who've always been totally outside of my experience, I just take it as a gift*" (Arthur). For Emily, having a special needs child was "*one of those amazing little timely God-gift or interventions*" in that it helped her make sense of, and find value in, her enduring struggle with her institution over her support of same-sex marriage:

> *It's [having a special needs child] a difficulty or challenge I would have never chosen for myself. Once I found myself in the thick of it suddenly my eyes were open to what amazing gift it was and how it wasn't actually a problem. It was just an incredible aspect of being human and having a child. All of those things are this huge risk but also this huge gift of opening you up.*

Degrees of speaking out and participating.

In addition to holding a space for everyone within the institution, participants reported degrees of speaking out and/or participating, as explained through the concepts of

advocating for change and supporting gay people at institutional, parish, and wider community level.

Advocating for change

Irrespective of their preferred role, participants challenged the church's traditional ideology and unfair treatment of lesbian and gay people, and kept up-to-date on current institutional policies, holding the church to account and calling the church out over injustices. Grace purported, "*I stay and speak to it. Name it. Don't try to excuse it.*" Advocating for change involved a number of strategies.

Influencing policy reforms

Working at decision-making level within the institution, with the intention of influencing policy reforms, was the goal of some participants. "*My main focus is in advocacy, trying to be an alternative voice within our denomination as it makes its decisions, as it forges its way ahead around these particular issues*" (Daniel). As marriage equality first gained momentum, Arthur, despite opposition, raised the issue of same-sex marriage in a national meeting challenging hierarchy to address and not ignore the matter:

> *There was a lot of people that were nervous about it being raised. But I brought the motion, and it was a good debate, a good airing and has set the scene for subsequent change that is now coming in the (denomination) church.*

Rachel had spoken out at national assembly against the church's decision to reject same-sex marriage, having her dissent noted and reasons recorded. On another occasion, in her neutral role as chaplain, Rachel privately challenged a minister who had been saying during an assembly that lesbian and gay people where an abomination: "*I went up to him in the corridor and said, knowing that gay and lesbians are in the room, can you refrain from using that language.*" Known for his capacity for articulating logically, George often assumed the role of public spokesperson.

> *A number of times there were a lot of people who supported the perspective. But I was the one who stood on the floor and pushed it because I think I could put the reasons together, not just the gut feelings that other people had, and make an argument.*

In advocating for change, participants understood that, "*it is not one person who carries any issue all the way through … there's a number of people who need to, as a movement builds momentum*" (Jessica). While some advocated at General Assemblies and Synods, others saw their role as exerting pressure from the outside: "*I can stand*

outside and keep pressure on whilst supporting others who are in the negotiations. So, we strategically work that way" (Jessica). When a religious institution overseas took a courageous decision in support of same-sex marriage, George called for a show of support by calling on the national leadership "*to state our churches solidarity with the U.S. and not simply stay silent and hide.*"

Other participants were, at times, less confident about advocating at institutional level or chose not to. Harry recounted an earlier occasion where he had felt vulnerable about speaking out because of being gay: "*I wasn't in this space... having courage to stand up.*" Instead of challenging institutional ideology directly, Philip, during his training, used the words "*some scholars say...*" to distance himself and his personal views. As his supportive views and confidence developed he spoke out more; for example, pressing hierarchy to incorporate speakers at institutional meetings that were both aligned with traditional thinking and representative of a range of different views on issues of sexual orientation and same-sex marriage.

Sharon had refrained from attending an inter-denominational meeting at her church where a conservative leader known for his opposition to same-sex marriage was a guest speaker. While questioning her response as cowardice, she simultaneously hoped her absence would be interpreted as a protest. Once a vocal advocate within her institution, Grace, no longer wished to be drawn into "*playing their political games;*" while Shane, whose institution decided not to affirm his ministry because he was gay, chose to: "*just get on with ministry without any kind of reference to it. I don't go on national committees anymore because they want me to go away.*"

Saying 'no'

In some instances, participants refused to speak or act in ways their institution expected. Philip refused to sign his institution's petition against the proposed Homosexual Law Reform Bill because he was ambivalent. Similarly, Ann and Ethan chose not to go knocking door-to-door gathering signatures as expected. During his ordination, Harry challenged his Bishop over the word 'obey' which he viewed as controlling and oppressive terminology. Others refused to ask people, presumed lesbian and gay, about their sexual orientation for clarification, as with Grace when recruiting ordinands for training:

> *I said to the bishop at the time I'm not asking that question. I don't ask the question of people we suppose are straight. I don't ask them to declare their*

*sexuality and the nature of their relationships to me and I'm not going to do
that to people who you think are gay or lesbian. So, we got past that.*

To those who did volunteer this information during the interview process, Grace felt
obliged to make the institution's stance on homosexuality explicit: "*I would say if
you're going to pursue your desire to enter into ministry training and offer yourself for
ordination then you need to be aware....*"

Calling the institution out

Another aspect of advocating for change involved exposing institutional injustices. Such
actions that challenged the institution or hierarchy took courage. Maria asserted: "*I
won't keep my mouth shut when I think that [a] minister is being extremely whacky in
his theology.*" From an institutional perspective, George recalled "*we tried to push it out
of the closet in to the public view about what the church was actually doing.*"

Often caught in the middle, participants shifted responsibility to decision-makers,
holding them accountable for their actions that adversely affected their lesbian and gay
congregants. Grace was part of a leadership team with a progressive parish that invited
hierarchy to explain their decisions to the parish's governing group about not approving
the blessing of same-sex marriages: "*The Bishops have been invited to come and talk
about the decision … they've agreed to come.*"

Publicising and education

Advertising and publicity were reported as other ways participants advocated for same-
sex marriage. To counteract negative media about some religious institutions' reactions
to the proposed Homosexual Law Reform in Aotearoa New Zealand, Maria, as a young
minister, stated: "*I paid some money to have my name on a full-page advertisement in
the daily newspapers. At the time, it was a brave and controversial step.*" Elizabeth
added her signature, along with another 90 clergy, to "*an open letter to the senate
affirming the rights of LGBTIQ+ community to marry. Some folk in my parish got hold
of that and promptly left. So, you know, it has a cost to do that.*" Some participants
reported erecting controversial billboards outside their churches to attract attention.
Being affiliated with progressive parishes gave some individuals licence to speak out
publicly more confidently:

> *Because we're kind of one of the flagship churches and people know our
> position and we're very strong on it, in a sense that gives me permission to*

speak very strongly. So, after our last (national meeting) I did a lot of media interviews, called the church out, said I was ashamed of the church. (Jessica)

Other participants, in order to protect hierarchy, were reluctant to use publicity as a platform for advocating their views: "*If I made a statement to the media about my support for marriage equality, that puts the archbishop in a difficult place*" (Michael). As a result, they chose alternative strategies, for example, education. Maria revealed, "*we had an educational process and shared information*" about same-sex marriage. New immigrants from conservative countries like Africa and Asia—clergy and congregants—were educated on a variety of human rights issues including women's rights, biculturalism, and LGBTIQ+ rights. "*Certainly, it's something we struggle a bit with, new immigrant clergy who have to get up to speed with a whole lot of things ... so, that can be an issue*" (Jessica). Participants were sometimes required to "*challenge the behaviour*" of newcomers "*and help people to see things differently, hopefully, or decide that we're not the place for them and they go and worship somewhere else. But then it's their decision, not ours*" (Jessica).

Supporting lesbian and gay people

Conducting same-sex weddings

In addition to advocating for institutional change, participants looked at ways they could support lesbian and gay people within their institutions, parishes, and wider communities. Some made themselves available to conduct same-sex weddings. Shane stated:

> *We are relational. We live in relationship and if relationships become important it's important that something dignifying and sacred is made available to people. And I've probably not quite articulated that like that before. But I think probably that's been informing a lot of why I've chosen to do what I've done and what I've ended saying to people.*

Most chose to be discreet out of respect for their institution and to protect and offer dignity and privacy to those taking their vows. Rachel reported of a recent event, "*I thought we should be discreet, which is not their [congregation's] style. In the past they have done very 'out there' press statements.*" However, being discreet was also a cause for some regret:

> *... [it] would be good to say 'yay, we've done a same-sex marriage' and for other couples to hear that and know they can come and have theirs here as a result of the publicity. But I didn't think it was safe ... also respectful not to go 'nah, nah' look what we've done.* (Rachel)

With few liturgical resources to draw from when constructing services for same-sex weddings, participants were often required to devise appropriate liturgy themselves.

> *It was pretty much like a regular service really. We looked at different resources from churches around the world and we did a mixture of services from Canada and our own marriage service. We wrote our own liturgy really to make it seem appropriate for them. Yeah, it was lovely.* (Jessica)

Questioning the government's right to regulate any couple's loving relationship, Michael, conducted a same-sex ceremony 20 years ago. While acknowledging the service would not be valid in the eyes of the church, he believed his participation brought a certain credibility that made "*the ceremony right for [the couple], family and friends and yeah, it was wonderful*" (Michael).

Following churches in Europe, some participants separated the legal declaration of a marriage from the church service. By not solemnising the same-sex marriage participants "*could still offer all of the spiritual and ceremonial things to people, providing they registered their marriage first with the state at a registry office*" (Shane). Another compromise was participants relinquishing their ministerial marriage licence in favour of transferring to the civil celebrants' register and offering to officiate at same-sex weddings outside of church property. One participant, Ben, decided to reverse his decision and have his minister's marriage license reinstated because he felt not being able to offer and conduct marriages as a minister of religion was a betrayal to himself and others. He intended to continue conducting same-sex marriages despite this going against institutional regulations.

Emily endured extreme provocation and harassment from her institution over her supportive views of same-sex marriage. While personally, she felt a possible compromise might be to not conduct any weddings at their church, she knew that a lot of people in her progressive congregation would feel that that was unacceptable. So, to be fair to all couples looking to get married, homosexual and heterosexual, she placed a temporary moratorium on all weddings in the church while dialogue with her institution took place:

> *At the moment our church is not conducting weddings. I think we've said for six months we won't have any weddings. That's gay or straight. Because we want to do the right thing and have some discussions with the national leaders… Either we'll all get married in the church or none of us will get married in the church kind of thing.* (Emily)

Anticipating the future, Emily supposed that after the six months *"we'll reassess our situation. At some point someone in our church, or close to our church, a gay person or gay couple is going to want to get married and I would think that we'll go for it."* Compromising was a strategy to be seen to be doing the right thing to keep dialogue open. They were viewed as *"a means to an end ... those kinds of compromises that I don't feel any loss of integrity over"* (Maria). Jessica and Rachel allowed clergy from other denominations to take weddings in their church building, which Jessica stated:

> *is not really technically the denomination's rule ... the denomination's rule is that at least one of the couple has to be baptised ... and we ignore that rule ... because it's part of our being open and hospitable*.

Rachel explained that she requests any outside minister using their church for heterosexual weddings that they ensure nothing in the ceremony refers to marriage being only between a man and a woman: *"it's just to check ... that we have quality control ... that it's not contradicting our general stance for which we're known."* Most participants conforming to institutional rules by not marrying same-sex couples still reported attending weddings of same-sex couples they knew to show their support, with some participating—saying a prayer or reading a bible passage—if asked.

Standing alongside lesbian and gay people

In addition to the above strategies, participants advocated for lesbian and gay colleagues and congregants in other ways, including supporting gay colleagues through disciplinary hearings within the institution because of their sexual orientation: *"I've had personal experience of standing beside somebody who was going through a horrible discriminatory situation"* (Ann). Emily supported a gay congregant at a national meeting asked to make a plea as to why he believed the institution should allow same-sex marriage amidst harsh opposition: *"I was there, we were sitting with Robert and we just couldn't have supported him more, or been more on board, or have our hearts more open to him."* A same-sex couple from Rachel's congregation was planning on moving to a new city. Taking the initiative, Rachel emailed the denominational minister where they were going asking, what could she tell them about coming to his church? *"I said they've recently married and they're a much-loved part of our congregation and I don't want them to come to a bad situation for either you or for them"* (Rachel). Her proactive approach to help find them a new spiritual home was rewarded with a friendly letter back from the minister saying, *"anyone was welcome, and they were welcome too. So, they went there"* (Rachel).

Participating beyond parish borders

Participants reported an array of strategies that required involvement outside the confines of their own parish or institution. For some, this was volunteering on a preaching roster for lesbian and gay congregations that were, because of not being sanctioned by their institution, not assigned their own minister. Arthur recalled this bold move early on in his career: "*I was invited to be on the preaching roster of the community church back in mid 80s. So, shortly after I was ordained ... I was a very young priest.*" Similarly, Maria became involved in 'Christians for Civil Unions.' Others found opportunities to be a supportive voice through accepting speaking engagements at religious conferences, universities during diversity week, and Pride events. In the run up to the Australian national postal vote on marriage equality, Michael participated in a panel topic of same-sex marriage at a youth camp:

> *The other three people on the panel were very clear on the fact that the bible says they should vote no and I presented an alternative opinion. Afterwards, one of the leaders came up and thanked me profusely because some of the young people in her group had been quite distressed by those other three answer*s. (Michael)

Participating at such events provided these individuals with opportunities of saying "*there is actually another voice, and finding ways of having that voice*" (Michael).

Participants reported working on building, and in some cases restoring, relationships with the LGBTIQ+ community. On hearing criticism from certain external agencies about their rehabilitative approach with lesbian and gay addicts, Philip responded by inviting LGBTIQ+ representatives from these agencies to come and talk to his staff about the particular issues facing lesbian and gay addicts. Differentiating his and others' views from the institutional stance he was able to dismantle some of the negative perceptions and restore conflictual relationships which resulted in greater understanding and respect by both parties.

Some participants, like Rachel, with evangelical backgrounds, had "*a greater understanding about how evangelicals think and what's important to them.*" Using this understanding and her connections, she reached out to build stronger relationships with ministers from these churches: "*I've quite deliberately been making sure I have friendly relationships with some of the key evangelical guys who are on the other side of the debate. And some of them are showing their colours of being a little undecided now*" (Rachel).

Putting pen to paper

Some participants advocated for lesbian and gay people through writing books, blogs, discussion papers, and church articles/newsletters. Philip wrote to the hierarchy expressing his view that they were wrong in their anti-gay stance in the lead-up to the Homosexual Law Reform and, later, scripted a discussion paper for the institution on how the church should treat people from the LGBTIQ+ community. This paper led to a national survey investigating church members' attitudes toward homosexuality and lesbian and gay relationships. Seeing a headline in her local newspaper 'Local clergy opposed to civil unions,' Jessica responded by saying, "*you're not talking for me!*" and penned a piece about her support of civil unions for her congregation. James volunteered to be interviewed for articles about LGBTIQ+ issues written by his institution, as well as have representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community tell their stories, which "*changed the tone of the reporting*" (James). Knowing how lonely it can be at times in the fight for gay rights in the church, Arthur took to sending notes of encouragement whenever he saw someone taking a risk or being heavily criticised by their institution for going out on a limb:

> *You get masses of notes that say, 'What the??,' 'Explain yourself!' and the last thing you've got energy for at that point is to explain yourself. And then you get other notes from people, you know some sort of prominent person you've hardly heard of just saying 'You and I are on the same page.' And one note like that you feel like a million bucks.*

Participants' advocating for change, through adopting the strategies delineated, took immense courage. This courage came from their personal convictions and taking inspiration from others' journeys. Emily reflected, "*Its pulled-on resources of myself and of God and it has taken a lot of courage.*" Having witnessed a gay congregant opening up and sharing some of his own story in front of a hostile national leadership panel debating same-sex marriage, Emily added:

> *For him to front up and say what he said and be who he was just takes a level of courage and honesty that I think is phenomenal. It's got to be inner courage that does it. I don't think conducting same-sex weddings is anywhere like the kind of fronting up that Tom has had to do in his time and situation but it's sort of taught me a bit about it… Yes, I think it's required a lot of courage. Yeah, it has.*

This section has explained the wide range of strategies employed and actions participants enacted; holding a space and degrees of speaking out and participating in advocating for change within the church. Analysis revealed that their focus on people

and valuing relationship contributed to their choice of strategies and, at times, led participants to shifting roles depending on the context and situation.

Shifting roles

Participants identified with a preferred role; outward advocate/provocateur or quiet advocate/discreet facilitator. However, as they encountered new situations, requiring them to reflect and decide an appropriate response, they shifted roles depending on the people and relationships involved. Grace explained:

> *If I was in a pastoral situation with someone who was adamantly opposed ... if it was a robust conversation, then I would continue to press. If it was not a robust person ... if it was someone, for example, who was dying. Then I may not press it. I wouldn't act if it meant that other people were going to be at risk by my actions. I would weigh that up very carefully in terms of is there enough positive outcome for this or do we have to give it a different consideration.*

This shift in roles was not restricted to working pastorally with parishioners but extended to their interactions with hierarchy, colleagues, LGBTIQ+, and wider communities. Participants' convictions, risks to self and others, and anticipated consequence of their actions were weighed up in conjunction with whichever stakeholders were involved in a given situation or context.

Sharon, an outward advocate of same-sex marriage, illustrated this shift when she reported taking a more facilitatory role in a conversation she had with two elderly women from her congregation who had been invited to a gay couple's wedding. Uncertain about whether to attend, they asked Sharon what she thought they should do. Realising that for these two congregants same-sex marriage was a concept they were struggling with, she refrained from offering advice and sensitively encouraged and supported them in coming to their own conclusions over time. This meant helping them "*identify their own questions ... and search for the answers, whatever those answers might be for them*" (Sharon). George, another strong advocate of same-sex marriage and self-identified provocateur within the institutional setting, refrained from talking about his views at his regular humanitarian business meetings "*unless it comes up*" because their focus as a group was on non-political and non-religious issues. Seniority of position and respect for institutional unity also influenced some participants to shift roles. As a parish priest, Michael had felt freer to be more vocal and visible in advocating same-sex marriage. Moving into a more senior role, he felt "*more*

constrained than ever before, I feel I can't go out on a limb and wave the flag" and instead found ways of "*quietly getting on with doing my thing*" (Michael).

The choice of strategies and actions participants adopted as they went about their daily clerical roles evoked a range of different reactions from those around them.

Consequences

The strategies and actions participants employed produced diverse responses, positive and negative, from within the institution, hierarchy, congregants, and wider community. Referring to her institution, Maria stated: "*There was a mixture in the parish; some congregations were fully supportive and enthusiastic, and others were not. The congregation was fairly divided.*" Referring to the public's response, Michael explained:

> *Generally, in the wider community there's two responses. One is that it's so good to hear the church saying something positive about this stuff. The other is from I guess people who have had bad experience of the church in the past who, you know, react angrily to, to anything that comes from the church whether it's positive or negative.*

Support and encouragement

Some participants reported that, despite their views being at odds with that of their institution, they received degrees of supported ranging from tolerance to encouragement from within their denomination and wider community.

> *The community I'm part of is overtly supportive. I don't think there is anybody who is an on-going part of that community who would be otherwise. The people that I associate with that are a part of church would be the same.* (Arthur)

Institutional support made participants feel respected, appreciated, and valued: "*To my surprise I still find myself, at times, given a degree of respect that amazes me really*" (Maria). Reasons for hierarchical support appeared to vary. Some perceived hierarchy shared their views on same-sex marriage, "*leadership actually supports same-sex marriage personally*" (Arthur) or supported individuals because they recognised certain personal attributes, "*the church had affirmed me early on because I was reasonably bright, they saw me as a potential leader*" (George). Others felt appreciated for their international work outside the institution or, in the case of Harry, supported out of respect for what his whakapapa[30] had contributed historically to the institution: "*I think*

---

[30] Ancestors, lineage, genealogy.

the Bishop and the church's mutual respect to me and my whakapapa, of my grandparents and great grandparents, who made huge contributions to the church. If I didn't have that connection I'd probably be chucked out." Shifting opinions was also a contributor making it harder for hierarchy to take an authoritarian approach: "*A lot of people in the church, the older ones and some of the younger ones, actually see this as a non-issue*" (Arthur).

While not affirmed by the upper echelons within the institution, Shane felt supported by peers and other denominational leaders. At a ministerial committee meeting Shane attended, they talked about the church and "*the froth at the mouth of the fundamentalists and so on.*" Shane continued:

> *… And I remember somebody saying 'oh, they can't do any damage.' And I made the observation, well I'm a bit more vulnerable to that damage than you are. And Martin from the other side of the room said, Shane everyone in this room has your back. And people nodded and, and I found myself thinking oh I'm surrounded by straight people who are really on my side.*

Through a rigorous selection process, congregational denominations seek to match a minister with his or her congregation. While not guaranteeing everyone would have the same ideas on everything, often participants found that within their parish their congregants became their strongest supporters. "*I'm so lucky to be in a situation where my own feelings are congruent with my church's,*" exclaimed Emily. As an out gay man, Shane explained that the gay flag in his church was not put there by him but by straight people in his church with a genuine desire to make progress on gay issues within a conservative denomination. "*It's great. I wouldn't actually want to work in any community that wasn't like that. And, and we've got one here and it's precious and terribly rare!*" (Shane). Participants also reported received positive feedback from sermons that offered an alternative voice to traditional demonising of lesbian and gay people and their relationships.

> *Over my 20 years in churches, every time I've talked about sexuality stuff, and more recently you know alluded to marriage things in sermons, there's someone afterwards who talks about you know their son, daughter, nephew, niece or their grandchild and they've waited 20, 30, 40, 50 years to hear someone from the church say actually that person they love is actually okay. You know they're not going to hell.* (Michael)

Apart from congregants, participants found strength through their leadership teams in their parishes: "*I simply advised at the leaders meeting here that I wanted to apply to be a civil union celebrant. And I had their full support*" (Maria). Support was felt by

lesbian and gay people inside and outside the parish for the courageous stance often taken by participants, sometimes, in the face of great opposition and risk. "*Gay people in particular, are incredibly supportive of me. And sometimes quite weird and wonderful people*" (Arthur). Those conducting same-sex weddings received outer words of gratitude but also an inner sense that confirmed what they were doing was right. Officiating at her first same sex marriage, Emily reported a feeling welling up from within, "*It struck! … The joy of the moment was palpable, and it just seemed very human and important that these were human beings who were happy, and it needed to be celebrated. It was lovely.*" Participating at a Pride event, Philip recalled being "*hugged hard*" by a lesbian who shared with him how, up until recently, she had been filled with anger and fear at the church because of their scathing protests in opposition to the Homosexual Law Reform: "*there was this real warmth around it*" (Philip).

Arthur was well known in his community for his supportive views and felt a real sense of protection from members of the public. He described being accosted by a man outside his church one day when suddenly, "*these female parking wardens came close to me in a protective sort of way and they just stood there in their uniforms, which has a power of repelling the outsider.*" This is what happens "*when you put your neck out. There is absolutely a lot of support there. It's not like you're alone*" (Arthur). Similarly, Jessica felt a great deal of support from her congregation and community. After making a media statement after the general synod:

> *I got messages from around the world, from colleagues here, and just general random people on my phone saying, 'well done' and 'hang in there.' So, people take the time to do that, and that's pretty amazing and that makes me feel it's worthwhile.* (Jessica)

While there was clear evidence of support and encouragement for some participants, others reported reactions that were less predictable.

Inconsistencies and contradictions from hierarchy

There were reports by some participants of inconsistencies and contradictions from hierarchy over their actions regarding same-sex marriage, such as superiors clandestinely supporting participants but publicly siding with the institution's stance: "*Whilst most of the bishops probably wouldn't openly support us because it makes life politically too difficult in the wider church for them to do so, they would privately*" (Elizabeth). Whereas some appeared to value this support irrespectively, sympathising with hierarchy's behaviour and attributing it to them being "*hamstrung;*" others felt

frustrated, accusing their superiors of "*game-playing*" because "*at a personal level think differently from the manner in which they express themselves as office holders within the institution*" (Grace). Such discrepancies led many to feel angry, discouraged, betrayed and, at times, abandoned when left alone in the firing line of the opponents' attacks. One gay clergyman, known to be in long-term relationship and married through the civil court, was covertly supported by his superiors but unable to rely on any consistent overt support. This awkward position left him feeling he was "*living in this limbo land*" (Thomas). Hierarchical incongruence evoked criticism by many participants.

> *I only wish that the structures of the church would stand behind you wholeheartedly in your responsibilities and in your desire to be honest and compassionate in your pastoral dealings with everybody. And I find it very difficult… sad.* (Grace)

The lack of hierarchical transparency did little to counteract society's perception of the church's collective voice against same-sex marriage. Being automatically subsumed under the church's official stance was immensely difficult for many participants, particularly for those wearing the priest's collar out in public. "*The thing I find difficult in the church is the collective voice,*" stressed Daniel. These sentiments were echoed and elaborated on by Michael:

> *The thing that I find hardest is that perception from outside the church where we see yet another bishop in the media encouraging people to vote no, people then do equate you, they put us all in the same thing, and you walk down the street looking like a priest, there'll be people who yell things from cars or whatever and because we are all tarred with the same brush.*

Participants responded to these inconsistencies through ministering individually to people pastorally: "*it's then the importance of those one-on-one relationships to say actually you know we're not all like that. And, finding opportunities to tell a different story*" (Daniel).

Confrontation

Most participants experienced some degree of confrontation because of their supportive views of same-sex marriage from within the institution—hierarchy, colleagues, congregants—and/or wider Christian community. Whilst being able to cope with people having different views, participants struggled when people were militant and aggressive in their opposition to same-sex marriage. "*There's a lot of hatred, a lot of anger, a lot of fear, so people aren't wanting the conversation, they're just wanting the fight*" (Daniel).

Confrontation included participants being criticised or reprimanded by hierarchy for being impatient and "*too pushy*" (Arthur) in their attempts to bring about change. Hierarchical 'interventions' had the aim of setting participants straight and calling them back into faithfulness, "*not*," as Daniel explained, with any genuine interest that asked, "*tell us more about how you've come to view this?*" For others, confrontation came in the form of having their duties curtailed. Shane was asked to step down from the parish review team amidst complaints by one parish that did not want him visiting because of his being gay and his supportive views of same-sex marriage. Acquiescing, he stood down. "*Well, what's the point in insisting on a situation where they're just going to feel uncomfortable and make it difficult for me?*" (Shane). Almost all participants reported receiving "*hate mail*" (Arthur), "*atrocious letters*" (Daniel) and "*nasty voice messages from homophobic people*" (Jessica). People left the church in protest and legal action was threatened. Receiving a deluge of vicious responses from the public could more easily be attributed to the 'looney fringe,' but when that vitriol came from within their denomination, it was very painful. Michael elaborated:

> *[I've] received over the years plenty of really awful emails from Christians who are convinced … who tell me what's going to happen to me you know in the fires of hell after I die because of my outrageous views on these things. Just yesterday one of my priests flicked through an email she'd received from someone and she said she hadn't even publicly said anything about marriage equality, but you know just this awful stuff saying she was a poof-loving priestess who was destroying the church. So, there is that sort of really strong ugly reaction from parts of the church.*

Some participants reported protests outside their churches with profanities being shouted, chalk-writing over the pavements, and people holding up banners. Daniel stated: "*It was quite distressing for people coming into church that day because [the protesters] were loud and aggressive.*" Trying to talk to protesters just infuriated them more, so participants resorted to informing the Police and continuing with their services. Arthur received death threats because of his controversial approach to social justice issues including gay rights: "*the gay love thing is part of the tag they want to sort of bash me with.*"

A few individuals who preferred keeping their heads down and quietly getting on with what they believed right, felt forced by their institution to defend their supportive positions publicly.

> *So, the same-sex marriage thing has put me in a position because of how other people have chosen to react to the issue and our church's decision to support*

and host same-sex marriages. It's put me in a position of standing up in the limelight. (Emily)

As a pastor within a congregational denomination, Emily was horrified and disappointed at the authoritarian way her national leaders tried to enforce "*whatever top-down ruling they could possibly manage to squeeze together in order to control a church like ours.*" The vitriolic attacks, where participants' views had "*become synonymous with sin and lack of holiness*" (Emily) and they were vilified and "*perceived as the devil*" (George), could not be predicted and were unprecedented.

> *I didn't realise just how vicious people would be. And I'm probably more used to the people thinking that I'm just a kooky liberal rather than an evil sinner. I felt this 'villainisation' of who I was and what I believed, and what my church supported. I've certainly never on mass felt the judgement of people to this extent.* (Emily)

Because of their actions, some participants underwent disciplinary hearings and were issued warnings of punishment such as being removed from the denomination's marriage list if they continued to advocate and/or act outside doctrinal parameters. For Emily, this threat came with the ominous clause 'in the first instance,' "*and no one knows what the next instance will be… to try and kick us out the church or the denomination, to try discredit the minister in every way? We just don't know.*"

Confrontation for some participants felt like they were constantly fire-fighting and operating in survival mode. The severity and weight of this perpetual tension was highlighted in Emily's fears: "*it just might crush me at some point. I just might not be able to handle the loneliness, the difficulty, the feeling people are 'villainising' me, and just been kind of pecked away at.*" For some gay clergy, the struggle did get too much. Shane, spoke of a friend who had recently left to go overseas:

> *He just wanted to be somewhere where the issue was sorted, to be in a church where he didn't have to pretend he was anything other than who he was and that he could get married if he wanted. So, for him, the fight had been enough.*

Participants' experience of exclusion at times paralleled the experiences of lesbian and gay people in some religious institutions. While not the case for everyone, feelings of alienation and being side-lined were strongly prevalent in the data. Harry reported his experience as sitting on the outside: "*I sit in the wilderness*" because "*I voice things that are not traditional.*" For Rachel, exclusion took the subtler form of evasion: "*I don't get asked to talk at things that maybe others maybe might. I haven't been yelled at. It's*

been more polite than that, it's been more avoidance." Whereas Daniel's experience was that of being discredited:

> *What I found distressing, I've been part of this community for a long, long time. I am a known quantity. I've played a significant role in our denomination. I've proved my metal as a pastor and a theology teacher and, this issue [same-sex marriage] discounted all of that.*

Another form of avoidance reported was that of hierarchy being absent. Having tried to engage his superior in discussions about his marriage ending and going into a same-sex relationship, Harry purported: "*My Bishop knew about it, but we didn't speak about it. This is a discussion I have tried to have with my Bishop. He said, 'yes, we will Harry,' but it's never happened.*"

Individuals' preferred role—outward advocate/provocateur or quiet advocate/discreet facilitator—was not found to be a contributor to their feeling ostracised. Jessica, an outward advocate, felt shunned by her institution after speaking out publicly against the church's decision to not support same-sex marriage. Referring to a media interview she gave, Jessica said:

> *I didn't call them, they called me, so I gave an interview and boy did the world turn frosty at that moment with everyone. Everyone was very angry, and no-one talked to me… because I'm airing the dirty laundry out in public. That leaves me very much on the edge with my colleagues and the rest of the church.*

Emily, who preferred to be discreet in her approach, experienced ostracization by the national leadership over her views: "*I've come to realise that this is the nature of these situations; they are just lonely, and no one can protect us from this.*" Loneliness, an outcome of alienation by hierarchy and those within the institution, was reported by many participants as being deeply painful. "*Rather than getting angry, [I] get depressed,*" divulged Emily, "*it's been quite nice actually, just having the chance to talk and reflect. I haven't had that kind of opportunity.*" Daniel illustrated his pain associated with how the institution had treated him because of his stance on same-sex marriage: "*This is my mob, my people. This is my community and yet I sit on the edge of that community very much because of this issue. And that is painful. I now inhabit an edge space in the community of which I belong.*"

Participants' confrontation was not limited to coming from opponents of same-sex marriage. "*The confrontation I've found more difficult,*" Maria disclosed, had been the critique she received from members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Recalling a brave and controversial step she had taken in the fight for gay rights, she reflected:

> *I got a fair amount of flak from some of my gay and lesbian friends for it not going far enough or about not being good enough. I found that more difficult because I'd worked my butt off to get even this far. And I just had to take some deep breaths!"* (Maria)

Incidents like Maria's, left participants feeling undervalued and deflated. Similarly, Rachel recalled some of the congregational pressure—from homosexuals and heterosexuals—during discussions with her progressive parish about conducting same-sex marriages "*there was quite a lot of obligation, a lot less choice here for me than I thought there was.*"

In holding a space, participants often came under immense pressure from above and below and from both sides of the same-sex marriage debate. While the consequences of participants' actions varied in their presentations, a tension pervaded participants' daily lives as they held a view different either to that of the institution or many within it.

Living with tension

In holding a space for all, where, above anything else, faith could flourish, participants often felt 'caught in the crossfire' with an array of reactions, positive and negative, from two polarised groups both pushing for a different outcome. In the words of James:

> *You accept that the LGBTI community will be critical of that in-between position. The church will be critical of that in-between position, but if you feel that that's where you're supposed to be, to build some sort of bridge between these two communities, you live with those tensions and that ambiguity.*

Michael spoke of the friction he felt having seen the downside of people's behaviour in the church whilst simultaneously feeling a strong sense of connection to a body of like-minded believers: "*For my family and historically, and because of my faith, the church is incredibly important to me and I do love it but, but I'm also incredibly aware that it's broken and corrupt and so there's a real tension.*"

In addition to the conflict associated with the inconsistencies, contradictions, and confrontation some participants faced, tension arose from their concern for lesbian and gay people and a church divided.

Concern for lesbian and gay people.

Many participants had lesbian and gay people or gay couples within their parish. Jessica, who chose to follow regulations, battled with the inconsistency of being able to marry any heterosexual couple who walked in off the street; yet, a long-term gay couple

in her congregation could not get married in their own church, "*and that's been really hard for them*" (Jessica). Her tension in this situation was palpable: "*I feel caught between saying why would you stay in this institution that's beating you up and saying well you still need a place to be, to belong. What about God? Please don't leave!*" Jessica echoed the sentiments of others in her predicament when she confessed: "*that's very challenging and very sad when you're talking with someone and having to be part of this system that's saying no to them. That's really hard.*"

Others spoke of their sadness at hearing grown men weep when "*they ring and ask if we do same sex marriages and when they've heard 'yes,' because they've had bad reactions from other churches*" (Rachel). Conducting same-sex weddings, however, was not without its tensions too:

> *We were all a bit nervous about being found out and being exposed and a complaint being made. I did actually say please don't take photographs during the ceremony, but I still posed for photographs and I don't know whether they went up on FaceBook but at least we may have stopped the 'yay, look at the wedding I went to!' which was what I was trying to avoid*. (Rachel)

Whether or not participants chose to marry same-sex couples, they experienced degrees of anger, shame, and sadness over the church's treatment of lesbian and gay people; and frustrations about the church's fixation on sexuality and inability to move past what was clearly a contextual issue, often at the expense of other important issues like poverty, hunger, and loneliness. "*A piece of me is quite angry about people who cannot see the 'rightness' of same-sex marriage, about the inability of people to see what's the obvious, and that the opposition to it has no sensible basis at all*" (George). Others reported embarrassment over the lack of congruency and mixed messages emanating from the church's exclusive beliefs and practices: "*I am ashamed because I think that the church professes one thing on one hand and then behaves differently on the other. I think it can't with any integrity continue to behave that way*" (Grace). In particular, there were expressions of intense anger and deep sadness over the church obstructing people's relationship with God: "*What is man-made gets in the way of what is God-made and has caused us to turn people away. Anger! It gets kind of that intense sometimes when I'm talking about turning people away*" (Shane). A congregant, nearing the end of his life, told Shane of his dilemma about his daughter not wanting to have his funeral in church because of the pain they had caused her. "*And part of your reaction to that is to be sad for the people and part of it is to become bloody angry at the institution for causing it*" (Shane).

A church divided.

Participants expressed degrees of anger at churches' rejection of same-sex marriage; however, they simultaneously voiced deep sadness over the devastating effects the split in opinions had caused. The experience of many participants was that those in the church remaining opposed to same-sex marriage were inflexible and not prepared to be open and engage in genuine dialogue. This led to a feeling of discouragement.

> *The frustration always is that the conservative parts of the church will do their thing regardless, and no matter how accommodating the rest of us are, or not, they'll do their thing. And, so that's the great frustration that we accommodate and accommodate and accommodate to keep them within the tent and yet, as soon as it doesn't suit them, they'll go their own way anyway.* (Michael)

Living with integrity and following their conviction about same-sex marriage came at great cost to some participants because of the hurt their position caused to their fellow Christians who were opposed; yet, who they loved deeply. For Daniel, this was heartbreakingly painful: "*the weight of that is very heavy for me.*"

> *I'm sat there in that meeting and over there was Ariel and Oscar, just salt of the earth, beautiful people. Both very conservative, particularly on this issue. There're very few people in the world I think more highly of, they're the most genuine Christians I know. And I know that my public position on this caused them such pain. Because they love me, we connected through our stories. But here's me standing up at this meeting, parroting a position that they just see as so counter to the bible and the gospel. I could look around the room and see people like that who just loved me but found my position untenable, and I know that I caused them grief. And for me, I felt that grief.* (Daniel)

Daniel's tension became even clearer as he continued his story: "*But at the same time, I'm looking at Tom, my brother in Christ, a beautiful Christian man, deeply committed to the church who is being marginalised.*" Frustration over some opponents' seeming lack of commitment to resolve the contentious issue of same-sex marriage in the church, combined with deep concern for the hurt caused by a church divided, led participants to further reflect on and try to make sense of their opposition's behaviour (explained further in Chapter 8.) in ways that might help them continue holding a space.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the stage of holding a space, a process that saw participants enact their supportive positions in their clerical roles on a day-to-day basis. The method by which individuals initially positioned themselves, through choosing a stance and assuming a preferred role, was outlined. The diverse relationships participants were

required to manage were elucidated and the steps taken to implement a range of strategies, including conditions causing individuals to shift their roles, expounded. Finally, consequences arising from individuals' choice of strategies and actions, highlighting their experience of living with tension, were provided.

Chapter Eight: Revisiting

Introduction

This chapter explains the third stage of the trajectory, revisiting, where participants reflected on the actions and consequences of holding a space. I begin by outlining how participants made sense of the reactions and behaviour of hierarchy and opponents of same-sex marriage. Next, I explain participants' process of re-evaluating their decision to remain in their clerical roles and stay connected with their institution. Finally, participants' choices of continuing or adapting/changing their strategies to successfully navigate forward are delineated.

The central concept of revisiting

Revisiting refers to an open-ended process where participants reflected on, and acted in response to, consequences from the earlier stage of holding a space. While presented in a linear fashion, revisiting, like other stages, was iterative in nature. Interplay existed between the second and third stages of the trajectory—holding a space and revisiting—where the latter fed into, and was influenced by, the former, and vice versa. This leap-frog progression of participants responding to consequences, which in turn generated new consequences, led to further responses and so on, moved individuals forward on their pathway.

Revisiting was a process requiring sustained effort and was motivated, among other things, by participants': capacity to be self-reflexive; valuing of relationship with lesbian and gay people, the institution and those within it from all sides of the same-sex marriage debate; openness to multiple realities; and, above all, commitment to upholding faith. There was no evidence to suggest individuals revisited the first stage of the trajectory, diverging ideologies, or changed their supportive perspectives of same-sex marriage. On the contrary, participants reported that their supportive views became more certain over time.

The purpose of the stage of revisiting is similar to the notion of praxis (from Greek πρᾶξις meaning 'doing'); making a series of decisions, individuals were able to respectfully actualise their chosen ideology through ongoing practical means within the institution. They achieved this by: reflecting on the reactions of hierarchy and those

opposed to same-sex marriage in a way that made sense to them; re-evaluating their own actions by reassessing the decision to stay connected with their institution in view of past consequences and future predictions; navigating a way forward by choosing to either continue or make changes to their strategies (see Figure 12, p. 214).

Reflecting: Making sense of hierarchy and opponents' behaviour

Participants' strategies regarding same-sex marriage during the stage of holding a space evoked a range of reactions—positive and negative—from hierarchy, colleagues, congregants, and the wider community (see Chapter 7). Participants were particularly surprised by the strength and depth of opposition to same-sex marriage from within the church:

> *I think it's really sad that our church, and a lot of other churches, have got bogged down in this issue, and I still don't really understand from those who are opposed why it's such a deal breaker of an issue where people are threatening to leave and split the church. I just can't get my head around that.* (Jessica)

Comparisons were made with earlier debates—feminism, ordination of women, marriage and divorce—where the church, while not wanting to know about it at the time, managed to move past these issues. None, however, seemed to compare to the intensity of hatred and anger evoked by the same-sex marriage issue: "*It would take a room full of psychotherapists to try unravel why suddenly marriage has become like the central thing in Christianity,*" stated Emily. Making sense of opponents' behaviour was important for two reasons. Firstly, increased understanding helped participants to be more empathic toward their opponents, thereby sustaining participants' valued relationship with the church and all those within it. Secondly, interpreting some of the reasoning behind the negative behaviour served to validate participants' perspectives which, in turn, influenced their future actions. Rather than dwelling on differences, individuals chose to focus on similarities such as their joint intentions of loyally upholding the faith and their love of the church and Christian community. Participants remained open to multiple realities and could cope with people having different views about same-sex marriage:

> *I can quite happily relate to people who are very conservative. If I was of a different theological persuasion then I understand why for some people it is so problematic, if you truly believe that God just invented this thing called marriage and gave it to humanity. I totally see why that's different.* (Emily)
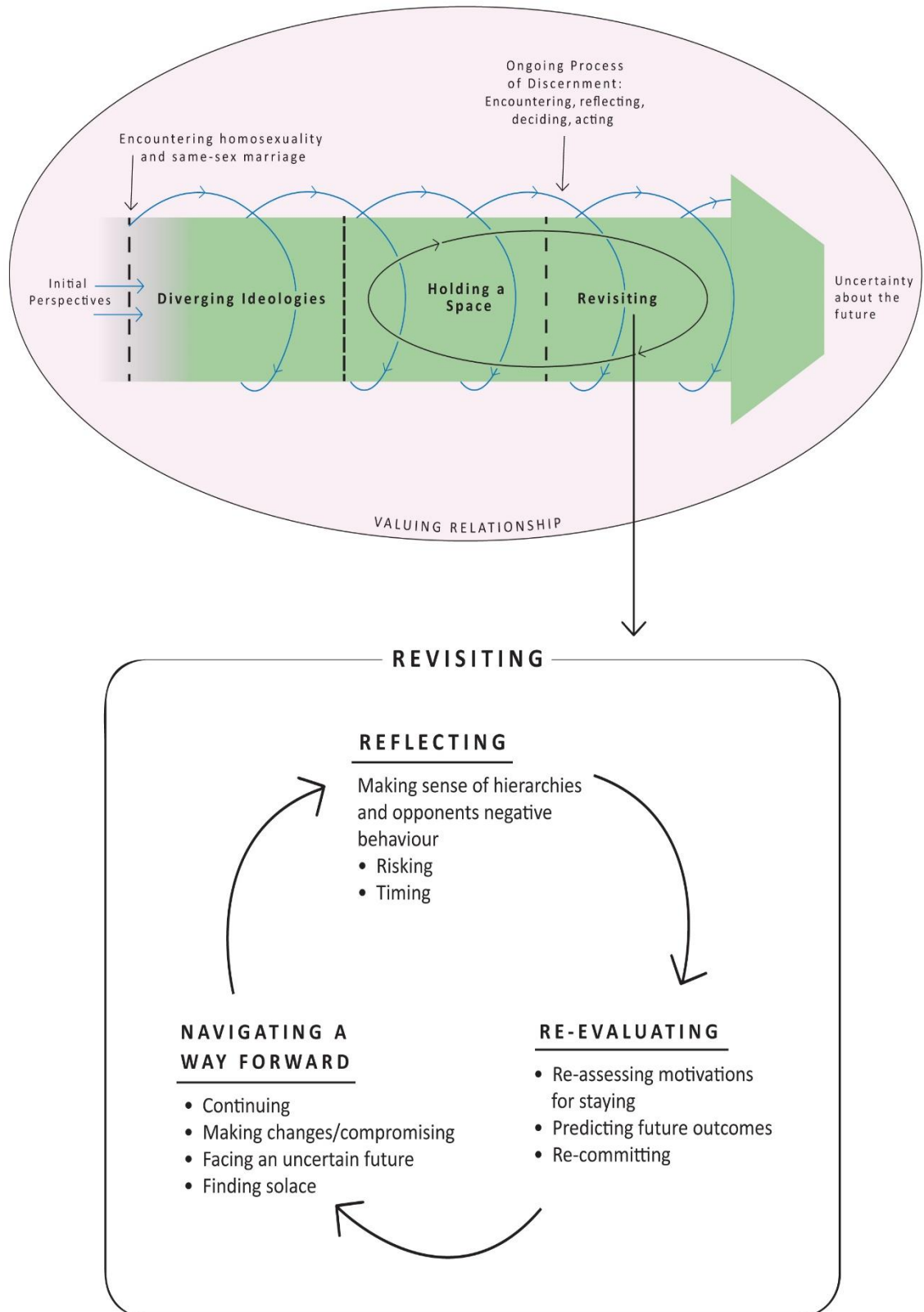
Figure 12: Stage of Revisiting

Participants reported struggling more when opponents were militant and aggressive in their views. Experience of strong opposition led participants to reflect on, and make sense of, these individuals whose actions, at times, were seen to be causing rifts and threatened the life and future of the church. Participants understood this often "*atrocious*" (Daniel) behaviour in terms of risk and timing. Participants identified three categories of risk, which they understood was underpinned by fear: risk to hierarchy and institution, risk to self and belief-system, and risk to society.

Risks to hierarchy and institution.

Participants were conscious of a growing, pervasive culture of control in the church; for example, introducing rules without consultation, thereby preventing clergy from acting in accordance with their conscience. In this instance, some institutions' actions were perceived as a fear by hierarchy of losing power. Such actions "*can sound much more like control of people than following the way; the Christian way*" (Sharon). Other participants perceived hierarchy's refusal to sanction same-sex marriage as politicking, motivated by fear:

> *That's just game playing and a lot of excuses by a wing of the church. If we want to continue to use the love of God, then it means it's for everybody. If you want to start dividing and discerning who's in and out, who's worthy and who's not then you have to do that across a whole range of different categories. What motivates them to do that? What fear lies behind it? If they want to profess a God of love, a God of compassion, a creative God of life and health, then why are they so afraid?* (Grace)

Hierarchy who personally supported same-sex marriage but aligned themselves publicly with the institution's stance were understood to be "*trapped by centuries of tradition*" (Arthur) restricting them from living congruently. Pressured to take a stand, Jessica's superior, who was "*pro-gay marriage*," was "*forced in to a position where he had to defend a position he didn't want to defend but it's the current position [of the institution]*" (Jessica). The risks associated with hierarchy openly showing support of same-sex marriage were seen to be too high. It would mean acknowledging the church had taken some "*wrong turns*" (Philip) and made an error in its interpretation of homosexuality. Some participants expressed frustration with the contradictory actions of hierarchy, purporting, "*most of them know what the right thing to do is. But for various reasons they don't do it*" (Grace). Others were more sympathetic recognising their superiors were ensnared as Elizabeth explained:

> *It's more that the church hierarchy does not feel that it can be supportive, they're a bit hamstrung. They could decide okay we're just going to go this*

> *way. There would be howls and protest no doubt … the possibility of a parting of the ways, but no one actually wants to legislate if you know what I mean.*

Most participants claimed their hierarchy were uncomfortable and in an unenviable position over the issue of same-sex marriage which was made worse by growing political pressure for the church to end its discriminatory practices against lesbian and gay people. Those in power were aware of the turning tide regarding society's acceptance of same-sex marriage and cognisant that some churches were already "*over the hill*" (Arthur) as far as accepting lesbian and gay people and their relationships. However, participants perceived a growing conservatism in some quarters of the church, stemming from the influx of immigrants—mainly from Africa and Asia—which meant more leaders, particularly from global hierarchical institutions, were increasingly working across cultures. Finding standardised regulations acceptable to everybody was becoming increasingly unachievable. As a result, participants sympathised with international leaders whom they appreciated were caught in an impossible bind; but believed such a situation called for localisation.

Hierarchy were seen by participants to prioritise their actions toward maintaining unity to avoid splits or people leaving the church over the issue of same-sex marriage. Michael asserted, "*The bishops by and large don't want to say anything about [same-sex marriage] because there's this obsession with unity. They'd rather stay quiet than risk the unity of the church.*" Jessica highlighted the fears underlying hierarchies' choices and possible consequences of these actions.

> *A bishop's greatest fear is to lose parishes because his or her job is to be bishop to the whole diocese. Something happens to them when they get ordained. They suddenly become people stuck in the middle, and it's an institutional flaw because very few bishops allow themselves to be courageous prophets because they've got to be bishop to both [progressive and conservative parishes]. They try and hold it together, and so they try and move the institution forward on block. So, they get stuck.*

While understanding hierarchies' predicament, some participants voiced disapproval at the costs associated with goals of maintaining unity.

> *On one level I understand it, but I think we also need to come to a point where we say, actually, there are some things that are more important than unity. Maybe there's some stuff about justice and love that's more important.* (Michael)

Some participants were placated by hierarchy and assured: "*Change is coming. Our job is to try to keep everyone on board as change happens. But I just want it to come gently,*

decently, and in order" (Arthur). Viewing this reaction by hierarchy as encouraging, many participants came to a realisation that the only way forward, as has happened with other controversial issues such as slavery and women's rights, was through a transition of small, incremental changes over time.

Risks to self and belief-system.

When reflecting on those within the church, participants were cognisant that "*some people need the structures to live by*" (Grace). Conversely, structures, such as the church, relied on its members to adhere to its ideological parameters to exist. Having those structures challenged could be threatening to individuals.

> *They'd been brought up believing that this is God's way and it's beautiful and lovely and true and fragile. And along comes this community telling us that there are other ways and that they're also true and beautiful and lovely and good … What do we do with these people?* (Shane)

Hierarchies' instinctive reactions to push back and defend were seen as the result of such challenges to structures or belief-systems. Some participants suggested confusion arises when individuals failed to differentiate between their personal views and those of the institution: Ethan remembered a colleague saying, "'*I don't know who I am if I'm not the pastor,*' and I thought, heaven help! *That's a very fragile position to be in … Born a man and dying a pastor!*" Similarly, Harry referred to some colleagues, saying, "*Once they put on the collar, they become the collar.*" These individuals, participants felt, struggled to think independently and, at times, lacked the courage to follow personal conviction: "*their existence is talking about the Word but not feeling it or not relating to a lot of it*" (Harry).

Participants recognised that thinking independently heralded degrees of risk for some colleagues such as lack of connection and possible conflict resulting from criticism, personal attack, retribution, punishment, alienation, and possible loss of position and career prospects. For many Christians, whose identity is entwined with their beliefs, taking a critical approach toward often taken-for-granted societal structures/systems such as institutional religion, patriarchy, marriage, sexuality, was understood to be terrifying. Participants were mindful the stigma associated with questioning traditional interpretations leading to one's faithfulness being called into question. Questioning an aspect of one's belief, such as same-sex marriage, might raise fears it could lead to the questioning of everything and destabilise their entire belief-system. Potential spiritual annihilation was considered too overwhelming by many. George, who fervently

believed that deconstructing and reconstructing all suppositions was a necessity, disclosed, "*I know a lot of people who find that challenging because their worlds don't make sense unless they've got them framed like rocks they can hang on to. I can understand it intellectually, but I can't go there.*"

Biblical hermeneutics, in particular how one is educated to read and interpret the bible, was identified as an important contributor to influencing opponents' views on same-sex marriage and subsequent actions. Michael emphasised, "*Certainly, the conservative[s] would be much more likely to have that clear literal understanding of the scriptures and to say there's a plain meaning to every text.*" Participants viewed opponents' traditional understandings of the 'clobber passages' as outdated and inaccurate sustained through disregard of latest biblical insights. Another stumbling block was perceived to stem from the church's obsession with, and inability to move past, the issue of sexuality. As Grace reported, "*The Christian church has happily picked and chosen its way through the biblical material, and it will accept some things and disregard others. So, I can't see why it chooses to fixate on that except its own-locked in mind.*" The elevation of homosexuality to a 'first order' sin by some religious institutions made it even more difficult to accept for some. Michael explained:

> *The real challenge for the conservative evangelicals, the issues around sexuality is what they would call the first order issue. It affects eternal salvation and so, for them, what people do with their genitals affects whether you go to heaven or not. That's where it sits in their understanding of things. And so, it's very hard then to have a conversation when they start from that place.*

A few participants blamed a lingering patriarchal system in society for some opponents' perspectives, suggesting opposition to homosexuality or same-sex relationships was primarily misogyny. Stemming from dualisms that historically viewed men as good and woman as bad meant that "*the uncomfortable thing for heterosexual men*" with gay couples, especially two men, "*is that he doesn't know which man is being the woman in the relationship*" (Rachel). Homophobia, evident in some opponents, was at times considered as stemming from individuals' own sexuality being threatened:

> *Although it's not always the case, sometimes I see those who transfer their feelings out upon gay people… I had a fairly strong sense of my own sexuality on the continuum and have never felt my sexuality threatened in any way.* (Arthur)

Risks to society.

Participants speculated that some opponents' strong reactions stemmed from seeing same-sex marriage as the last bastion that needed defending to prevent degradation into total moral decay within society. Commonly, participants heard concerns about same-sex marriage endangering the institution of marriage, leading to the demise of the family unit. Participants understood that allowing marriage between people who are attracted to the same sex would unlikely affect marriages continuing between heterosexual individuals: "*This crazy idea that by allowing gays to marry would somehow threaten my marriage is just kind of like... really?*" (Arthur).

Daniel surmised that some of the fears about decline of societal values, often raised by people of religious faith, primarily reflected the 'what ifs:'

> *It's the fear of change and uncertainty... a genuine fear of the slippery slope. It's inevitably one of the very early questions that is asked: If we allow two men to marry, what will that lead to? What other possibilities will that open up? Can you marry your dog? What are the other six things that will flow from that?*

These fears, Daniel suggested, were less about accepting the current issue of same-sex marriage than they were of being fearful of the future.

> *If the issue is marriage equality and we're talking about two loving, giving human beings of the same sex wanting to enter into a lifelong covenant relationship with each other, if that's the issue we're debating, then let's debate that. Let's not devalue that debate by talking about marrying your dog, because that's just silly. It's either wrong, wrong, wrong, or it's right.*

Timing

Timing was also an important consideration in participants' understanding of opponents' negative reactions. However, views were conflicted. Participants were impatient and frustrated at the church for dragging its heels over acceptance of same-sex marriage. Expressing sadness over a gay couple in her church that have waited years for the institution to change its mind so they can get married, Jessica asserted: "*They magnanimously have, with amazing grace, continued to wait.*" Contemplating how good it will be when the institution changes its mind, Jessica added: "*That's if gay people haven't completely given up on the church by the time we get around to it, which is probably very reasonable.*" Emily elaborated:

> *A lot of us probably feel it's happened so quickly but on the other hand some people would say this is part of a long cultural process. People who have the eyes can see it's actually not just been this enormous abrupt change to*

marriage that's just happened. Things have been changing slowly and steadily over a long time.

Along with feelings of impatience, participants, simultaneously, were sympathetic to the rapid shift in public opinion and subsequent quick escalation of legalising same-sex marriage in many Western countries. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Jessica purported, "*when we passed the civil union bill, no-one expected marriage to be on the table this quickly. And because the church is a slow beast we've been really caught out by that.*" Participants reported that this unprecedented shift put many in a position of having to try and deal with the issue before being given adequate time to process and adjust. The fall-out was evident in Michael's comments: *"[Hierarchy] recently participated in the consecration of a bishop in the United States who's to be a missionary bishop to England and Europe to look after those people who are so distressed with the Scottish church's decision [to support same-sex marriage].*"

Emily, made sense of some opponents' negative behaviour as reactionary, a defence against uncertainty which comes with not having adequate time or information to process what is required safely:

> *Having young children through this process of same-sex marriage has been a bit of a god-send because I've so often had to think about what it's like for young children and how difficult and stressful the world is and how change, when they're not ready for it, not cognitively ready for it, is really inappropriate and unfair to them. And that has given me a bit of compassion for people who I often see as behaving really badly ... because I guess we all grow and develop.*

Not wishing to patronise, Emily was of the opinion that some, given time, can develop and change their perspectives. While this analogy instilled compassion and tolerance toward opponents there was the realisation that, unlike her children, these adult opponents were responsible for their actions.

This process of meaning-making evoked a variety of different responses in participants: compassion for understanding the risks involved; sadness for those they perceived to be in an unnecessary bind due to traditional biblical entrapment; a detachedness and frustration that comes with a sense of having moved on; accusations toward some for lacking courage to act congruently according to their personal beliefs. All participants were of the conviction that, for the survival of the church and to ensure it did not become obsolete, change was necessary. In the words of Ann: "*They've [religious institutions] got to grow up. They've got to waken up. They've got to change. They've*

got to think and line themselves up with reality." As participants reflected on, and worked to understand, hierarchies' and opponents' negative and sometimes aggressive, behaviour they re-evaluated whether to stay with the church. This involved re-assessing their motivations for continuing in the light of the consequences to their holding a space.

Re-evaluating whether to stay or go

At some point on their respective journeys, most, if not all, participants considered whether they should stay connected with their institutions through the tension they experienced. Jessica questioned:

> *Is this the time for me to leave? Should I be storming up to the bishop and saying here's my license. I'm out of here. And yeah obviously I've thought about that a bit and I don't think I've really come to that point.*

Their dilemma of whether to stay began during the first stage of diverging ideologies (see Chapter 6) and continued through the stage of revisiting in the light of consequences to theirs and others' actions encountered during the stage of holding a space (see Chapter 7). There was no correlation between participants' dilemma and doubt about their faith or calling. This section begins by delineating participants' ambivalence about continuing with their institutions and explains how individuals reached a point of re-committing through a process of re-assessing their motivations for staying.

Ambivalence about continuing

Participants' ambivalence about staying with their institutions was influenced by: first, consequences they experienced, particularly the strong negative reactions and, at times, aggressive behaviour from their hierarchies and opponents; and, second, ethical considerations about being part of an institution that upheld beliefs and practices deemed harmful. Holding a different view to the institution or those within it came at a personal cost to many; strong criticism, threats, intimidation, and punitive action generating feelings of discouragement, loneliness, frustration, and depression. Emily became worn down by relentless institutional harassment:

> *Throughout that pregnancy, things were so hard on the (denominational) scene and I thought, oh well, if I don't come back to work after this maternity leave its sort of a good external reason without having to say 'Sorry, I just can't hack it!'*

Under much duress from her national leaders over her choice to marry same-sex couples, coupled with concerns that the institution's exclusionary policies were damaging lesbian and gay people, Emily questioned, "*Is it even ethical to be a (denominational) pastor? Even though I think my church is a good church to work for, I think should I be part of perpetuating this system that can be so harmful and hateful?*" Some participants "*managed to get some time out*" (George) to take stock of their ambivalence. Stuart reported "*At that stage I thought, I've got to look at options, this is not sustainable on a long ongoing basis. And I ended up in China teaching English!*" Taking time out to re-evaluate whether to stay or go gave several participants valuable time to reflect, recharge, and regroup before re-entering the fray.

Reassessing motivations for staying

Living with tension, rising from the consequences to their actions, led participants to reassess their motivations for remaining in their clerical roles. The main considerations influencing participants' decisions to stay included: valuing relationship with their institution; a continuing conviction they were doing the right thing; believing they needed to be in it to change it; and hope of change.

Valuing relationship with their institution.

Although most participants' views on same-sex marriage were at odds with their institution, individuals reported appreciating 'the bigger picture' and were conscious of many things besides the issue of same-sex marriage that connected them with the church. This strong sense of belonging, intertwined with their identity and manifest through their calling and vocation, made them ready to tolerate and accept the tension, while simultaneously continuing to live with hope of change for the future:

> *Fundamentally I'm very institutionalised as a priest of the (denomination) church. We all are really. So, at one level it would be leaving myself partly and I also fundamentally believe the church will do the right thing in the end. I hope I'm not proved wrong.* (Jessica)

Conviction they were doing the right thing.

In answer to being asked what kept her going, Grace stated: "*People! People! People!*" Modelling their lives on Christ's example, through valuing relationship and fighting for justice and equality for people, especially those who were marginalised, participants increasingly felt confident that supporting same-sex marriage was the right thing to do. "*Where there are people that are marginalised or cut out of participation in community*

in its fullness, doing what I can there keeps me going" (Grace). Participants professed a God who was bigger than the debating and mudslinging and accepted the futility in trying to control what was a highly complex issue where they acknowledged no-one had all the answers. Participants chose to remain true to their convictions and put their trust in God who they deemed was ultimately in control. In her struggle, Emily lived by the mantra: "*You take care of your character, and let God take care of your reputation.*" In addition to trusting God and following their convictions, Emily asserted:

> *I honestly believe I'm building a better world for my kids. That by standing up for what I think is the right stuff that I've modelled something that will be useful to my children in the future… I believe I've helped make just a tiny little bit of New Zealand society be broader.*

Participants trusted and took comfort in their calling, believing they were where God intended them to be.

> *I still have an old-fashioned sense of call and so I feel called to be here … it's where I'm meant to be. Therefore, I don't focus too much on what will happen next… I feel I'm in the right place so that carries me. So, I don't worry about the rest of it really. That'll figure itself out.* (Jessica)

Participants frequently referred to shifting public opinion and legislation toward support of same-sex marriage based on humanitarian, moral, and ethical standards that were underpinned by extant knowledge. Growing political pressure in the West valuing human rights and the fair and equal treatment of all people highlighted to participants a widening gap between church and society. Participants identified that the church no longer championed the way for many socio-moral issues as it had in the past.

> *You look at the founders of all the great religions–Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, also the Hebrew Prophets–they all tended to be ahead of society. They were always challenging society; leading society into a better way. And that really should be the way, the role of the church to lead society into a better way. But we've largely lost that.* (Ben)

Aware of the history of conflict between the religion and lesbian and gay people, and the hurt this had caused, some participants were fervent about the need to offer a safe, affirming space for all people so that individuals could work through their sexuality issues without having their faith threatened or being forced to walk away. While listening to Bev, a lesbian congregant, speaking resolutely and with a sense of deep vocation about feeling called to her work by God, Daniel could, simultaneously, hear protestors outside the building shouting profanities about lesbian and gay people through their megaphone: "*It's events like this where you think, yeah … this is awful … but where would Bev go?*" Jessica was motivated and inspired by others' tenacity and

determination. After a vote rejecting same-sex marriage in her institution, again, Jessica overheard an elderly gay couple from her congregation, who had been waiting many years to marry, joke together saying: "*Oh, we're going to be retired by the time this is through. We thought we'd make it, but you know we're not going to.*" One of them added: "*Well we're used to being outside the shop window with our noses pressed up against the window seeing what's going on inside. Ooh … that was so heart-breaking. But, I thought, if they can stay, I can stay.*" These incidents strengthened Daniel and Jessica's resolve to continue creating a safe, affirming spiritual home for people like Bev and the elderly gay couple, which they understood was, sadly, a rarity. In the aftermath of an earthquake, Stuart reported:

> *One of the things about having your church fall down, is it's so discouraging, and the job of rebuilding is so big that you really have to take seriously the question, 'Should we just give up and go home, is it worth it?' And, you know, it's important we're here because we stand for things that other churches don't stand for and they're important things; the inclusive ethos.*

For some participants, the decision to stay and continue in their positions became easier with maturity which brought with it an increase in personal confidence to remain focused on people, "*look beyond the structure*" and not get drawn into "*playing the game*" (Grace) of institutional politics. Approaching retirement, or having retired, significantly decreased the risks of having position and career jeopardised with less concern about the consequences. Elizabeth explained:

> *I'm 60 next birthday, I'm not 25. If I were one of our young ones coming through, I'm not sure what I'd choose to do at that point. It's easier if you're coming to the end of your active ministry to say well I will stay for as long as I can and fight the case for as long as I can.*

Being in it to change it.

Where, in some cases, it might have been easier for participants to leave, many reported that they felt there was a better chance of influencing change from within. This motivated them to stay, tolerate the tension, and respond to opportunities to act. These actions varied from actively advocating to quietly living according to their values that demonstrated to others an alternative perspective (see Chapter 7). Through choosing an appropriate approach and adopting strategies that were people-focused, participants hoped that by staying, dialogue about same-sex marriage would continue.

> *At this point in time I would choose to conform, and I would choose to reform from within if I can. And I would continue to do that until such point you know … if the church throws me out, they throw me out … for 30 years I've worked*

within the church to reform it from within. I will choose to remain within, and argue my case, for as long as I can. (Elizabeth)

Hope of change.

Although institutional change seemed slow for many, participants were encouraged to continue through the support they received from others and because of the shifts, from anti to pro-same-sex marriage, they witnessed in people around them. Illustrating such a change in a relief minister who was sent to her church, Emily stated:

> *Some people do change their minds… he was just someone who was really sincerely processing and understanding that the world was bigger and more complicated than sometimes (denomination) churches want to make it seem… I could see his own evolution of understanding or that kind of encounter with other people and how that changes you.*

Participants' motivations to stay were strengthened on the occasions they received encouragement from hierarchy, colleagues, congregants, and wider community (see Chapter 7). This support inspired some participants to seek out like-minded people to sustain them in their work: "*There is enough people and you have to find the people who do help you to stay*" (Grace). Whereas other individuals, viewed support from others as an invitation to respond in ways they had been doing to a ready and waiting audience: "*Well, the people I work with, the people I meet, the congregation who come every Sunday are wanting what we have to offer*" (Jessica). While positive change in the institution was generally perceived as being slow, significant numbers of congregants in some parishes were calling for exclusionary practices to stop and for their clergy to welcome lesbian and gay people without discrimination. These expectations reinforced participants' belief that they were on the "*right side of history*" (Arthur) and, because of the emphasis those from congregational churches placed on ministering to the needs of their communities, enabled them to act with more confidence. In some inner-city churches, where there was a high percentage of lesbian and gay and supportive congregants, participants revealed there was an expectancy that, at times, came with a sense of obligation: "*Same-sex marriage would be expected here. In fact, it would be unacceptable here to promote or to speak of anything different*" (Grace).

Recommitting to staying.

At the end of the first stage of the trajectory—diverging ideologies— participants committed to staying with the church (see Chapter 6); despite tension resulting from their supportive views of same-sex marriage which diverged from that of the institution

and/or opponents within it. Through enacting these supportive views and reflecting on the consequences—holding a space (see Chapter 7) and revisiting—participants made sense of hierarchy and opponents' reactions and reassessed their motivations for continuing in relation to the consequences of their actions. During the stage of revisiting, all participants recommitted to staying connected with the church and faithful to their calling and convictions about same-sex marriage, despite degrees of ongoing conflict. For some, this decision was easier while for others, like Daniel, the ambivalence was far greater:

> *Almost wanting at times to just walk away. Wanting to ... I can't. I have been ordained, called to the ministry of word and sacrament within the (denomination) churches of this State, and for me to walk away from that would be, impossible. I feel conflicted constantly.*

Having reached a place of re-committing, participants sought to navigate a way forward cognisant of their ongoing experiences, reflections, and evolving understandings.

Navigating a way forward

Regardless of the stance or role participants took, and strategies adopted, all remained resolute in their support of same-sex marriage. Having recommitted to staying with the church, participants faced a series of decisions about how to best navigate an appropriate way forward. This process of discernment was driven by participants' valuing relationship on multiple levels and involved a delicate balance of continuing to enact their supportive views in a way that sensitively considered others and self considering ongoing consequences. Participants contemplated all invested relationships, in every situation, and acted mindfully of other's realities, beliefs, perspectives, and feelings. Rachel provided an example of individuals' self-reflexivity:

> *When we were discussing what the policy [regarding same-sex marriage] would be here I was very much reflecting, trying to monitor my reactions to what people were saying and trying to work out whether I was reacting to the surprisingly assertive pressure. I was monitoring and reflecting what was the argument and what was my sense of hurt personally to them, what were they thinking of me? Yeah, so I was very conscious of working out what was my personal feelings towards people and what they were saying and what was a fair argument and what was a fair argument for me to make back.*

In navigating a way forward, participants' choices led to them continuing as they had been or adapting and making changes to their actions and strategies.

Continuing

In certain contexts, participants continued what they had been doing previously. For example, where they felt encouraged and supported, they increased their efforts in fighting for change regarding same-sex marriage within their institutions and respective communities.

Unwavering determination.

Having reflected on the consequences of their actions, some participants continued enacting their supportive positions (see Chapter 7): *"[I] just get on and do it [advocating for same-sex marriage] and hope that someone notices. Well, whether someone notices or not is not the point. We get on and do it"* (Maria). No correlation was found between participants' decision to continue with little or no change to their actions and their preferred role (outward advocates and provocateurs/quiet advocates and discreet facilitators). There also appeared to be no relation between individuals' choice to continue and any confrontation or risk they faced. Remaining resolute in her views, Maria, an outward advocate who was happy to conduct same-sex marriages, purported, *"It's painful and difficult, but I'm not afraid of it… there's part of me that won't give anybody the satisfaction of giving up… so, they're wasting their time trying to change me."* Anticipating future risks, she added, *"I would not hide my views in order to get another appointment"* (Maria). For others, like Thomas, who continued conforming to institutional rules and refrained from conducting same-sex weddings, what remained important was being *"true to the path the church is on."* Having married his same-sex partner in a civil ceremony to fulfil the legal requirements he chose to let *"the church catch up with us at a certain time, at a certain point [and], when that's possible ... then that marriage will be blessed"* (Thomas).

Building on what they were already doing, some participants reported continuing to involve and commit themselves to personal and spiritual growth; for example, ongoing learning to keep abreast of latest scholarship: *"I've done reading, courses, as we all have to make sure we understand all the arguments and everything. I went to a lecture at the (church) the other day"* (Jessica). As part of their choice to continue, some participants questioned whether they should be doing more. This tended to arise when individuals compared their quieter advocating roles to other, more outward advocates, whom they admired. Referring to her own *"live and let live principle,"* Emily pondered,

"*but I do sometimes struggle with at what point would or should you actually say something.*"

Building relationships.

Michael echoed the sentiments of other participants when he emphasised the importance of building relationships with a range of people with differing opinions as they continued to enact their supportive positions.

> *I've worked quite hard to build relationships and so, the most conservative [minister] … in my area who we would agree on very little theologically or politically, I have a good working relationship with. And I think we're quite open and honest with each other about that [same-sex marriage] stuff.* (Michael)

Despite an often-very vocal opposition to same-sex marriage, participants recognised a growing segment within the church that fell in the middle and were undecided in their views. These participants acknowledged the importance, and expressed their intention of, continuing to build relationships with this specific population. Unlike the extreme left, who were unlikely to change their views, individuals identified the potential to influence this significant middle population. Speaking of one such colleague, Rachel explained:

> *I rang [the minister] after the earthquake asking how they were and this church [and] sent [funds] down to his church. There was a two-pronged reason: one was to do something for them which I think we would have wanted to have done anyway, but we were all aware that it was a very good thing for [our well-known progressive church] to reach out to [them].*

Accepting conflict.

Important to participants, as they navigated their way forward, was how they understood and dealt with the tension in their lives resulting from theirs and others' actions. Most of those interviewed drew parallels with earlier transformations in the church. Maria recounted how the church had been embattled for "*a decade or more of quite painful struggle*" in the fight to openly ordain gay and lesbian people. Participants, therefore, anticipated that the path forward, regardless of how one chose to navigate it, would contain degrees of conflict and resistance. Anticipating likely consequences her future actions might yield, Emily pensively stated: "*I think that will be a really stressful when the time comes.*" Because individuals had both experienced or expected degrees of conflict to continue in the future, there was an acceptance of, and a willingness to learn to tolerate, tension which was viewed as part of the territory.

Accepting tension extended beyond holding different views to their institution or opponents of same-sex marriage to tolerating ambiguity arising from the complexities inherent in every individual's life. For Grace, this "*creative chaos which is part of life*" meant being "*able to live with contradiction in your own self.*" She added:

> *If you want everything to be smooth ... if you want no contradictions or conundrums within your own life, then you're going to choose a set of certainties and assurities that are provided by those things like those institutional laws and authorities*. (Grace)

Making changes

As participants navigated their way forward, some chose to modify or change their actions or strategies as a result of reflecting on previous consequences. Motivations for adapting or changing behaviour was driven by the credence participants gave to maintaining relationship with all invested parties and influenced by a desire to keep dialogue open with hierarchy and opponents, protect oneself against potential hurt or disappointment, and remain true to their own values-system.

Readjusting expectations.

Many participants reported a certain naïvety in the early days of attempting to interact with others over the same-sex marriage debate, which led to them being hurt or disappointed by others' reactions. Over time, the realisation that not everyone was as open-minded made them more circumspect about engaging others on the topic. While remaining committed to valuing the diverse relationships and views around them, some participants increasingly struggled to respectfully hold a space for those opponents "*behaving badly*" (Emily) with a sense that their initial expectations of trying to respectfully accommodate everyone was unrealistic.

> *The way our (denomination) tries to take this forward, all the motions and different statements say we respect each other's position and we want to live with these two integrities; it's okay to think gay marriage is wrong and it's okay to think it's right and we can move forward together. Well I can't actually say I think I respect their position. I don't. I have real trouble signing up to that by saying I can actually respect a position that is so discriminatory, like I just can't. And while on the conservative side they are also gritting their teeth and saying well okay we respect your position. I know they don't respect my position. They will try and stop me if they could. So, I think we're not just being very truthful about that part of it*. (Jessica)

This shift appeared to stem from a place of self-protection: "*Probably better to say nothing, not safe to say too much*" (Philip). For others, the change arose from a need to conserve energy and choose one's battles wisely: "*People either get it or they don't.*

And if they don't get it, I don't believe that there's any argument I can put forward that will convince them" (Emily). What became increasingly important was discerning those who were genuinely interested in engaging constructively from those who wasted time because they were unlikely to listen or try to understand:

> *If there are people who are genuinely enquiring then that's a different matter, who are wanting to understand. I'll engage in dialogue about my perspectives and why I think this is an important justice issue for the church. But it doesn't seem helpful to me to be desperately trying to change another person's mind when there's no way in the world they are going to change, in the same way I'm not going to change mine.* (Maria)

Being more careful was not only restricted to protecting oneself but also others, particularly lesbian and gay people. The lack of respect for some of his lesbian and gay congregants, by some opponents, made Daniel less trusting about telling others' stories so as to protect them. With seniority, Michael reported, "*I've had to be more careful about putting my name on public statements or that sort of thing,*" and instead found more unobtrusive ways of working that did not attract too much public and media attention. Some participants' shattered trust in their opponents forced them to seek out and align themselves more with like-minded people.

> *We are having to be a little bit more open about our views with one another and discover where people stand and stand together. And I've never done that. That's, that's a new thing for me. A few of us got together before synod and that's never happened before, to say there's some difficult motions on this agenda, how are we going to pass them, how are we going to look after each other? That's very new*. (Elizabeth)

Along with fortifying their personal boundaries, when interacting with others, some individuals reported having become more realistic about their own capabilities and refrained from trying to take on too much: "*I do try and resist the temptation to try and act like Superwoman. It's easier as I've got older. I've thought, 'Nah, you can't do that'*" (Maria). Some individuals revealed that with age they were able to refrain from being drawn into the emotional element of the debate which manifested itself in them becoming less reactive and angry. Maturity, bringing less risk to self, position and career, increased self-confidence to stand up to institutional authority and react more authentically. In comparing her more recent courageous decisions with earlier compromises around conducting same-sex marriages, Rachel stated, "*I think the fear, the fear actually of the institutional church was quite strong at that point. It's not as strong now*." Separating the structure and human expression within it, enabled some participants to look past institutional politics and focus more on working to make a

difference through pastoral work. For Grace, this meant marrying a same-sex couple if they want to be married rather than waiting for permission: "*Nowadays I just want to move past this silly game-playing and just carry on doing what needs to be done.*" After spending many years fighting for change in the church on this and other issues, some participants moved to the position of feeling it was time to pass the baton to younger people with more energy to continue to the race. Arthur had reached this point when he reported, "*I felt it was time that other people started picking up the mantle. And they are making progress.*"

Revisions to speaking out and participating.

No participants changed their stance—conforming to rules, dancing along the edges, breaking rank—within their institution; however, modifications and changes to speaking out and participating were reported. After her institution took some punitive action over her decision to conduct same-sex weddings, the value Emily placed on her relationship with her institution led her to suspend conducting all weddings—homosexual and heterosexual—for a period because it "*felt the right thing to do.*" Emily's decision was motivated by her desire to give all invested parties an opportunity to enter dialogue over the disagreement: "*It will seem a lot less aggressive to go to a (national meeting) and say we've chosen not to have any weddings for six months… after six months we'll reassess our situation.*" Emily's expectation that she would likely reverse her decision in time demonstrated the value she placed on her relationships with her parishioners and what they felt, over her own preferences:

> *I would personally feel that if the compromise could be not to have any weddings, I would see that as, not great, but at least a way of everyone being equal. I know a lot of people in our church that think that that's just not acceptable, and I have to accept that that they feel strongly…*

Australian participants anticipated more clergy would change their actions by starting to marry same-sex couples if marriage equality laws were passed: "*I do know that within the church, on a national level, there are people who I think will start organising [same-sex marriages]. And so, I think there will be something like that … that will precipitate something*" (Michael). However, there was a sense clergy would act cautiously, taking into consideration people and relationships around them, and would depend largely on risks and anticipated consequences to individuals.

Three participants, while remaining committed to their faith and calling, chose to move to another parish or change denominations. The reasons for their decisions were

twofold. Some moved for protection and self-care by extrapolating themselves from the line of fire and maltreatment received from hierarchy and collegial opponents. Moving denomination for such reasons, Arthur stated:

> *Coming here in a sense was to get a break from that [confrontation]... because I'm right out of the loop now… By changing denomination, suddenly I was taken out of that whole political fray, and de-powered being out of it. And I feel okay about that.*

Others moved for a better 'fit' by closer aligning themselves with parishes and/or institutions that were like-minded on certain socio-moral issues, not restricted to same-sex marriage: "*I pulled away from the (denomination) church… now I'm with a parish that is aligned with where I want to stand on these issues and one of the few that's as overt around things like that*" (George).

For lesbian and gay participants, accepting their sexual orientation was a process. As a result, their confidence to act more authentically escalated over time, leading them to speak out and participate more in relation to gay rights within the church. Harry expressed aspirations to be more open and transparent about his sexuality as well as advocate more for same-sex marriage. Where previously Harry would have sought hierarchical permission before participating in this study, a desire to personally grow and contribute more led him to accept my invitation independently.

> *This opportunity to talk to you is timely for me because I think I need to be more proactive within the church structure around this… and lead by example. Just sitting down and talking today gives me the impetus to be able to begin thinking how will I progress this further within the institution? Which I want to do.* (Harry)

Through interacting with opponents of same-sex marriage, some participants encountered misperceptions others had of themselves as supporters of same-sex marriage, particularly around their expected standards of lesbian and gay relationships. Rachel discovered one of her congregants imagined her being over-tolerant with lesbian and gay couples, holding them to a lesser account than heterosexual couples. Because promiscuity was historically associated with the gay culture, he assumed this behaviour was inherent with everyone in the LGBTIQ+ community and accepted by all supporters. This view, in part, was exacerbated by political correctness in society that refrained from challenging minority groups for fear of offending them. Such incidents caused Rachel to identify the importance of addressing such misconceptions through education.

> *They assume that people are going to be promiscuous always having one-night stands, if you accept gay relationships then anything goes! 'I said, no, I don't*

mean that at all.' 'Oh,' he said, 'well if that's the case I would feel completely different about it.' So, maybe there's a bit of speaking about that that is needed.

Facing an uncertain future

Participants' staying connected through conflict moved them forward on a trajectory through three stages—diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting—toward a place of uncertainty about the future. This included uncertainty about what would happen in the future to: participants' positions and prospects, the institution, and church as a whole, and those within it (supporters, those uncertain and opponents); lesbian and gay people within and outside of the church. Despite growing evidence of transformation toward supporting same-sex marriage, participants believed religious institutions would continue to struggle with the issue for the foreseeable future. Michael anticipated marriage equality reform occurring in Australia resulting in an unavoidable struggle for the churches there.

> *I think the law will change in this country and whether it's next year or in the next couple of years, that's inevitable. I think for the church as we work out how to respond there's many years ahead of struggle.*

All participants raised degrees of concern about their prospects in the church. Contemplating the uncertainty of how far religious institutions would go to counter clergy, like himself, who were prepared to break rank and married same-sex couples in refutation to regulations, George pondered: "*Would the system then come down and … take away the licences of any clergy that did?*" Shane drew attention to his dilemma for his future personally as it related to him being a gay priest:

> *At the moment, theoretically I'm a potential problem. Well I would be a problem if I went around marrying same sex couples because that would be breaking a church law. Currently, because I'm living by myself and I'm not having sex with anyone, I'm objectively disordered but I'm not engaging wilfully in sinful behaviour. So theoretically, were I to start a relationship with someone, that would move me into a more problematic stance. But that's not an issue now. And for me it wouldn't be an issue. I think if I'm lucky enough to find someone and fall in love and want to commit, then I'm going with that!*

In contemplating the future uncertainty, participants' predictions incorporated both feelings of hope and encouragement for positive change and fear of division and splits.

Anticipating degrees of transformation.

The majority of participants reported being hopeful of positive change within the church, as reflected in Grace's comment: "*I think eventually it's going to shift.*"

Similarly, Harry asserted, "*There'll come a time, I don't know when, when ordained will be able to marry same-sex couples.*" While many religious institutions were unequivocally divided over same-sex marriage, Ethan felt encouraged by the results of a recent survey in his church where the responses "*in New Zealand were split roughly half and half between traditional anti views and either pro views or I'm changing or I'm open.*" Despite some very strong opposition, these figures were seen as representing a significant percentage of people in the church who were not strongly opposed to the idea of same-sex marriage. Another survey, from a different institution, investigating whether the church should believe marriage is between one man and one woman passed with 97% votes. But this was interpreted by Emily, as "*there's still 3% of the 600 people that are saying that there's other possibilities.*" As a result, there was 81% vote saying that clergy would not conduct same-sex marriage in their buildings or on their properties. "*So, one-fifth of churches didn't think it followed that just because they thought marriage was about a man and a woman that therefore no-one could think otherwise. So, I guess that's slightly encouraging*" (Emily).

Embedded in participants' responses was their awareness of a dynamism that existed in these representational statistics where individuals' views constantly changed: "*At the last assembly, a woman got up and said I'm an evangelical, but I've been thinking and praying about this and I've changed my mind*" (Rachel). Individuals' feelings of hope were bolstered by some hierarchies' assurances that change was coming. Some, like Arthur, believed that while it had been a struggle for the church, "*the majority actually are coming to a point where, 'Yes please, we'd love to have gay people in our church'.*"

Rachel explained her prediction in terms of Roger's adoption curve which is a bell-shaped curve. This, she inferred, accounts for an initial 3% known as early adopters, with 16% that follow and come on board quickly. Next are the moderates which account for 50% of the population and then there are the laggards that will never change their minds.

> *I think at the moment what we're seeing is that the early moderates in these debates that we have in the church here are sitting at around 55% in favour. That means we're already past half way which means that the moderates are on board. They need to talk to the late moderates, that's the group they will listen to, they won't listen to me. So, it's this group that will influence that group, not the early adopters. I am now consciously trying to keep up relationships and looking where I can start new ones with people I think who are in this middle. And I think there's a hope now that the middle ground may activate itself.* (Rachel)

All participants spoke of a turning tide which they believed would usher in change. Referring to this change amongst church-goers, Jessica stated:

> *For the next generation coming through [same-sex marriage] is just not an issue, unless they've been brought up in a very, very conservative environment, people are just going to find it obvious that we should be moving on. So yeah, I think we'll get there in the end.*

Jessica also highlighted that as some religious institutions move toward tolerating homosexuality as a sexual orientation, more young lesbian and gay people who were unaware of the intensity of vitriol levelled previously against them were gracing the pews and making their presence known. As this happens, Jessica excitedly anticipated, "*we get an opportunity to work with another whole group of people.*" As participants readjusted their expectations and, in some cases, gave up the idea they could, individually, change the church, they continued to acknowledge "*that we all have little spheres of influence and you get on and do what you can in that place*" (Michael). Over time, as some participants moved up the echelons and were taken more seriously by people in the church, Michael believed that "*at that level there is more of a capacity to bring some change ... Maybe there is that slightly bigger capacity to knock a few more edges off it, bring a bit more change,*" although recognising this had to be done gently and carefully. Others, in their training capacities, influenced future generations, "*so it will make a difference to how they come out of college thinking about some of those things*" (Elizabeth).

George purported change will occur when people in the parish, override church policy and demand their grandsons and granddaughters are not discriminated against. When hierarchy start listening and people can have their say. "*And it 'will' happen,*" Arthur asserted, "*because change of thought is already underway.*" Similarly, Shane emphasised:

> *The world is certainly getting more inclusive and I see the fear reactions of the conservative people, which currently are determining at least the partial direction of the church. They're going to lose at the end of the day because the world is just going to keep on going and they'll just either make themselves more and more irrelevant or they'll die!*

Fearing splits.

While some participants predicted hope of positive change, others anticipated "*a big fight*" (Elizabeth) with a likelihood of there being splits in the church.

> *It's happened over ordination. It happened in the U.S. In the U.S. they're able to be in the position to say, yes, we support same-sex marriage. That's not*

before a fair chunk of the church left and aligned themselves with diocese overseas. So, my guess it's a similar sort of thing that will end up happening. (George)

Participants' negative predictions were based on their belief that a growing conservatism was taking hold of the church as more liberally-minded church-goers gave up and left leaving many hierarchies feeling hamstrung. While the church was under increasing political pressure to stop discrimination of lesbian and gay people, participants reported that "*the growing churches are the charismatic churches*" (Ann) and these bred a conservatism that influenced regulations within religious institutions. Some individuals felt that, with Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia's liberal views, acceptance of same-sex marriage by the church might have occurred sooner if it were not for the conservatism of developing countries–Africa, India, and parts of Asia–where the church is growing: "*85% of [denominational members] are now from the developing world who are overwhelmingly conservative*" (Ethan). Because of diverse, often-competing cultural views on certain socio-moral issues like same-sex marriage, some were of the opinion, "*[Same-sex marriage] will always be divisive*" (Ann) where, particularly for international institutions, "*it's a no-win situation*" (Ethan).

> *I think in terms of change we're [New Zealand] over the hill. Gays (Christians) go out and get married and invite ministers to be present or whatever. It might not be in their church, but actually you can find churches that … will allow their church to be used for this … so, society have moved over the hill with this. But … there is a huge international issue still, and particularly again where (the institution) is connected with former colonies who are more homophobic seemingly than other parts of the world, there's some big stuff there.* (Arthur)

Hierarchies' fear of losing conservative parishes was reported to be another contributor to predicting splits in the church. Some participants, however, deemed such fears to be unjustified and accused hierarchy of lacking fortitude to resolve and progress the matter as it should:

> *Our (national meeting) this time got stuck over the number of parishes who were threatening to leave our diocese who said they had enough, that they couldn't survive moving forward. I don't believe people, or that many, will leave. We've had one vicar who, two years ago, handed in his license and 20 or 30 of his congregation went with him. There's been one other in a similar vein. Call their bluff I say and see what happens.* (Grace)

These hierarchical fears, some participants asserted, immobilised hierarchy from taking any decisive action and, in turn, contributed to the widening gap between the church and society. Arthur explained:

236

And that's the problem with the church right now. They're on the wrong side of history... and the big churches know it, and the leaders are very uncomfortable about that and they're hamstrung by all this traditional stuff behind them and their traditional legislation.

Underlying individuals' prognostications was that any chance of positive change would be a process of events, containing risks that evolved over time. Emily commented:

It's hard to feel [same-sex marriage] won't divide the church because I think people seem so determined to draw lines in the sand and take a stance and take a side. I imagine in 100 or 200 years we will have slowly changed our way of thinking. Not every single Christian, not every single church, but it's hard to think in 1 or 200 years we won't have by and large quite a different view on it. But it seems like the church may not hold itself together for 1 or 200 years to go through that slow process because this has been such a flash point in history.

Reflecting on the anticipated splits likely to occur, Daniel echoed the sentiments of other participants when he stated that, if any hope of change existed in this uncertain future, then it lay with relationship: "*I'm not sure if people will change, but if they do it will because of relationships: My only clue as to how people change is all about relationships isn't it?*"

Finding solace

As participants moved through the second and third parts of the trajectory—holding a space and revisiting—navigating their way forward amidst degrees of tension, individuals sought solace as they continued enacting their supportive positions within their institutions and communities. Individuals found guidance, comfort, and reassurance through various means including support, twinning, supervision and, importantly, through their faith.

For participants, the support they received was more than an outcome to their actions; it provided a source of comfort and reassurance that strengthened their resolve to continue along their respective paths. For some, this valuable resource, intentionally, comprised a few trusted individuals: "*I have had small in number but just hugely significant support and companionship along the way*" (Emily). For others, progressive congregations and wider collegial circles provided a comfortable, safe environment proffering sustenance: "*My colleagues, the people who were young ministers when I started, all have much the same attitude as me. I can't think of any… who would have any position other than supportive of gay, same-sex marriage*" (George). Certain individuals found solace from wider social networks beyond their institutions: "*There's*

always been a network of people around the church, and not just in the (denomination) church but wider community of people that I've kept in contact with. So that's where this support comes from" (Maria).

The concept of 'twinning,' another source of solace, was distinguishable from support in that instead of drawing strength from the reassurances received from others, participants sought out like-minded people, literature, situations and places that would provide sustenance. Being connected to something larger than just their views functioned as a means of endorsing individuals' positions which brought degrees of comfort that they were not alone. For Grace this came through acknowledging that "*there are many, many people in the church who fight and struggle for the rights of gay and lesbian people to be married or blessed in the church and are very hurt by the current decision by (hierarchy).*" Similarly, for Michael, it was about:

> *Knowing who the fellow travellers are and finding those spaces where you can just unload or be completely honest about things … it's finding those safe places. I think for me as well it's staying engaged with people outside the church. Because I think ultimately, yeah, the Holy Spirit calls us from outside the church just as much from within and I think staying engaged with what's happening out there is really important and that's where I often find most life you know! When the institution is, yeah when it's all too difficult.*

A primary source of solace was gained through participants' faith and connection to God through solitude and prayer: "*My own mindful prayer is sustaining. I could not pass through this year with all that's entailed without an active practice of meditation and prayer*" (Elizabeth). Another aspect, incorporating individuals' faith and twinning included emulating role models, whether through reading scripture and following Jesus' example, or finding refuge in people of courage and conviction who inspired them. Contemplating his dilemma about whether to conduct same-sex marriages, Harry referred to someone he admired:

> *He was a great leader within the old (Denomination) church, Māori, radical as anything and … similar to me … but he'd do it. He'd say, well if they love each other, isn't that what Christ says, love each other? Do it! And then deal with the ramifications later.*

Some participants found refuge by talking regularly with a mentor, a provision made to most clergy, enabling them to safely process and 'off-load:' "*We have a spiritual director and a supervisor, so I have both those people to talk to when I need to, so that's really good. So, you do get that place of support. I talk about it and move on*" (Jessica). Elizabeth found solace in the inclusive ambiance of her city's cathedral:

> *If you walk in at the moment, they've got rainbow banners on the pillars, there's a very definite welcome of the LGBTIQ community in the cathedral. So that's sustaining when you know that at the heart of the city is a (denomination) place of worship that is affirming.*

Apart from gaining sustenance through support, like-minded people, and their faith, some participants reported finding release from stepping out of the fray to find pleasure in the simple things of life and vocation beyond the same-sex marriage issue. This enabled them with to connect with, in Harry's words, the "*bigger picture*" in a variety of different contexts. Elizabeth echoing the sentiments of others, when she stated:

> *I do things like labyrinths and interplay, they are body practices and [because] I have a dance background, movement is important to me. They're very nourishing to me. I like to walk, have a border collie, and I'm fairly diligent about my day off. And my daughters are lovely, and a new grandson. That's really important to me. But it's a balancing act all the time. A lot of the time I simply get on with doing what I love which is to minister: to listen, to take the services here in chapel, get on write a sermon, write a reflection, preach, you know, read a book! And be an active member of this community and of my little parish. Do the rest you know, it's not all about this.*

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the stage of re-visiting, an ongoing, open-ended process where participants reflected on and responded to the consequences of their earlier actions. The reasoning behind the way individuals made sense of hierarchy and opponents' reactions, in terms of risking and timing was outlined. Participants' ambivalence about whether to continue and the way they re-evaluated their motivations that led to recommitting has been expounded. The method by which individuals navigated a way forward to an uncertain future and the steps they took to respond to the consequences—by continuing or making changes to their strategies—was provided.

Chapter Nine: Discussion

Introduction

In this thesis I set out to develop a substantive theory explaining the processes underlying the actions of clergy who support same-sex marriage within the context of their institutions, congregations, and wider communities. This subset of clergy offers an alternative way of thinking to traditional religious views about same-sex relationships; one advocating that same-sex marriage and the Christian faith are compatible. In particular, the study sought to answer the questions: 'What contributes toward clergy's supportive views?' and, 'How do they sustain holding those views with their institutions?' The findings contribute to a small but growing body of work by explaining a social process, that of staying connected through conflict, that explicates, in depth, how clergy formulated and sustained their supportive views in a way that enabled them to remain true to themselves and their values while carrying out their clerical roles. The lives of clergy who support same-sex marriage are complex and continually shift and change as they reflect, evaluate, and navigate their way forward regarding the controversial and divisive issue of same-sex marriage within the church. I begin this chapter by addressing the most prominent threads from the research findings—the centrality of valuing relationship; the reciprocal process of holding a space and revisiting; staying connected through conflict—explaining how each is connected and how they relate to the literature. Following, the significance, research implications, and the strengths and limitations of the study are stated, along with recommendations for further research.

The research findings

The centrality of valuing relationship

For participants it is all about valuing relationship. Valuing relationship is at the heart of who they are as clergy and it is this valuing of people, and the connection with and between people in the world around them, that drives their perspectives, actions and overarching process of staying connected through conflict. Why is this valuing relationship so important? For participants, relationship and love is at the heart of the Christian message, more than anything. It reflects the gospel values exemplified through the radical life and teachings of Jesus who challenged religious elites to love all

people, especially the marginalised and outcast, above other traditional religious law. When asked which the greatest commandment in the Law is, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law hangs on these two commandments."[31] Participants' focus on people was borne out of their love for humanity which recognises that acceptance and belonging are vital for human beings to feel connected. Their valuing relationship came out of the gospel message and then a sense of social justice (Anderson, 2011) that desires to eradicate barriers preventing a fair and just world for all. To be true to these principles has led participants to having their supportive views that embrace the LGBTIQ+ community.

Prioritising valuing relationship.

Supportive clergy's actions were underpinned by their valuing relationship; however, this does not suggest that opponents of same-sex marriage do not value relationship or involve themselves in social justice activities. They do. Many social change activists across all disciplines are driven by a democratic interest in, and commitment to, the well-being of people. However, not all. Some place more importance on achieving their goals of social change than concern for those involved in the process. This thesis argues that what made supportive clergy different to opponents of same-sex marriage was that they prioritised valuing relationship over church law. For them, social justice, which values all people equally, is inextricably linked to their Christian faith because it is viewed as an attribute of God, not imposed from outside but part of peoples' very nature. An attribute to be realised not in some remote future but in the here and now (Hantal, 2011). As a result, clergy who see their supportive views as intrinsic tend to be spiritual rather than religious and inclined to follow their faith convictions before conforming to doctrinal law. This places immense pressure on those clergy affiliated with institutions (international, hierarchical) who expect obedience from its members to church law above all else.

Some participants learned to prioritise valuing relationship from an early age. They were encouraged to critically challenge societal and religious structures and systems that coercively established and maintained inequalities, discrimination and development-inhibiting conditions of living imposed by dominant groups, classes, and

---

[31] Matthew 22:36-40 New International Version (NIV).

peoples upon dominated and exploited groups, classes, and peoples (Gil, 1998). Others, while having a propensity to value relationship, only came to prioritise valuing relationship over church law later in life as they came to know lesbian and gay people, and became better informed. Increasing awareness of the relationship between knowledge and power and its role in society—a central organising concept in critical theory (Foucault, 2001; Galper, 1975; Habermas, 1992; Marcuse, 1941; K. Marx & Engels, 1937)—caused these individuals to question the church's history of oppression and injustice toward minorities aimed at self-preservation and denying compassion for their fellow humans (Freire, 1997). This, in turn, led to a recognition that the church was failing to reach everyone and motivated them to work to transform societal relationships and institutions that stand in the way of justice creating a more equitable society.

Effects of valuing relationship.

Participants' valuing relationship made them open to coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people and receptive to wanting to understand them better, leading to them informing themselves with extant knowledge and latest biblical scholarship. Meeting lesbian and gay people initially increased ambivalence among some participants; however, coming into relationship with these individuals ultimately decreased cognitive dissonance by reducing prejudice and fear of difference.

Reducing cognitive dissonance by coming into relationship supports Allport's Social Contact Theory (1954) and similar findings (Borgman, 2009; Cheatham, 2006; J. Dewey et al., 2014; Henrickson, 2009). While Social Contact Theory is widely accepted, Baker and Brauner-Otter (2015) found that contact with lesbian and gay individuals did not change the negative perspectives of Evangelical Christians' in the data they analysed from an American telephone survey. This is perhaps not surprising considering the authority Evangelicals give to traditional interpretations of scripture above all else and is likely to account for this anomaly. Caldwell (2010) offered a theological proposition addressing the viability of Christian same-sex unions for Christians whose authority comes from the bible. He advocated that such individuals must accept biblical testimony on the identity of human beings and the calling of human beings to image God's covenant of faithfulness through the gift of sexuality, regardless of sexual orientation.

Again, through their valuing relationship, participants saw facts (e.g., sexual orientation is not a choice) through values (e.g., their commitment to stop harms and further loss of life of young lesbian and gay congregants who, despite their best attempts, were unable to change by conversion therapy). By joining their values (e.g., respecting their positive experiences with same-sex couples whose relationships they saw as loving, caring, supportive and God-honouring), they saw facts (e.g., same-sex marriage could reflect God's love in the same way heterosexual marriages could). In joining their facts, they recognised multiple realities and contexts where certain 'truths' were perceived as conditional to what we know and experience (K. Charmaz, personal communication, September 25, 2017). Philip emphasised, "*In [church] people can gather in a setting where it seems like the world is a certain way and you can interpret scripture from that, when actually the world is quite different to that*." Desiring to understand lesbian and gay individuals better, motivated participants to expand their knowledge across a range of fields and disciplines which resulted in them allowing their theology to, in the words of Daniel, "*bubble out of experience*" as evidenced in God's creation. This does not suggest they negated or prioritised experience over theology. Rather, they acknowledged an interdependent relationship between the two where each informed the other.

Integral to participants' resolving cognitive dissonance was how they read and understood scripture. For some, familiarising themselves with latest biblical scholarship highlighted inaccuracies in early translations that led to incorrect terminology and misinterpreted our understanding of homosexuality. Biblical prohibitions of homosexual practices were understood to be based on references to specific types of homosexual sex acts, i.e., pederasty, the sodomizing of young boys by older men, and male temple prostitution. This could not be applied to monogamous, loving, caring, and God-honouring same-sex relationships between consenting adults, as with heterosexual marriages. Foucault (1970/1979) claimed those who controlled the creation and maintenance of language controlled the power in relationships by determining how social phenomenon were named and discussed. Through the transformative potential of discourse, participants worked to alter systemic social imbalances and the taken-for-granted social order about traditional marriage that had, until recently, remained unchallenged (Galper, 1975; Hansen, 2008). However, as this is not a theological study but a sociological one which investigated clergy's daily lives, I have chosen not to

explore the hermeneutical aspect of this argument further. Literature on this already exists (Gomes, 1996; Helminiak, 2000; J. Rogers, 2009; Scroggs, 1984).

Degrees of dissonance were experienced by all participants at some point through the stage of diverging ideologies as they formulated their supportive views. Ultimately, however, coming into relationship with gay people and better informing themselves, emanating from their valuing relationship, brought participants to a place of certainty about their support of same-sex marriage. Although no participants went back and changed their view, they were not uncompromising to the point of being inflexible, remaining open and acknowledging that what we know constantly evolves. Participants' certainty in the views differs to the findings by Cadge et al. (2012) who found that clergy experienced degrees of uncertainty about homosexuality regarding the aetiology of homosexuality and appropriateness of same-sex marriage. This disparity is probably due to the heterogeneity of Cadge et al.'s (2012) sample compared with my participants who all identified as supporters of same-sex marriage. There has also been rapid growth in public awareness and acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage in the last six years since Cadge et al.'s study, even within the church (Jones et al., 2014). While choosing not to disclose my sexuality to participants, unless asked, the discrepancy might also reflect participants responses who, because they either knew or assumed I was gay, did not wish to offend me by expressing their doubts and/or contradicting any assumed social justice intentions of the research. I suspect, if current trends continue where same-sex marriage becomes normalised and less shrouded in controversy, similar future studies might show a decrease in the duration and intensity of ambivalence clergy experience.

Active agents of change.

Norman Vincent Peale (1952) believed if you change your thoughts, you change your world. Through valuing relationship, participants actively sought to change their world by getting to know and talking with people who helped them see the world differently. This, and allowing evidence of God's creation to inform their views, led some to rethink their theology which led to a shift among some participants reflective of similar shifts reported by Thomas and Olson (2012) who explored changes from anti-gay to pro-gay among religious elites. The intent demonstrated by the participants in this study who shifted their views questions the 'law of effect' notion inherent in Reinforcement Theory of Motivation (Skinner, 1938). This theory claims that people's attitudes and

behaviours are modified in a passive way toward incoming stimuli and reinforcers; behaviours are repeated with positive consequences and not repeated with negative consequences. While participants did modify their behaviour according to consequences (e.g., choosing their battles with opponents more carefully), it appeared to be an action of intent as they negotiated their way toward change. Mostly, participants' supportive views and actions created risk, internal dissonance, and a range of consequences that were mostly negative. Therefore, I concur with Festinger's (1957) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance which recognises people as active agents in the structuring of their world, as evident in all stages of the trajectory. Festinger's theory assumes individuals reduce cognitive dissonance by changing their behaviour, adding new cognitions or changing their social environment that reinforces the dissonance. Consistent with Festinger's view, participants altered their cognitions/beliefs and behaviour while choosing to stay connected with their religious institutions that, for some, continued to reinforce their dissonance (Mahaffy, 1996). These choices reduced internal not external dissonance and, in some cases, only served to increase negative consequences from their environment.

Predictors of attitudes of clergy who support same-sex marriage.

The findings reveal that predictors of clergy's attitudes toward supporting same-sex marriage follow similar patterns to predictors of clergy's attitudes toward supporting homosexuality. The conditions of valuing relationship, including coming into relationship with lesbian and gay people and valuing experience and extant knowledge enough outside the religious domain to inform theology, builds on previous findings (Cadge et al., 2008; J. Dewey et al., 2014; Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a; Estwick, 2010; Hildebrandt, 2012). Participants were not questioned about their political ideology; however, their belief in social and economic equity suggests a democratic leaning, supporting similar claims by Olson, Cadge and Harrison (2006) and Schwartz (2010). Age was not found be a predictor for negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage, mirroring findings by (Jakobsson et al., 2013). Eleven out of 21 participants were over 60 and references were frequently made of others in a similar age bracket who were also supportive. I am unable to endorse previous gender studies (Deckman et al., 2008; Robbins, 2007) suggesting women tend to be more approving of same-sex marriage as my sample was roughly split between men (N=12) and women (n=9). Higher levels of education have been linked with positive beliefs about homosexuality in some studies (Cheatham, 2006; Park et al., 2016). While my sample was small and cannot

substantiate this claim, 17 out of the 21 participants that were interviewed in this study were undergraduates with 12 postgraduates including eight who had completed doctoral studies. In this study, valuing relationship was not only identified as a primary condition and predictor of participants having supportive views, it was integral to how they enacted those views; through a reciprocal process of holding a space and revisiting.

Reciprocal process of holding a space and revisiting

Participants' valuing relationship, which contributed to their supportive views, also influenced the way they daily managed the diverse relationships with their institutions, congregations, and wider community. An array of strategies was adopted that focused on people and sought to respectfully maintain relationship with people from all sides of the same-sex marriage debate. This, they achieved, through a reciprocal process of holding a space for all, regardless of their views of same-sex marriage, and continually revisiting to reflect on their actions and consequences to make appropriate adaptations as they navigated a way forward. Djupe and Neiheisel (2008a) claimed that clergy have a greater capacity for reflection and awareness of their personal processes than the general population, and the way participants constantly took account of themselves and their effect on those around them supports this assumption.

The theoretical framework influencing participants' perspectives calls for *praxis*; addressing real-world-problems and constraints rather than pulpit theorising. This involves a dynamic, reciprocal, and reflexive relationship when faced with theological dilemmas (Hansen, 2008). Taking a pastoral and pragmatic approach, as identified in previous studies (Cadge, Girouard, et al., 2012; Olson & Cadge, 2002), participants compassionately responded to individuals' unique realities affecting their psycho-social-physical-spiritual needs. In situations where there was a conflict of interest, participants met people where *they* were rather than defaulting to an institutional viewpoint.

A change in response emanating from participants' constant revisiting was that they became more cautious about where and when to speak out about same-sex marriage. Perhaps, naïvely, they assumed others would be as open to having constructive discussion on the topic as they were. However, experiences of confrontation instilled in them the need to carefully discern which battles to fight. This came with the realisation that it was unrealistic to assume you could change someone's minds who was unswervingly opposed, and such attempts often only served to further entrench people.

Caldwell (2010) and Massey (2014) also purported clergy's tendency to avoid the issue of homosexuality with their congregations for fear of conflict and uncertainty in their views. The findings in this study differ in that while participants became more discerning in their behaviour, this did not reflect being any less confident in their views. A main motivator for speaking out, even with those who chose to be more careful, was remaining true to their convictions or personal motivation echoing findings by Djupe and Neiheisel (2008a) and Meek (2015).

Meek (2015) found a deterioration in congregational support with their dissenting pastor who acted in defiance of institutional rules and married same-sex couples; whereas participants in this study, reported strong parishioner support when faced with a similar situation. The pastor in Meek's study used his power and position to 'force meaningful discourse' on his congregation which might account for the different reaction he got from his parishioners, unlike my participants' relational approach that focused on deepening rapport. Another reason is that the congregation may have been conservative and influenced by the church's official stance prohibiting LGBTIQ+ members from church life through its 'incompatibility clause.' It is anticipated that, due to their vocation, clergy will continue to take a contemplative approach. However, if current trends see same-sex marriage becoming normalised, participants' process of revisiting, as it relates to same-sex marriage, might become less prominent over time.

Shifting roles.

A key finding of this study concerned the roles participants took in their approach to same-sex marriage; facilitators/quiet advocates, outward advocates/provocateurs. Consistent with Cadge and Wildeman's (2008) concept of 'negotiated identities,' clergy in this study adopted different roles in response to the issue of same-sex marriage within their institutions and congregations. Facilitators/quiet advocates assumed a more educational role and/or positioned themselves more discretely in terms of their views in public forums. Outward advocates/provocateurs made their positions known publicly and were committed to creating broader institutional change by challenging what they perceived as unjust policy and practice within the church. My findings build on those by Cadge and Wildeman in that they show that these roles, rather than being static positions, are 'preferred roles' in which clergy felt most comfortable, and operated out of, for most of the time. These preferred roles were shaped by, among other things, personality, age, institution (hierarchical, congregational etc.), institutional stance on

same-sex marriage, and associated risks with taking a supportive position. Whereas Cadge and Wildeman clearly distinguished between participants' negotiated identities, my data analysis revealed a range of actions in all participants that were identifiable with facilitators, quiet advocates, and outward advocates. This finding suggests that clergy in this study, while choosing a preferred role, shifted between roles depending on the situation and people they encountered. These shifts occurred because, as agents of change motivated to keeping dialogue open, participants continually reflected, decided, and acted in ways they discerned would be most appropriate in the interests of the relationships at stake. This led them, at times, to act in ways that were quite different to their preferred role. Emily, for example, preferred keeping her head down and quietly getting on things without drawing any attention to herself (preferred role: facilitator/quiet advocate). At times, motivated by compassion and desire for justice for her lesbian and gay congregants, she was compelled to speak out and challenge hierarchy during national meetings (outward advocate/provocateur). This finding may be due to more attention being paid in this study to the nuanced positions of supportive clergy than previous studies (Cadge & Wildeman, 2008; J. Dewey et al., 2014) where focus was on allies of the LGBTIQ+ community invested in fostering change in their religious communities. As such, most of the clergy interviewed by Dewey et al. (2014) were strong advocates of gay rights with only 3 of the 13 interviewed self-identifying as subtle advocates. The reciprocal relationship of moving back and forth between holding a space and revisiting, while constantly shifting roles within that process, supports findings that clergy's lives are complex, processual, and multi-faceted (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008a; Estwick, 2010).

Spectrum of consequences.

The method by which participants managed their diverse relationships—holding a space and revisiting—generated a spectrum of consequences from those within their institutions in relation to the issue of same-sex marriage. Some hierarchy and colleagues remained strongly opposed, others were avoidant to discuss the issue. Several had a private and public face where they personally supported same-sex marriage but publicly aligned themselves with the institution's official stance in opposition. Participants had all, at some stage, experienced confrontation ranging from vitriolic attack, being punished, anonymous death threats, shut down and silenced, avoided and excluded, perceived as evil, and having their faithfulness called into question. These negative consequences led to participants feeling isolated, alienated, sad, hurt, angered,

impatient, embarrassed, betrayed, and abandoned leaving them on their own to deal with the complexities of same-sex marriage with parishioners. Living with degrees of tension and conflict was reported by all participants. Those serving in liberal congregations/institutions permitting freedom to act according to conscience were not exempt as they, too, were required to deal with a variety of people with different opinions on same-sex marriage. These negative consequences raise important questions: If the church exists so that people might experience the love of God, then how can it treat its own people so poorly? Especially, when these clergy are trying to do good? The findings indicate that the church, in this case, is not doing a very good job and is failing its own, not to mention lesbian and gay people that are excluded and discriminated against.

Participants understood opponents' perspectives to be underpinned by fear: risk to hierarchy and institution, risk to self and belief-system, and risk to society, which echoes findings by Cadge and Wildeman (2008). An expansion to these findings proposes a link between opponents' vilifying behaviour and not having adequate time or information to process safely in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of lesbian and gay issues.

A criticism of traditional critical theory is its collective view of 'the establishment' which can sometimes promote stereotypical thinking about the majority who hold the power. Such a view can obscure those within the power-base who are, in fact, supportive and want to bring about change (Hansen, 2008) as highlighted by certain participants. Not all consequences reported in this study were found to be negative. Some taking part in this study felt encouraged and supported by hierarchy which led to them feeling optimistic about the future of the church and its potential to become fully inclusive over time. The spectrum of consequences highlights a diversity of view that is a reality of life and exists within the church.

Spheres or tracks?

Historically, people who think differently from the church have not been treated very well. Many opponents of same-sex marriage do not view same-sex marriage as a justice issue—usually conservatives or evangelicals who emphasise biblical literalism—and treat Christian faith and gay rights as different issues to be kept separate despite contrary endorsements by scientific fields. Charles Darwin, a Christian, was reviled by

the church because they perceived his evidence of evolution as contradictory to God's truth about creation. In Sharon's words:

> *The church convinced him he didn't have a faith. The driver for his work was his faith; the glory of God's creation. But when he started talking in the way he did about the ways of nature, there was no space in which he could continue to praise God and hold to the science and faith as totally different tracks, as oppose to different spheres.*

Similarly, the church opposed Galileo ideas that the earth revolved around the sun, which was at the centre of our universe (heliocentrism), accusing him of attempting to reinterpret scripture[32]. The church vehemently declared heliocentrism "heretical since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture" (Finocchiaro, 1988, p. 146). Forced to renounce his opinions, Galileo was sentenced to house arrest for the remainder of his life and publication of his works forbidden. For Darwin and Galileo, there was no space to hold their scientific discoveries and faith, a view most Christians today would view as inflexible and irrational. Yet, many supportive clergy continue to be discredited by their church in the same way. How are religious institutions going to deal with these agents of change? How can it stay open to something it does not believe in? How can it make theological space for reason founded on experience and extant knowledge? Is there a more accommodating approach to those who bring new ways of thinking, like that role-modelled by supportive clergy where alternative views can be respectfully heard?

While knowledge transcendent is different to sociological phenomenon, participants, through their valuing of relationship, traversed between these two tracks (scripture-based faith and evidence from God's creation) which they perceive as running in the same direction. Failure by the church to join these realms risks making religion obsolete. While the percentage of individuals identifying as Christian in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia remain significant, statistics show that fewer people are attending church (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)[33]. In fact, the 2013 Census figures show numbers of Aotearoa New Zealand Christians has fallen to below 50% (to 1.9m), making Christians a minority for the first time (Royal Society, 2013). Where once the Christian church led the way on what was considered moral and ethical belief and

---

[32]"The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved" Psalm 93:1, 1; Chronicles 16:30.
"The Lord set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved" Psalm 104: 5.
"And the sun rises and sets and returns to its place" Ecclesiastes 1:5
[33] In the Australia Census 61.1% were listed as Christian in 2011 compared with 73% in 2006.
 In 1901, 1 in 30 Aotearoa New Zealanders did not identify with any religion compared with 1 in 3 as of 2013.

practice in society, we must ask, who leads who on what is considered morally acceptable today? While religious communities actively attempted to dictate outcomes in the wider society regarding the Australian postal vote about same-sex marriage, they were unable to influence public choice (Perales et al., 2019). In-depth studies in Aotearoa New Zealand (Reed, 2018) and America (Jones et al., 2014) found that the decline in church attendance is, in part, attributed to society's perception of how the church has responded to the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. The church's discrimination against lesbian and gay people is increasingly perceived by many to be morally and ethically questionable. With the advent of science, the rise of Western democracies, and the move toward subjectivity with its emphasis on human rights, the separation between church and State continues to grow wider in many western countries. In the light of current trends, how is the church going to remain relevant?

The strength of any organisation lies in its ability to evaluate new ideas that will facilitate growth. Change can only come from people working within who can refine it; who challenge it by bringing different or alternative ways of thinking. Although clergy who support same-sex marriage are a minority within the church now, this group is growing exponentially with the growth in numbers of countries legislating for same-sex marriage. More and more religious leaders (Father Richard Rohr, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bishop John Shelby Spong, Joan Chittister, Reverend Jim Winkler, Bishop Gene Robinson, Elizabeth Johnson, Reverend Peter Gomes to name a few) have challenged religious institutions and, alongside participants, are holding the tension in their endeavour to align orthodox views and contemporary human rights issues. These individuals argue for a middle ground—an alternative orthodoxy based on orthopraxis—between traditional orthodoxy and heresy, a way of focusing on the Gospel, justice, and compassion (Rohr, 2014). Neil Darragh (2019), from Auckland, recently purported, "We need a church that is wholly focused outwards toward social justice and an internal ecology rather than inwardly absorbed by its own survival and the salvation of its own members." The groundswell of interest in gay rights by members at parish level cannot be ignored by the church. With same-sex marriage having become, arguably, one of the most divisive issues the church has faced (Robinson, 2013), how does this conflict over different perspectives get resolved to avoid further schisms in the church, the like of which has happened in Aotearoa New Zealand (Collins, 2014; Gates, 2018)? With the tension, and in some cases extreme

hardship, participants endured because of their supportive views, why not leave? Despite the spectrum of consequences that were reported, all participants chose to stay connected with the church because of their valuing relationship.

Staying connected through the conflict

Participants' valuing relationship that underpinned their decision to stay connected to the church operated on multiple levels. First and foremost, participants valued their relationship with God; their faith and vocation were at the heart of who they were as individuals. Secondly, they valued their relationship and sense of belonging to their institution as a structure, and the Christian fellowship within it, as a source that nurtured their faith. Over and above any disparity in views, participants believed in the overall mission of the church. Thirdly, participants valued their relationships with the LGBTIQ+ community and were compelled to fight church injustices against them. Fourthly, participants valued authentic relationship to self which required them to be true to themselves and their faith-based values.

Giving priority to valuing relationship did not mean wanting to be in good relationship with everyone. Participants recognised that all relationships inevitably run into conflict; along with the good comes the bad. If the relationship, such as with their institutions for example, was deemed worthy in so much as the benefits outweighs the conflicts, a commitment is made to all of it.

Unswerving commitment.

The process of staying connected through conflict—diverging ideologies, holding a space and revisiting—is not easy for participants, personally or professionally. I concur with Hildebrandt (2012) that, due to their formal ties with their institutions, clergy face greater risk than laity in supporting gay rights particularly if their view goes against their church's stance. Both espousing supportive views and choosing to stay connected shows courage which comes from a clear sense of knowing, and being connected with, oneself and one's values. There is the perception by some conservatives/evangelicals that supportive clergy are enemies of the church and threaten its survival. This thesis argues strongly against these simplistic claims purporting instead that these individuals are faithful Christians who are allies of the church and unswervingly committed to its overall aims. It is because of their valuing relationship with God and the church that they are prepared to remain with the tension and conflict they experience. Furthermore,

the way supportive clergy reflect and make accessible the love of God to all people openly, sensitively, and respectfully means they have much to contribute to its survival and growth in the future.

Living congruently.

Ultimately, for clergy who support same-sex marriage it is all about being congruent and living with integrity; it is about mirroring Jesus' example and living the gospel in action, through thought and deed, in the world. Valuing relationship contributed to participants' supportive views, led to the ongoing reciprocal process of holding a space and revisiting, and underpinned their decision to stay connected to their institutions and calling through conflict. Each of these was essential for participants to live with integrity according to their faith-based value system with those in the world around them. By upholding each of these parts of the overarching process, participants remained true to their faith-based values, remained with their institutions to which they felt a great sense of belonging, while fully embracing principles of social justice and upholding ethical belief and practice.

Comparing data from Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia

Data collection for this study took place in Australia in the run up to, and during, the same-sex marriage postal vote in 2017, and prior to legislative changing permitting marriage between same-sex couples. Despite this, the pathways participants took through the phase of diverging ideologies were similar regardless of where individuals lived. Because Australian participants were at a different stage of the legislative process, they tended to anticipate how they might position themselves—conform to rules, dance along the edges or break rank—if marriage equality went ahead, as opposed to those in Aotearoa New Zealand who responded from the position of what they were already doing. Despite this difference, there were similar patterns of responses from participants from both countries. This similarity between both was found in the way Australian participants dealt with the issue of homosexuality and proposed marriage equality bill in the lead up to the national postal vote within their institutions, congregations, and wider communities. As a result, it is likely that if the study was conducted after the marriage equality bill passed certain data might change although it is unlikely to change the overall theoretical construct.

Research implications

Implications for the church

Since this study commenced, there have been certain significant shifts toward the blessing of same-sex marriage by some religious institutions (Baird, 2018; Riordan, 2018; Whitaker, 2018). However, religious hierarchy and policy-makers could consider seriously the findings of this study that show how many churches have been responding negatively to some of its clergy. If love and relationship is at the heart of the Christian message, then the actions of vilifying, punishing, and alienating clergy do not embody these principles. These responses do not seem to fit with Christianity. There is a call for the church to recognise these individuals as faithful Christians who follow Jesus' example of love and compassion and are committed to the church and its aims.

Much of the church's reaction to same-sex marriage has been either a fight (confrontation), flight (abandoning), or freeze (remaining quiet) response. Churches have a decision to make. It can hold fast to traditional views but jeopardise their relevance in society as fewer people join and more liberally-minded people leave. While the church may well survive this, they run the risk of becoming an elitist fundamentalist group. Or, to avoid schisms, hierarchy can seek ways to proactively facilitate bringing about positive change that is congruent with extant knowledge and reflects the Christian message of love and inclusiveness. If the church chooses the latter, findings from this study, together with guidelines from the social justice literature, can direct policy-makers.

Implications from the findings.

Firstly, hierarchy need to be more open to those with new ideas and who bring different ways of thinking. There is an array of different responses by institutions toward supportive clergy regardless of their stance on same-sex marriage. The church might better deal with conflict by learning from those who are taking a more constructive approach and supporting its clergy. This does not come with expectations that everyone should think the same but is about being respectfully and reflectively open to the conversations that will lead to more understanding, tolerance, and support for these agents of change. As a result, institutions might recognise the contributions supportive clergy, as allies, can make toward developing Christian ideologies that connect it to humanity.

Secondly, hierarchy might role-model being effective facilitators of change by engaging in dialogue and having the hard discussions. This involves creating a safe space for all to feel heard and initiating the difficult conversations about sex which has always been a taboo subject for the church. Not only is the issue of homosexuality on clergy's minds (Olson & Cadge, 2002), the groundswell of interest by parishioners over same-sex marriage means the church has a responsibility to prepare and equip its clergy to work with these issues in their parishes. Ensuring training for ordinands, including a balanced view of latest biblical hermeneutics, consciousness raising and social education, such as the opportunity to talk to those for whom the issues (i.e., same-sex marriage) matters, is vital.

Thirdly, one of the biggest challenges facing international institutions today is establishing appropriate rules for its members across vastly different cultural milieus. The fallout can be seen with the rifts occurring between the Episcopal church in America, who are in favour of blessing same-sex marriages, and the Anglican church in Africa, who are vehemently opposed. While global guidelines are needed, the church must recognise the cultural, historical, and political influences shaping people's realities. Rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, institutions might lessen their control by localising decision-making responsibilities. This would facilitate some members from progressive countries, such as Aotearoa New Zealand which has a strong culture of social activism, the freedom to act in accordance with their conscience. However, the negative responses from Aotearoa New Zealand noted in these findings indicate that localisation would not automatically guarantee such freedom.

Although it is understandable that hierarchy be concerned about keeping the church together, there should be, as George stated, "*No unity over injustice. In other words, you don't hold things together if by holding them together you create injustices*." Rather than being ruled by fear of schisms, the church needs to acknowledge and take responsibility for the harms being perpetrated by the church against lesbian and gay individuals whilst they deliberate: "*There's people dying, committing suicide, depressed, while we're having this intellectual debate*" (Philip). Such consequences arising from being marginalised by the church can lead to a loss of life and a lost experience of coming into relationship with God.

Implications from the social justice literature.

Social justice literature across the disciplines of research, psychology, and leadership draw us toward theoretical frameworks that have a critical and constructivist underpinning. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), "critical theory involves social transformation and emancipation through critique, whereas, for constructivism, even though a normative dimension exists, the main objective involves understanding through reconstruction" (p. 31). Both these and other social justice theories, however, share commonalities that apply to facilitating social change. These include: deliberators being accountable; staying experience-near and recognising real people are at the centre of deliberations who must be conceptualised as contributors to knowledge development rather than as detached objects; cultivating an ethical stance that will position work to counter destructive socio-political discourses (D'Arrigo-Patrick, Hoff, Knudson-Martin, & Tuttle, 2016). Working toward "careful integrative thinking and practice" in multiple contexts that draws from multiple models while being "anchored in disciplined thinking" are recommended (Imber-Black, 2014, pp. 373-374). These social justice frameworks present challenges to logical positivism arguing that "dynamic social and cultural systems influence human action rather than natural laws" (Richards, Graber, & Woods, 2018, p. 220). Therefore, they encourage embracing "the possibility of social change and seek to illuminate how socially constructed meaning may change over time" (Richards et al., 2018, p. 220). Social justice leadership calls for people-centred leadership that will foster positive relationships with lesbian and gay individuals, their families and communities, grounded in a proactive way, take risks and innovative approaches to bring about change that embraces "the values of democracy, inclusion, representation, and difference" (Wang, 2018, p. 471). It is up to hierarchy to change the perception that the church can be rule-bound to the point where they no longer care for people.

Implications for clergy who support same-sex marriage

Consistently, participants reported feeling alone on their respective journeys in the challenges they faced with their institutions. In part, this stemmed from their reluctance to speak out about their negative experiences to protect the reputations of their institution and those within. Participants welcomed the opportunity to share with me in a safe, confidential environment where they felt heard and understood. Telling their stories—the struggles and triumphs—might encourage and reassure others on a similar journey that they are not alone. Clergy who support same-sex marriage might also take

comfort in the fact that, in following their hearts, they are: role-modelling to others who are struggling with issues they once were; and holding the hope for lesbian and gay individuals, who may have only ever known rejection by the church, to know that they acceptable to God for who they are.

Implications for clergy who are struggling with same-sex marriage

My experience of clergy who were struggling and feeling stuck over the issue of same-sex marriage was an impetus for conducting this research. My hope is that by sharing the stories of my participants and their process, the findings might offer an alternative perspective of same-sex marriage that offer these individuals a way forward.

Study strengths and limitations

In Chapter 4, Research Methods, I addressed the strengths of the study using the evaluation criteria of credibility, originality, resonance, usefulness (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014a; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this section, using these criteria as a guideline, I revisit the strengths and consider the limitations of the study that became apparent during the research process.

The credibility of this study is demonstrated through my having intimate knowledge of the substantive area under investigation which has fuelled my passion for pursuing what I consider to be a meaningful inquiry. Throughout the research, analysis focused on the perspective of the participants knowing that I come from a specific position and bring a particular lens. Despite the best intentions of staying true to the data, separating my own presuppositions during analysis was, at times, challenging. A CGT approach adds to the credibility of the study through transparent methods such as reflexive analytical and methodological memos, audit trails and continually 'holding that doubt' (K. Charmaz, personal communication, September 25, 2017) about the way I conducted my data collection and analysis. For example, not disclosing my sexual orientation to participants unless asked was one way of minimising the influencing of gathered data.

While there is material that supports and confirms the findings of this study, there is little material that directly contradicts the findings. One of the reasons might be due to the limited amount of research into this topic with this population. Whereas previous studies have investigated clergy's responses to homosexuality and gay rights, this is an original study in that it is the first known inquiry specifically exploring clergy's responses to same-sex marriage, and within the Australasian region. The findings

contribute to a small but growing literature about this subset of clergy and its strengths are demonstrated in the way it shows a social process that presents supportive clergy's lives as complex, processual, and multi-faceted. The findings extrapolate, in depth, what causes people to diverge from traditional religious views about same-sex marriage; what happens to people who go against the church's traditional way of thinking; the way in which people who do diverge from institutional ideologies can face extreme hardship as well as the way in which people can be supported; the process of how individuals deal with such conflict within the church.

It presents news ideas by revealing explicit and implicit meanings that, through member checking, make sense to participants, such as uncovering the centrality of valuing relationship in formulating their supportive views and how this also informs the way they sustain their positions through holding a space and revisiting. The findings are significant in that they challenge perceptions by some opponents that supportive clergy are troublemakers and enemies of the church. This thesis argues that these individuals, who live the gospel in action, are faithful Christians committed to the church and have a valuable contribution to make. The pronouncements open a conversation which could prove advantageous for clergy and hierarchy by highlighting the need for the church to learn how to support these clergy and work constructively to bring about positive change.

These findings reflect these participants in this moment and within this environment. As such, they do not represent the views of all Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. While the findings are not generalisable, they may be transferable to other organisations undergoing social change; however, this is never a whole picture. Neither is this a research that claims to go beyond a substantive theory. Nevertheless, there is an important argument to be had here: How can we call ourselves a church with love of humanity when we do not show that love and respect to people who are change agents within the church? Not all supportive clergy have stayed with the church. Many have left, either of their own choosing or having been forced out. Unfortunately, attempts to source such people to interview were not forthcoming. Another limitation was that this study focused on western religious perspectives and does not consider or distinguish how cultural influences might impact clergy's supportive views. Also, parishioners were not interviewed and their perspectives, in conjunction with clergy, would have added depth and complexity to the study.

Recommendations for further research

This research set out to explain the processes underlying the lives and actions of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage who were affiliated with the Catholic Church and five mainline protestant churches, namely Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army. This analysis is not exhaustive, and the findings do not necessarily reflect the view of all supportive clergy from these institutions. However, I have provided a theory that has the potential to stimulate discussion and further inquiry. Because this is one of the first known studies specifically in this area, more research needs to be conducted in several domains. These include speaking with supportive clergy from a wider range of denominations, including evangelical churches, and faith traditions (Christian and non-Christian). Further study might compare the Aotearoa New Zealand data, which is known as a progressive country with a strong history of social activism[34], with data from other, particularly conservative, parts of the world. It might also include interviewing parishioners to add depth and complexity to these findings. Another important area of research might investigate clergy who have left the church because of their views on same-sex marriage who, if going by the findings in this study, could experience immense pain on leaving their institution. A US study by Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, and Wright (2008) found that Whites were more supportive of gay rights than African-Americans, so further inquiry into responses of supportive clergy from different ethnical backgrounds, such as Māori and Aborigine, would be valuable to establish the cultural impact on their responses to same-sex marriage.

Closing thoughts

Learnings from conducting this research on both a personal and professional level have been profound, and I have been challenged academically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. There have also been some unforeseen turns. Entering this research, I expected supportive clergy to possess and be motivated by certain social justice principles. I never imagined the extent to which valuing relationship would be central in driving their supportive views of same-sex marriage, and their actions in sustaining those views. Contrary to expectations that such individuals were a certain personality type or rebel-rousers, analysis revealed that the significance of valuing relationship that

---

[34] Aotearoa New Zealand was the first self-governing country in the world where women had the right to vote.

underpinned clergy's actions was consistent across age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, denomination, educational level, and personality type.

Many religious institutions have hidden behind the ramparts discounting calls for transformation as heresy or insurrection, while simultaneously promulgating the notion that religious traditionalism has all the answers (Riddell, 2019). I do not assume to have all the answers to this complex issue which religious institutions are grappling with. Yet, we are all—supporters, opponents and those who are ambivalent about same-sex marriage—in this together. Neither side is immune; heterosexual people can leave the debate; lesbian and gay individuals cannot.

> To adopt an "us and them" attitude is to perpetuate a duality that is fundamental to the problem. All great institutions of our age have undergone either reforms or death. History and authority have seen great bastions against change until the tsunami of public opinion has washed them away in astonishing ways. (Riddell, 2019, p. 13)

While the mortar may be crumbling, we can, like the participants in this study, choose to live in the true Spirit of Christian love and relationship, ensuring a place for all to live in freedom rather than fear.

References

Abbott, E. (2013). *A history of marriage*. London, UK: Duckworth.

Achtemeier, M. (2014). *The bible's yes to same-sex marriage: An evangelical's change of heart*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Adhar, R. (2014). Solemnisation of same-sex marriage and religious freedom. *Ecclesiatical Law Journal, 16*, 183-305. doi:10.1o1 7/SO9 56618X 4 000507

Adler, G. (2012). An opening in the congregational closet? Boundary-bridging culture and membership privileges for gays and lesbians in Christian religious congregations. *Social Problems, 59*(2), 177-206.

Alford-Harkey, M., & Haffner, D. (2014). *Bisexuality: Making the invisible visible in faith communities*. Westport, CT: Religious Institute.

Allen, D., & Oleson, T. (1999). Shame and internalized homophobia in gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 37*(3), 33-43.

Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of predjudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Report of the American Psychological Association task force on the appropriate therapeutic responses to sexual orientation*. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/therapeutic-response.pdf

American Psychological Association. (2011). *Resolution on marriage equality for same-sex couples*. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from https://www.apa.org/about/policy/same-sex.pdf

Ammerman, N. (2002). Connecting mainline Protestant congregations with public life. In R. Wuthnow & J. Evans (Eds.), *The quiet hand of God: Faith based activism and the public role of mainline Protestantism* (pp. 129-158). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Andersen, R., & Fetner, T. (2008). Economic inequality and intolerance: Attitudes toward homosexuality in 35 democracies. *American Journal of Political Science, 52*(4), 942-958. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00352.x

Anderson, J. (1997). The lesbian and gay liberation movement in the Presbyterian church (U.S.A.), 1974-1996. *Journal of Homosexuality, 34*(2), 37-65. doi:10.1300/J082v34n02_02

Anderson, J. (2011). *"Incompatible": The construction of the homosexual subject in American mainline Protestantism* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Loyola University, Chicago, IL. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/docview/919479609?accountid=8440

Anderson, J., Georgantis, C., & Kapelles, T. (2017). Predicting support for marriage equality in Australia. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 69*, 256-262.

Andrews, T. (2012). What is social constructionism? *The Grounded Theory Review, 11*(1), 39-46.

Archer, A. (1998). *Constructivism and Christian teaching*. Presented at the meeting of the 23rd International Faith and Learning Seminar, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya. Retrieved from http://christintheclassroom.org/vol_23/23cc_085-101.htm

Aslam, S., & Emmanuel, P. (2010). Formulating a researchable question: A critical step for facilitating good clinical research. *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS, 31*(1), 47-50.

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee. (2012). *Guidelines and procedures*. Retrieved from https://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/guidelines-and-procedures?nav=inthissection

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). *Religion in Australia, 2016*. Retrieved December 18, 2018, from https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/7E65A144540551D7CA258148000E2B85

Australian Law Reform Commission. (1981). *Aboriginal marriages and family structures: Marriage in traditional Aboriginal societies*. Retrieved December 27, 2018, from https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/12.%20Aboriginal%20Marriages%20and%20Family%20Structures/marriage-traditional-aboriginal-societie

Australian Marriage Equality. (2009). *'A failed experiment': Why civil unions are no substitute for marriage equality*. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from http://www.australianmarriageequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/A-failed-experiment.pdf

Aveyard, H. (2007). *Doing a literature review in health and social care: A practical guide*. Maidenhead, NY: Open University Press.

Aveyard, H. (2010). *Doing a literature review in health and social care: A practical guide* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead, UK: McGraw Hill International.

Bainbridge, R., Whiteside, M., & Mccalman, J. (2013). Being, knowing, and doing: A phronetic approach to constructing grounded theory with Aboriginal Australian partners. *Qualitative Health Research, 23*(2), 275-288. doi:10.1177/1049732312467853

Baird, A. (2018). *Anglican Church will bless same-sex relationships*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2018/05/anglican-church-will-bless-same-sex-relationships.html

Baker, A., & Brauner-Otter, S. (2015). My friend is gay... The effects of social contact on Christian evangelicals' beliefs about gays and lesbians. *Review of Religious Research, 57*(2), 239-268.

Baptist Union of New Zealand. (2015). *Working party report on same-sex relationships, same-sex marriage, and Baptist church autonomy*. Retrieved from http://www.westbaptist.org.nz/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Baptist-Working-Party-Report-on-same-sex-marriage-etc-2015.pdf

Barclay, S., & Fisher, S. (2003). The states and the differing impetus for divergent paths on same-sex marriage. *Policy Studies Journal, 31*, 331-352.

Baunach, D. (2012). Changing same-sex marriage attitudes in America from 1988 through 2010. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 76*(2), 364.

Becker, P. (1993). Common pitfalls in published grounded theory research. *Qualitative Health Research, 3*(2), 254-260. doi:org/10.1177/104973239300300207

Benoliel, J. (1996). Grounded theory and nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research, 6*(3), 406-428. doi:org/10.1177/104973239600600308

Berger, P., Davie, G., & Fokas, E. (2008). *Religious America, secular Europe? A theme and variations*. New York, NY: Ashgate.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York, NY: Penguine Putnam Inc.

Berkeley, G. (1982). A treatise concerning the principles of human knowledge. Cambridge, MA: Hackett.

Berkowitz, E. (2012). *Sex and punishment: Four thousand years of judging desire*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.

Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bordeyne, P. (2006). Homosexuality, seen in relation to ecumenical dialogue: What really matters to the Catholic Church. *New Blackfriars, 87*(1012), 561-577.

Borgman, A. (2009). LGB allies and Christian identity: A qualitative exploration of resolving conflicts and integrating identities. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56*(4), 508-520. doi:10.1037/a0016691

Bos, D. (2017). "Equal rites before the law": Religious celebrations of same-sex marriage relationships in the Netherlands, 1960-1990s. *Theology & Sexuality, 23*(3), 188-208. doi:10.1080/13558358.2017.1351123

Boswell, J. (1980). *Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicargo Press.

Boswell, J. (1996). *The marriage of likeness: Same-sex unions in pre-modern Europe*. London, UK: Fontana Press.

Bowen, G. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 8*(1), 137-152.

Bowers, B., & Schatzman, L. (2009). Dimensional analysis. In J. M. Morse, P. N. Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz, & A. Clarke (Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 86-106). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Bowland, S., Foster, K., & Vosler, A. (2013). Culturally competent and spiritually sensitive therapy with lesbian and gay Christians. *Social Work, 58*(4), 321-332.

Boyer, S. (2012). Churches say they will snub gay weddings. *The Dominion Post*. Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/7591789/Churches-say-they-will-snub-gay-weddings

Brandom, R. (2011). *Perspectives on pragmatism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brentano, F. (1874). *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Brewer, P. (2014). Public opinion about gay rights and gay marriage. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 26*(3), 279-282. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edu029

Brooke, S. (1993). The morality of homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality, 25*(4), 77-100. doi:10.1300/J082v25n04_06

Brown, J. (2014). *Gay and okay: A conservative Christian's mind change*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris.

Brownson, J. (2013). *Bible, gender, sexuality: Reframing the church's debate on same-sex relationships*. Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Brumbaugh, S., Sanchez, L., Nock, S., & Wright, J. (2008). Attitudes toward gay marriage in states undergoing marriage law transformation. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*(2), 345-359. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00486.x

Bryant, A. (2002). Re-grounding grounded theory. *Journal of Information Technology Theory and Application, 4*(1), 25-42.

Bryant, A. (2003). A constructive/ist response to Glaser. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 4*(1), 63-68. doi:org/10.17169/fqs-4.1.757

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. London, UK: Sage.

Bulmer, M. (1984). *The Chicago school of sociology: Institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Burgess, J. (1999). Framing the homosexual debate theologically: Lessons from the Presbyterian church (U.S.A.). *Review of Religious Research, 41*(2), 262-274.

Cadge, W., Day, H., & Wildeman, C. (2007). Bridging the denomination-congregation divide: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations respond to homosexuality. *Review of Religious Research, 48*(3), 245-259.

Cadge, W., Girouard, J., Olson, L., & Lyleroehr, M. (2012). Uncertainty in clergy's perspectives on homosexuality: A research note. *Review of Religious Research, 54*(3), 371-387. doi:10.1007/s13644-012-0058-1

Cadge, W., Lyleroehr, M., & Olson, L. (2012). Clergy and controversial family issues: Divorce and homosexuality as case studies. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 38*(1), 85-104.

Cadge, W., Olson, L., & Wildeman, C. (2008). How denominational resources influence debate about homosexuality in mainline protestant congregations. *Sociology of Religion, 69*(2), 187-207.

Cadge, W., & Wildeman, C. (2008). Facilitators and advocates: How mainline Protestant clergy respond to homosexuality. *Sociological Perspectives, 51*(3), 587-603. doi:10.1525/sop.2008.51.3.587

Caldwell, J. (2010). The viability of Christian same-sex unions: Why scripturally normed faith communities must support homosexual relationships. *Theology & Sexuality, 16*(1), 59-76. doi:10.1558/tse.v16i1.59

Cameron, B. (1966). *Marriage: An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Retrieved from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/marriage/1

Campbell, J. (2006). *The New Zealand Civil Union Act: New challenges for private international law*. Retrieved February 27, 2019, from https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/vuwlr37&div=4&id=&page=&t=1558139368

Campbell, P. (2011). *Peirce, pragmatism, and the right way of thinking*. Albuquerque, CA: Sandia National Laboratories.

Carmody, D. (1985). Marriage in Roman Catholicism. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 28-40.

Carmody, D., & Carmody, J. (1993). Homosexuality and Roman Catholicism. In A. Swidler (Ed.), *Homosexuality and world religions* (pp. 135-148). Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.

Charmaz, K. (1990). 'Discovering' chronic illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science and Medicine, 30*(11), 1161-1172.

Charmaz, K. (1995). The body, identity, and self: Adapting to impairment. *The Sociological Quarterly, 36*(4), 657-680.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 397-412). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: Constructivist grounded theory methods for the twenty-first century. In J. Morse, P. Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz, & A. Clarke (Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp.127-154). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Charmaz, K. (2011). Grounded theory methods in social justice research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 359-380). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2014a). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2014b). Grounded theory in global perspective: Reviews by international researchers. *Qualitative Inquiry, 20*(9), 1074-1084. doi:10.1177/1077800414545235

Charmaz, K. (2017). The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry, 23*(1), 34-35.

Cheatham, C. (2006). *Predictors of Protestant clergy's attitudes toward pastoral care regarding issues of homosexuality* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Texas A & M University, College Station, TX. Retrieved from https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/ETD-TAMU-1129/CHEATHAM-DISSERTATION.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Clarke, A. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clarke, A. (2009). From grounded theory to situational analysis. What's new? Why? How? In J. Morse, P. Stern, J. Corbin, B. Bowers, K. Charmaz, & A. Clarke (Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 194-233). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Collins, S. (2013, April 23). Gay weddings ban: Churches say no. *Family First New Zealand*. Retrieved from https://www.familyfirst.org.nz/2013/04/gay-weddings-ban-churches-say-no/

Collins, S. (2014, July 26). Vicar quits over same-sex relationship stance. *Weekend Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11299352

Cook, M. (2017). *Marriage and partnering: Marriage in the 19th century*. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved from https://teara.govt.nz/en/marriage-and-partnering/page-2

Coontz, S. (2004). The world historical transformation of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*(4), 974-979. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00067.x

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons and evaluative criteria. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie, 16*(6), 418-427.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coulmont, B. (2005). Do the rite thing: Religious civil unions in Vermont. *Social Compass, 52*(2), 225-239. doi:10.1177/0037768605052604

Coyne, I. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; Merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Analytical Psychology, 26*(3), 623-630. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x

Cragun, R., Sumerau, J., & Williams, E. (2015). From Sodom to sympathy: LDS elites' discursive construction of homosexuality over time. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 54*(2), 291-310.

Craib, I. (1997). Social constructionism as a social psychosis. *Sociology, 31*(1), 1-15. doi:org/10.1177/0038038597031001002

Crary, D. (2019). *United Methodists confront possible split over LGBT issues*. Retrieved February 26, 2019, from https://www.foxnews.com/us/united-methodists-confront-possible-split-over-lgbt-issues?fbclid=IwAR2u1roYmC-4rqgyaAHgqQGHx1k__zyvydqF4AJEowH6WDoH1AEU7tN8igA

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cronin, P., Ryan, F., & Coughlan, M. (2008). Undertaking a litertaure review: A step by step approach. *British Journal of Nursing, 17*(1), 38-43.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Allen & Unwin.

Cunningham, M. (2005). Catholics and the concon: The church's response to the Massachusetts gay marriage. *Journal of Church and State, 47*(1), 19-42.

D'Arrigo-Patrick, J., Hoff, C., Knudson-Martin, C., & Tuttle, A. (2016). Navigating critical theory and postmodernism: Social justice and therapist power in family therapy. *Family Process, 56*(3), 574-588. doi:10.1111/famp.12236

Danforth, J. (2006). *Faith and politics: How the moral values debate divides America and how to move forward together*. New York, NY: Viking.

Darragh, N. (2019). Collaborate and free the Church. *Tui Motu Interislands, 234*, 13.

De Santis, S. (2007). Same-sex questions still vex Synod. *Anglican Journal, 133*(6), GS1-GS2.

Deakin, M. (2013). *'Fabulous gay wedding' is New Zealand's first*. Retrieved January 1, 2019, from https://www.uuworld.org/articles/first-new-zealand-gay-wedding

Deckman, M., Crawford, S., & Olson, L. (2008). The politics of gay rights and the gender gap: A perspective on the clergy. *Politics and Religion, 1*(3), 384-410. doi:10.1017/S1755048308000382

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston, MA: D. C. Health & Co.

Dewey, J. (1929). *The quest for certainty*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam.

Dewey, J. (1934). *A common faith*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dewey, J. (1925/1984). The development of American pragmatism. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *John Dewey: The later works, 1925-1953* (Vol. 2). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, J., Schlosser, L., Kinney, R., & Burkard, A. (2014). Faithful allies: The experiences of LGB-affirming, White Christian clergy. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 8*(3), 298-321. doi:10.1080/15538605.2014.933467

Dey, I. (1999). *Grounding grounded theory*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Dey, I. (2007). Grounding categories. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 167-190). London, UK: Sage.

Dick, B. (2005). *Grounded theory: A thumbnail sketch*. Retrieved September, 21, 2016, from http://www.aral.com.au/resources/grounded.html

Djupe, P., & Gilbert, C. (2002). The political voice of clergy. *Journal of Politics, 64*(2), 596-609.

Djupe, P., Lewis, A., & Jelen, T. (2016). Rights, reflections, and reciprocity: Implications of the same-sex marriage debate for tolerance and political process. *Politics and Religion, 9*, 630-648. doi:10.1017/S1755048316000547

Djupe, P., & Neiheisel, J. (2008a). Clergy deliberation on gay rights and homosexuality. *Polity, 40*(4), 411-435. doi:10.1057/palgrave.polity.2300095

Djupe, P., & Neiheisel, J. (2008b). Intra-organizational constraints on churches' public witness. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47*(3), 427-441.

Donnelly, N. (2013, July 29). *Pope Francis explicitly re-affirms the Catechism on homosexuality and criticizes the gay lobby as a serious problem*. Retrieved from http://protectthepope.com/?p=7813

Dourley, J. (2010). Homosexual marriage, the Vatican, and elements of a Jungian response. *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche, 4*(3), 47-46. doi:10.1525/jung.2010.4.3.37.

Dreyer, Y. (2008). Pastoral care and gays against the background of same-sex relationships in the Umwelt of the New Testament. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies, 64*(2), 739-765.

Dunn, W., Fletcher, M., Hodge, D. R., Lee, G., Milera, E., Saunders, R., & Wafer, J. (1994). *Peopling the empty mirror: The propsects for lesbian and gay Aboriginal History*. Sydney, Australia: The Australian Centre for Gay and Lesbian Research, University of Sydney.

Dunne, C. (2011). The place of the literature review in grounded theory research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 14*(2), 111-124.

Edwards, J. (2007). 'Marriage is sacred': The religious right's arguments against 'gay marriage' in Australia. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 9*(3), 247-261.

Elliot, N., & Lazenbatt, A. (2005). How to recognise a 'quality' grounded theory study. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 22*(3), 48-53.

Ellison, C., Acevedo, G., & Ramos-Wada, A. (2011). Religion and attitudes toward same-sex marriage among U.S. Latinos. *Social Science Quarterly, 92*(1), 35-56. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2011.00756.x

Estwick, D. (2010). *Learning to resolve conflicts within the Episcopal church: Strategies employed by clergy to reconcile differences over homosexuality* (Unpublished Doctoral disseration). Columbia University, New York, NY. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/docview/756480425/9C7A823F742A4F39PQ/1?accountid=8440

European Parliament Briefing. (2015). *European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2015 on the annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2013 and the European Union's policy on the matter.* Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2015-0076&language=EN&ring=A8-2015-0023

Farley, H. (2018). *Edinburgh church votes to split from the Scottish Episcopal Church in early sign of schism at decision to support gay marriage.* Retrieved March 8, 2019, from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/04/edinburgh-church-votes-split-scottish-episcopal-church-early/

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance.* Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Finocchiaro, M. (1988). *The Galileo affair: A documentary history.* Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Fischer. (1989). A bonding of choice: Values and identity among lesbian and gay religious leaders. *Journal of Homosexuality, 18*(3-4), 145-174. doi:10.1300/J082v18n03_08

Fish, S. (1990). How to recognize a poem when you see one. In D. Bartholomae & A. Petrosky (Eds.), *Ways of reading: An anthology for writers* (2nd ed., pp. 178-191). Boston, MA: Bedford Books of St Martin's Press.

Fisher, B., & Strauss, A. (1979). George Herbert Mead and the Chicago tradition of sociology. *Symbolic Interactionism, 2*(1), 9-26. doi:10.1525/si.1979.2.1.9

Fisher, D. (2014, May 29). Vicar exits in same-sex row: Anglican pastor says ruling body's plan to bless relationships goes against Bible teachings. *The New Zealand Herald,* p. 2. Retrieved from https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11263531

Fisher, R., Derison, D., Polley, C., Cadman, J., & Johnston, D. (1994). Religiousness, religious orientation, and attitudes towards gays and lesbians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 24*(7), 614-630. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1994.tb00603.x

Fordham University. (1999, March). *Ancient history sourcebook: A collection of contracts from Mesopotamia, c. 2300-428 BCE.* Retrieved from https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/mesopotamia-contracts.asp

Foucault, M. (1970/1979). Truth and power: An interview with Michael Foucault. *Critique of Anthropology, 4*(13/14), 131-137. doi:org/10.1177/0308275X79 00401311

Foucault, M. (2001). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences.* London, UK: Routledge.

Fox, R. (1983). *Kinship and marriage: An anthropological perspective (Cambridge studies in social and cultural anthropology).* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum.

Galper, J. (1975). *The politics of social services.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gates, C. (2018). *Splinter group splits from Anglican church over same-sex blessings*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/106783672/splinter-group-splits-from-anglican-church-over-samesex-blessings

Gay, D., Lynxwiler, J., & Smith, P. (2015). Religiosity, spirituality, and attitudes toward same-sex marriage: A cross-sectional cohort comparison. *SAGE Open, 5*(3), 1-14. doi:10.1177/2158244015602520

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gerow, B. (2010). *The pulpit at the end of the rainbow: How queer clergy enter into and maintain religious occupations* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Portland State University, Porland, OR. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. (UMI No. 1484269)

Giddens, A. (1976). *New rules of sociological method: A positive critique of interpretative sociologies*

Giddings, L., & Wood, P. (2006). How to survive (and enjoy) doing a thesis: The experiences of a methodological working group. *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand, 22*(1), 11-22.

Gil, D. (1998). *Confronting injustice and oppression: Concepts and strategies for social workers*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Giorgi, A. (1985). Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method. In A. Giorgi (Ed.), *Phenomenology and psychological research* (pp. 8-22). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualisation constrasted with description*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (2003). *The grounded theory persepctive II: Discription's remodeling of grounded theory methodology*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (2004). Remodelling grounded theory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 5*(2), Art. 4.

Glaser, B. (2005). *The grounded theory perspective III: Theoretical coding*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1965). *Awareness of dying*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Goldingay, J., LeMarquand, G., Sumner, G., & Westberg, D. (2011). Same-sex marriage and Anglican theology: A view from the traditionalists. *Anglican Theological Review, 93*(1), 1-50.

Goldkuhl, G., & Cronholm, S. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 9*(2), 187-205.

Gomes, P. J. (1996). *The good book: Reading the bible with mind and heart*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

Good, D., Jenkins, W., Kittredge, C., & Rogers, E. (2011). A theology of marriage including same-sex couples: A view from the liberals. *Anglican Theological Review, 93*(1), 51.

Goroncy, G. (2014, August 12). *The marriage amendment act one year on: How are the churches responding?* Retrieved from http://jasongoroncy.com/2014/08/12/the-marriage-amendment-act-one-year-on-how-are-the-churches-responding/

Gough, B. (2003). Deconstructing reflexivity. In L. Findlay & B. Gough (Eds.), *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences* (pp. 21-35). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Sceince.

Graff, E. (1999). *What is marriage for?* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Grant, B. (2003). Mapping the pleasures and risks of supervision. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 24*(2), 175-190.

Green, B. (2009). The use and abuse of religious beliefs in dividing and conquering between socially marginalized groups: The same-sex marriage debate. *American Psychologist, 64*(8), 695-709. doi:10.1037/a0017214

Greenberg, D. (1990). *The construction of homosexuality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Greenberg, D., & Bystryn, M. (1982). Christian intolerance of homosexuality. *American Journal of Sociology, 88*, 515-549.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-118). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Haack, S. (1993). *Evidence and inquiry: Toward reconstruction in epistemology*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Habermas, J. (1992). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (F. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Halliday, K. (2017). *10 cases of posthumous marriage*. Retrieved March 5, 2019, from http://listverse.com/2017/11/16/10-cases-of-posthumous-marriage/

Hammersley, M. (1992). *What's wrong with ethnography?* London, UK: Routledge.

Haneke, F. (2018). "Now there are diversities of gift, but the same spirit." (1Cor 12:4): Images of the self and concepts of office of LGBTQ* pastors in Germany. *Theology & Sexuality, 24*(2), 128-142. doi:10.1080/13558358.2018.1463641

Hanigan, J. (2004). The centrality of marriage: Homosexuality and the Roman Catholic argument. *Ecumenical Review, 50*(1), 54-63.

Hansen, T. (2008). Critical conflict resolution theory and practice. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 25*(4), 404-427. doi:10.1002/crq.215

Hantal, B. (2011). *Social transformation and development: In the context of globalization*. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications.

Hatzenbuehler, M. L., McLaughlin, K., Keyes, K., & Hasin, D. (2010). The impact of institutional discrimination on psychiatric disorders in lesbian, gay and bisexual persons: A prospective study. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(3), 452-459. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.168815

Hatzenbuehler, M. L., O'Cleirigh, C., Grasso, C., Mayer, K., Safren, S., & Bradford, J. (2012). Effect of same-sex marriage laws on health care use and expenditures in sexual minority men: A quasi-natural experiment. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*(2), 285-291. doi:10.2105/ajph.2011.300382

Heermann, M., Wiggins, M., & Rutter, P. (2007). Creating a space for spiritual practice: Pastoral possibilities with sexual minorities. *Pastoral Psychology, 55*, 711-721.

Helminiak, D. (2000). *What the bible really says about homosexuality*. Novato, CA: Alamo Square Press.

Henrickson, M. (2009). Sexuality, religion, and authority: Toward reframing estrangement. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, 28*(1-2), 48-62. doi:10.1080/15426430802643570

Henwood, G. (2014). Is equal marriage an Anglican ideal? *Journal of Anglican Studies, 13*(1), 92-113. doi:10.1017/S1740355314000229

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition.* London, UK: Sage.

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*(3), 274-294.

Hildebrandt, T. (2012). *Journeys of heterosexual-identified individuals with an evangelical Christian background from anti-gay to pro-gay* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Fielding Graduate University, Ann Arbor, MI. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/pqdtglobal/docview/1074792450/B2547A7D77574E49PQ/1?accountid=8440

Hilkemeijer, A. (2018). *In long-awaited response to Ruddock review, the government pushes hard on religious freedom.* Retrieved December 30, 2018, from https://theconversation.com/in-long-awaited-response-to-ruddock-review-the-government-pushes-hard-on-religious-freedom-108750

Hill, H., & Watson, J. (2006). In Christ there is no gay or straight? Homosexuality and the Episcopal church. *Anglican and Episcopal History, 75*(1), 37-68.

Hodge, D. R. (2005). Epistemological frameworks, homosexuality, and religion: How people of faith understand the intersection between homosexuality and religion. *Social Work, 50*(3), 207-218.

Howe, C. (2007). Sexual borderlands: Lesbian and gay migration, human rights, and the Metropolitan Community Church. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 4*(2), 88-106. doi:10.1525/srsp.2007.4.2.88

Hudon, M., Milne, M., Reynolds, P., Russell, K., & Smith, B. (2010). *Te Ara Tika - Guidelines for Māori research ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members.* Retrieved May 15, 2015, from http://www.hrc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/Te%20Ara%20Tika%20FINAL%202020 10.pdf

Hunt, M. (2015). Jesus ACTED UP: Learning with Robert Goss. *Theology & Sexuality, 21*(3), 182-188. doi:10.1080/13558358.2015.1222678

Hunter, J. (1991). *Culture wars: The struggle to define America.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Hunter, J., & Sargeant, K. (1993). Religion, women, and the transformation of public culture. *Social Research, 60*(3), 545-570.

Hutchinson, A., Johnston, L., & Breckon, J. (2011). Grounded theory-based research within exercise psychology: A critical review. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 8*(3), 247-272. doi:org/10.1080/14780880903304527

Hutchinson, S., Wilson, M., & Wilson, H. (1994). Benefits of participating in research interviews. *Image - The Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 26*(2), 161.

Imber-Black, E. (2014). Eschewing certainties: The creation of family therapists in the 21st century. *Family Process, 53*(3), 371-379.

Jackson, A. (2018). *Church wrestles with same-sex issues.* Retrieved December 31, 2018, from https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/comment/editorials/101986570/church-wrestles-with-samesex-issues

Jakobsson, N., Kotsadam, A., & Jakobsson, S. (2013). Attitudes toward same-sex marriage: The case of Scandinavia. *Journal of Homosexuality, 60*(9), 1349-1360. doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.806191

James, W. (1902). *Varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature.* Mineloa, NY: Dover Publications Inc.

James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Johnson, L. (2014, June 22). *Gay people are detrimental to society, says Archbishop of Singapore*. Retrieved from http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/gay-people-are-detrimental-society-says-archbishop-singapore220614

Jones, R., & Cox, D. (2009). *Mainline Protestant clergy views on theology and gay and lesbian issues: Findings from the 2008 clergy voices survey.* Public Religion Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/2008-Mainline-Protestant-Clergy-LGBT-Issues.pdf

Jones, R., & Cox, D. (2010). *Religion and same-sex marriage in California: A new look at attitudes and values two years after Proposition 8*. Retrieved from http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Religion-Same-sex-Marriage-in-California-Survey-report.pdf

Jones, R., Cox, D., & Navarro-Rivera, J. (2014). *A shifting landscape: A decade of change in American attitudes about same-sex marriage and LGBT issues.* Public Religion Research Institute. Retrieved from http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014.LGBT_REPORT.pdf

Karp, P. (2017). Australia says yes to same-sex marriage in historic postal vote. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/15/australia-says-yes-to-same-sex-marriage-in-historic-postal-survey

Kazyak, E. (2011). Same-sex marriage in a welcoming world: Rights consciousness of heterosexuals in liberal religious institutions. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 8*(3), 192-203. doi:10.1007/s13178-011-0051-4

Ke, J., & Wenglensky, S. (2010). *Keep it simple: Grounded theory*. Retrieved May 2, 2017, from http://avantgarde-jing.blogspot.com/2010/03/grounded-theory.html

Keenan, J. (2007). Can we talk? Theological ethics and sexuality. *Theological Studies, 68*(1), 113.

Kelle, U. (2007). The development of categories: Different approaches in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 191-213). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Kennedy, P., & Whitlock, M. (1997). Therapeutic implications of conservative clergy views on sexuality: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 23*(2), 140-153.

Ketner, K. (1987). Charles Sanders Peirce. In J. Stuhr (Ed.), *Classical American philosophy* (pp. 13-92). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ketner, K. (1998). *His glassy essence: An autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbuilt University Press.

Kettell, S. (2013). I do, thou shalt not: Religious opposition to same-sex marriage in Britain. *The Political Quarterly, 84*(2), 247-255. doi:10.1111/j.1467-923X.2013.12009.x

Kieschnick, G. (2009, August 24). *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod condemns ELCA heresy allowing 'Gay' pastors*. Retrieved from https://americansfortruth.com/2009/08/28/lutheran-church-missouri-synod-condemns-elca-heresy-allowing-gay-pastors/

Kim, B. (2001). Social constructivism. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology* (pp. 55-61). Retrieved from http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Social_Constructivism

Kirby, A. (2008). Gay-affirmative therapy and emerging integrative solutions: Working with ego-dissonant gay male clients [part one]. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling, 28*(2), 69-91.

Kirby, A. (2009). Gay-affirmative therapy and emerging integrative solutions: Working with ego-dissonant gay male clients [part two]. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling, 29*(1), 22-35.

Kirby, A., McKenzie-Green, B., McAra-Couper, J., & Nayar, S. (2017). Same-sex marriage: A dilemma for parish priests. *Sexuality and Culture, 21*(3), 901-918. doi:10.1007/s12119-017-9414-1

Kirchgaessner, S. (2015). *Pope reforms Catholic's church marriage annulment process*. Retrieved March 13, 2019, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/08/pope-radically-reforms-catholic-churchs-marriage-annulment-process

Krull, L. (2015). *Doing boundary work as an "inclusive" group: A qualitative study of a liberal congregation* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. Retrieved from https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:4320eb82-9ece-4338-b0ab-f246d655f7cb

Kuhn, T. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Layder, D. (1998). *Sociological practice: Linking theory and social research*. London, UK: Sage.

Lease, S., Horne, S., & Noffsinger-Frazier, N. (2005). Affirming faith experiences and psychological health for caucasian lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(3), 378-388. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.3.378

Lease, S., & Shulman, J. (2003). A preliminary investigation of the role of religion for family members of lesbian, gay male, or bisexual male and female individuals. *Counseling and Values, 47*, 195-209.

Lee, J. (2013, May 3). Same-sex marriage: City churches say no but one is taking a different stand. *Auckland City Harbour News*. Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/auckland-city-harbour-news/8623328/Same-sex-marriage-City-churches-say-no-but-one-is-taking-a-different-stand

Lemaitre, J. (2012). By reason alone: Catholicism, constitutions, and sex in the Americas. *I.CON, 10*(2), 493-511. doi:10.1093/icon/mor060

Lempert, L. (2007). Asking questions of the data: Memo writing in the grounded theory tradition. In K. Charmaz & A. Bryant (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 245-264). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Lienemann, W. (2004). Churches and homosexuality: An overview of recent official church statements on sexual orientation. *Ecumenical Review, 50*(1), 1-40.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163-188). Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Loader, W. (2014). Marriage and sexual relations in the New Testament world. In A. Thatcher (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of theology, sexuality, and gender* (pp. 198-205). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Loftus, E. (1975). Leading questions and the eyewitness report. *Cognitive Psychology, 7*, 560-572.

Loughlin, G. (2018). Catholic homophobia. *Theology, 12*(3), 188-196. doi:10.1177/004057IXI7749147

Love, P., Block, M., Jannaronne, A., & Richardson, P. (2005). Identity interaction: Exploring the spiritual experiences of lesbian and gay college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(2), 193-209.

Mah, C. (2005). The history of marriage. *Law Now, 29*(6), 25-27.

Mahaffy, K. (1996). Cognitive dissonance and it's resolution: A study of lesbian Christians. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 35*(4), 392-402.

Marcuse, H. (1941). *Reason and revolution: Hegel and the rise of social theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univeristy Press.

Marriage [Definition of Marriage] Amendment Act. (2013 No 20). Retrieved January, 2014, from http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2013/0020/latest/whole.html

Marx, C. (1852). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Retrieved July 30, 2015, from https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1346/1346-h/1346-h.htm

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1937). *The communist manifesto*. London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3), [Article 8]. doi:org/10.17169/fqs-11.3.1428

Massey, S. (2014). *Realistic priests: Same-gender marriage conflict, the realm of God, and clergy leadership* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/pqdtglobal/docview/1537055978/F156311DEB834754PQ/1?accountid=8440

Masters, C. (2004, June 5). Top bishop's vision - a world without gays. *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=3570843

Maynard, M. (1994). Methods, practice and epistemology: The debate about feminism and research. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective* (pp. 10-27). London, UK: Taylor & Francis.

McCoskrie, B. (2013, April 12). *77 politicians commit act of 'cultural vandalism' [Press release]*. Retrieved from https://www.familyfirst.org.nz/2013/04/77-politicians-commit-act-of-cultural-vandalism/

McQueeney, K. (2009). "We are God's children, y'all:" Race, gender, and sexuality in lesbian-and gay-affirming congregations. *Social Problems, 56*(1), 151-173. doi:10.1525/sp.2009.56.1.151

Meek, E. (2015). *The marriage division: A case study on clerical dissension in the United Methodist Church* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Iowa State University, IA. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1601838)

Melia, K. (1996). Rediscovering Glaser. *Qualitative Health Research, 6*(3), 368-378. doi:org/10.1177/104973239600600305

Meza, A. (2013). *The linguistic performance of sexual identity by an openly gay Christian minister* (Unpublished Master's thesis). San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and theses Global. (UMI No. 1545255)

Michel, S. (1984). American conscience and the unconscious: Psychoanalysis and the rise of personal religion, 1906-1963. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought, 7*, 387-421.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mills, C. (1967). *The sociological imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International Journal of Nursing Practice, 12*, 8-13.

Miner, J., & Connoley, J. (2002). *The children are free: Reexamining the biblical evidence on same-sex relationships*. Indianapolis, IN: Jesus Metropolitan Community Church.

Morse, J. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research, 5*(2), 147-149.

Morse, J. (2001). Situating grounded theory within qualitative inquiry. In R. Schreiber & P. Stern (Eds.), *Using grounded theory in nursing* (pp. 1-15). New York, NY: Springer.

Morse, J. (2007). Sampling in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 229-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morse, J. (2011). Molding qualitative health research. *Qualitative Health Research, 21*(8), 1019-1021.

Morse, J., Stern, P., Corbin, J., Bowers, B., Charmaz, K., & Clarke, A. (Eds.). (2009). *Developing grounded theory: The second generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Mungello, D. (2009). Time to spring the final closet: Gay clergy. *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide, 16*(5), 7.

Murphy, K. (2017a). Most support marriage equality and 80% plan to vote in survey - Guardian essential poll. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/aug/21/most-support-marriage-equality-and-80-plan-to-vote-in-survey-guardian-essential-poll

Murphy, K. (2017b). Support for marriage equality rises in Guardian essential poll. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/04/support-for-marriage-equality-rises-in-guardian-essential-poll

Myers, D., & Scanzoni, L. (2006). *What God has joined together: The Christian case for gay marriage*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins.

Nathaniel, A. (2011). An integrated philosophical framework that fits grounded theory. In V. Mart & A. Gynnild (Eds.), *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method and work of Barney Glaser* (1st ed., pp. 187-200). Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker Press.

Neisser, U. (1981). John Dean's memory: A case study. *Cognition, 9*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1016/0010-0277(81)90011-1

New Zealand Herald. (2019). *Dunedin church parish splits over same-sex marriage*. Retrieved March 8, 2019, from https://www.nzherald.co.nz/religion-and-beliefs/news/article.cfm?c_id=301&objectid=12206537

New Zealand Legislation. (2004 No. 102). *Civil Union Act 2004*. Retrieved December 28, 2018, from http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2004/0102/latest/DLM323385.html?src=qs

New Zealand Legislation. (2013 No. 20). *Marriage [Definition of Marriage] Amendment Act*. Retrieved from http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2013/0020/latest/whole.html

Newton, D. (2010). *Same-sex marriage*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Nicholson, W., & Long, B. (1990). Self-esteem, social support, internalized homophobia, and coping strategies of HIV+ gay men. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 58*(6), 873-876. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.58.6.873

Office for National Statistics. (2013). *Detailed characteristics for England and Wales, March 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/fullstorywhatdoesthecensustellusaboutreligionin2011/2013-05-16

Oliver, J. M. C. (1996). Why gay marriage? *Journal of Men's Studies, 4*(3), 209-216.

Olson, L., & Cadge, W. (2002). Talking about homosexuality: The views of mainline protestant clergy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 41*(1), 153-167. doi:10.1111/1468-5906.00107

Olson, L., Cadge, W., & Harrison, J. (2006). Religion and public opinion about same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly, 87*(2), 340-360. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00384.x

One News. (2014). *Kiwi Catholics praise new stance on gay people*. Retrieved December 31, 2018, from https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/kiwi-catholics-praise-new-stance-on-gay-people-6106612?variant=tb_v_2

Ozzano, L. (2016). Two forms of Catholicism in twenty-first-century Italian public debate: An analysis on same-sex marriage and Muslim dress code. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 21*(3), 464-484. doi:10.1080/1354571X.2016.1169888

Park, J., Perez, P., & Ramirez-Johnson, J. (2016). The impact of education onviews of homosexuality in the senior clergy of Hidalgo County, Texas. *Journal of Religious Health, 55*, 778-786. doi:10.1007/s10943-015-0173-8

Pascale, C. (2011). *Cartographies of knowledge: Exploring qualitative epistemologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patrick, K., Heywood, W., Simpson, J., Pitts, M., Richters, J., Shelly, J., & Smith, A. (2013). Demographic predictors of consistency and change in heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexual behaviour over a two-year period. *Journal of Sex Research, 50*, 611-119.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Paul, D., & Spencer, H. (2008). "It's ok, we're not cousins by blood": The cousin marriage controversy in historical perspective. *PLoS Biol, 6*(12), 2627-2630. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0060320

Paul, J. (2017). The varieties of religious responses to homosexuality: A content and tonal analysis of articles in *Pastoral Psychology* from 1950 to 2015 regarding sexual minorites. *Pastoral Psychology, 66*, 79-101. doi:10.1007/s11089-016-0717-1

Pawelski, J., Perrin, E., Foy, J., Allen, C., Crawford, J., Del Monte, M., . . . Vickers, D. (2006). The effects of marriage, civil union, and domestic partnership laws on the health and well-being of children. *Pediatrics, 118*(1), 349-364. doi: 10.1542/peds.2006-1279

Peachey, P. (2016). *African Anglicans may trigger formal schism of church at Canterbury meeting*. Retrieved March 8, 2019, from https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/african-anglicans-may-trigger-formal-schism-of-church-at-canterbury-meeting-a6805176.html

Peale, N. V. (1952). *The power of positive thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Pearl, M., & Galupo, M. (2007). Development and validation of the attitudes toward same-sex marriage scale. *Journal of Homosexuality, 53*, 117-134.

Peirce, C. (1878). How to make our ideas clear. *Popular Science Monthly, 12*, 286-302.

Peirce, C. (1931-58). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (CP)* (Vol. 1-6). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Perales, F., Bouma, G., & Campbell, A. (2019). Religion, support of equal rights for same-sex couples and the Australian national vote on marriage equality. *Sociology of Religion, 80*(1), 107-129. doi:10.1093/socrel/sry018

Perry, S. (2015). Bible beliefs, conservative religious identity, and same-sex marriage support: Examining main and moderating effects. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 54*(4), 792-813.

Perry, S., & Whitehead, A. (2016). Religion and public opinion toward same-sex relations, marriage, and adoption: Does the type of practice matter? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 55*, 637-651.

Pew Research Centre. (2011). *Global survey of Evangelical Protestant leaders*. Retrieved from http://www.pewforum.org/2011/06/22/global-survey-of-evangelical-protestant-leaders/

Pew Research Centre. (2013). *Growing support for gay marriage: Changed minds and changing demographics*. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org/2013/03/20/growing-support-for-gay-marriage-changed-minds-and-changing-demographics/

Pew Research Centre. (2015). *America's changing religious landscape*. Retrieved from http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/

Pew Research Centre. (2017). *Support for same-sex marriage grows, even among groups that had been skeptical*. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org/2017/06/26/support-for-same-sex-marriage-grows-even-among-groups-that-had-been-skeptical/

Pidgeon, N., & Henwood, K. (1997). Using grounded theory in psychological research. In N. Hayes (Ed.), *Doing qualitative analysis in psychology* (pp. 245-273). Hove, UK: Psychology Press/Erlbaum.

Pitt, R. (2010). "Killing the messenger": Religious black gay men's neutralization of anti-gay religious messages. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 49*, 56-72.

Pizzuto, V. (2008). God has made it plain to them: An indictment of Rome's hermeneutic of homophobia. *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture, 38*(4), 163-183. doi:10.1177/014610790803800404

Primiano, L. (1993). *Intrinsically Catholic: Vernacular religion and Philadelphia's "Dignity"*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/docview/304072875?pq-origsite=summon

Procter, S., & Allan, T. (2006). Sampling. In K. Gerrish & A. Lacey (Eds.), *The research process in nursing* (5th ed., pp. 173-188). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Quinlan, M. (2016). Marriage, tradition, multiculturalism and the accommodation of difference in Australia. *The Univeristy of Notre Dame Australia Law Review, 18*(3), 71-123.

Radner, E. (2014). Anglicanism on its knees. *First Things,* 243, 45-50.

Radom, A. (2011). *Do religious conservatives and religious liberals think differently? An exploration of differences in cognitive and personality styles* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Boston University, Boston, MA. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/openview/216a0539ef69934064d820024342a0a4/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

Raifman, J., Moscoe, E., & Austin, B. (2017). Difference-in analysis of the association between state same-sex marriage policies and adolescent suicide attempts. *JAMA Pediatrics, 171*(4), 350-356. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2016.4529

Ranford, J. (1985). *'Pakeha', its origin and meaning*. Retrieved April 5, 2019, from https://maorinews.com/writings/papers/other/pakeha.htm

Reed, C. (2018). *Losing faith: Why fewer New Zealanders are attending church*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12074520

Reichertz, J. (2010). Abduction: The logic of discovery of grounded theory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(1), (Article 13].

Richards, K., Graber, K., & Woods, A. (2018). Using theory to guide research: Applications of constructivist and social justice theories. *Kinesiology Review, 7*(3), 218-225. doi:10.1123/kr.2018-0018

Richardson, L., & Adams St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 959-987). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richardson, R., & Kramer, E. (2006). Abduction as the type of inference that characterizes the development of a grounded theory. *Qualitative Research, 6*(4), 497-513.

Riddell, M. (2019). Ending clericalism. *Tui Motu Interislands,* 234, 8-9.

Riordan, C. (2018). *Church of Scotland votes to draft same-sex marriage legislation*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from https://www.scotsman.com/news/church-of-scotland-votes-to-draft-same-sex-marriage-legislation-1-4741978

Robbins, M. (2007). Clergymen and clergy women: The same inclusive gospel? *Journal of Beliefs & Values, 28*(1), 55-64. doi:10.1080/13617670701251561

Robinson, G. (2013). *God believes in love: Straight talk about gay marriage*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Rodriguez, E. M. (2010). At the intersection of church and gay: A review of the psychological research on gay and lesbian christians. *Journal of Homosexuality, 57*(1), 5-38. doi:10.1080/00918360903445806

Rodriguez, E. M., & Ouellette, S. C. (2000). Gay and lesbian Christians: Homosexual and religious identity integration in the members and participants of a gay-positive church. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39*(3), 333-347. doi:10.1111/0021-8294.00028

Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, J. (2009). *Jesus, the bible, and homosexuality: Explode the myths, heal the church*. Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press.

Rogers, M. (1981). Taken-for-grantedness. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory, 2*, 133-151.

Rohr, R. (2014). *Eager to love: The alternative way of Francis of Assisi*. Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media.

Rosik, C., Griffith, L., & Cruz, Z. (2007). Homophobia and conservative religion: Toward a more nuanced understanding. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 77*(1), 10-19. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.77.1.10

Ross, M., & Rosser, B. (1996). Measurement and correlates of internalized homophobia: A factor analytic study. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 52*(1), 15-21. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1097-4679(199601)52:1<15::AID-JCLP2>3.0.CO;2-V

Ross, S. (2014). *Homosexuality and Aboriginal culture: A lore unto themselves*. Retrieved January 2, 2019, from http://archermagazine.com.au/2014/10/homosexuality-and-aboriginal-culture-a-lore-unto-themselves/

Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D., Brodnicki, C., & Olson, A. (2008). An exploration of lived religion in same-sex couples from Judeo-Christian traditions. *Family Process, 47*, 389-403.

Royal Society. (2013). *The 2013 Census and religion*. Retrieved January 25, 2019, from https://royalsociety.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Our-futures-submissionPaul-Morris.pdf

Royce, J. (1899). *The world and the individual*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Ruddock, P. (2018). *Religious freedom review: Report of the expert panel*. Retrieved from https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Documents/religious-freedom-review-expert-panel-report-2018.pdf

Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2007). Step-by-step guide to critiquing research. Part 2: Qualitative research. *British Journal of Nursing, 16*(12), 738-744.

Sabaraini, A., Carter, S., Evans, R., & Blinkhorn, A. (2011). How to do a grounded theory study: A worked example of a study of dental practices. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 11*, 128. doi:org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-128

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Focus on qualitative methods: Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health, 18*(2), 179-183. doi:org/10.1002/nur.4770180211

Sandeman, J. (2018). *Uniting church to hold same-sex marriages*. Retrieved December 31, 2018, from https://www.eternitynews.com.au/australia/uniting-church-to-hold-same-sex-marriage/

Schatzman, L. (1991). Dimensional analysis: Notes on an alternative approach to the grounding of theory in qualitative research. In D. Maines (Ed.), *Social organization and social process* (pp. 303-314). New York, NY: Aldine De Gruyter.

Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A. (1973). *Field research: Strategies for a natural sociology* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Scheitle, C., & Adamczyk, A. (2009). It takes two: The interplay of individual and group theology on social embeddedness. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*, 16-29.

Schnabel, L. (2016). Gender and homosexuality attitudes across religious groups from the 1970s to 2014: Similarity, distinction, and adaption. *Social Science Research, 55*, 31-47.

Schwartz, J. (2010). Investigating differences in public support for gay rights issues. *Journal of Homosexuality, 57*(6), 748-759. doi:10.1080/00918369.2010.485875

Scroggs, R. (1984). *The New Testament and homosexuality*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.) New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sheetz-Willard, J. (2007). *Seeking more light: Contemporary debate about homosexuality in the Presbyterian church (U.S.A.)* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/pqdtglobal/docview/304818391/F04E68D113A421FPQ/1?accountid=8440

Sherkat, D. (2017). Intersecting identities and support for same-sex marriage in the United States. *Social Currents, 4*, 380-400.

Sherkat, D., & Ellison, C. (1999). Recent developments and current controversies in the sociology of religion. *Annual Review of Sociology, 25*, 363-394.

Sherkat, D., Mattias de Vries, K., & Creek, S. (2010). Race, religion, and opposition to same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly, 91*(1), 80-98.

Shirbon, E. (2016). *Anglicans penalize U.S. church over gay marriage to avoid schism*. Retrieved March 8, 2019, from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-religion-britain-anglicans/anglicans-penalize-u-s-church-over-gay-marriage-to-avoid-schism-idUSKCN0UT0SA

Shokeid, M. (1995). *A gay synagogue in New York*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Sikiaridi, A. (2018). *Majority of Europeans across all ages support gay marriage*. Retrieved from https://www.tbd.community/en/a/majority-europeans-across-all-ages-support-gay-marriage

Simon, T. (2016). *Construction and maintenance of social identity among LGBTQ Christian clergy* (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of West Georgia, GA. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (UNI No. 10109271)

Sismondo, S. (1993). Some social constructions. *Social Studies of Science, 23*, 515-553.

Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The behaviour of organisms*. Cambridge, MA: The B. F. Skinner Foundation.

Sloane, J., & Robillard, L. (2017). Factors affecting heterosexual attitudes to same-sex marriage in Australia. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 1-2.

Small, V. (2015). *The 21st century church and the LGBTQ community: Bridging the G.A.P.* (God All Powerful) (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). The New School, New York City, NY. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/pqdtglobal/docview/1775393544/F62E665A523C4AA7PQ/1?accountid=8440

Smith, J. (2016). Same-sex marriage attitudes during the transition to early adulthood: A panel study of young Australians, 2008 to 2013. *Journal of Family Issues, 37*, 2163-2188.

Smith, L. (2013). *Same-sex marriage: City churches say no but one is taking a different stand*. Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/auckland-city-harbour-news/8623328/Same-sex-marriage-City-churches-say-no-but-one-is-taking-a-different-stand

Sowe, B., Brown, J., & Taylor, A. (2014). Sex and the sinner: Comparing religious and nonreligious same-sex attracted adults on internalised homonegativity and distress. *Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 84*(5), 530-544.

Spong, J. (1991). *Rescuing the bible from fundamentalism: A bishop rethinks the meaning of scripture*. New York, NY: Harper-One.

Statistics New Zealand. (2013). *2013 Census quickstats about culture and identity: Religious affiliation*. Retrieved May 9, 2015, from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/religion.aspx

Stern, P. (2007). On solid ground: Essential properties for growing grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 114-126). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Stern, P., & Porr, C. (2011). *Essentials of accessible grounded theory*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press

Stevens, L. (1989). Different voices/different voices: Anglican women in ministry. *Review of Religious Research, 30*, 262-275.

Strauss, A. (1959). *Mirrors and masks*. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.

Strauss, A. (1961). *Images of the American city*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Strauss, A. (1964). *Psychiatric ideologies and institutions*. New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A. (1993). *Continual permutations of action*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Straw, S. (2015, June 2). *Will same-sex marriage split the United Methodist Church?* Retrieved from http://religionandpolitics.org/2015/06/02/will-same-sex-marriage-split-the-united-methodist-church/

Stringer, J. (2018). *Multiple NZ churches to leave Anglican fold*. Retrieved from
https://www.kiwiblog.co.nz/2018/09/guest_post_multiple_nz_churches_to_leave_anglican_fold.html

Subhi, N., & Geelan, D. (2012). When Christianity and homosexuality collide: Understanding the potential intrapersonal conflict. *Journal of Homosexuality, 59*, 1382-1402. doi:10.1080/00918369.2012.724638

Sullivan-Blum, C. (2003). *"The two shall become one flesh": The same-sex marriage debate in mainline Christianity* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Binghamton University, New York, NY. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/pqdtglobal/docview/305240714/66FA9CF234E14914PQ/1?accountid=8440

Sullivan-Blum, C. (2004). Balancing acts: Drag queens, gender and faith. *Journal of Homosexuality, 46*(3-4), 195-209. doi:10.1300/J082v46n03_12

Sullivan-Blum, C. (2006). "The natural order of creation": Naturalizing discourses in the Christian same-sex marriage debate. *Anthropologica, 48*(2), 203-215.

Sweet, M. (2013). *Gay marriage coming to the bay*. Retrieved December 31, 2018, from
https://web.archive.org/web/20150122053751/http://www.baybuzz.co.nz/archives/6830/4/

Tatum, A. (2017). The interaction of same-sex marriage access with sexual minority identity on mental health and subjective wellbeing. *Journal of Homosexuality, 64*(5), 638-653.

Thayer, H. (1947). Two theories of truth: The relation between the theories of John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. *The Journal of Philosophy, 44*(19), 516-535. doi:10.2307/2019905

The New York Times. (1984). *Unitarians endorse homosexual marriages*. Retrieved January 1, 2019, from https://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/29/us/around-the-nation-unitarians-endorse-homosexual-marriages.html

The Salvational Army. (2017). *Statistics*. Retrieved from
https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/statistics

The Week. (2012, June 12). *How marriage has changed over the centuries*. Retrieved from http://theweek.com/articles/475141/how-marriage-changed-over-centuries

Thomas, J., & Olson, D. (2012). Evangelical elites' changing responses to homosexuality 1960-2009. *Sociology of Religion, 73*(3), 239-272. doi:10.1093/socrel/srs031

Thompson, D. (2015, May 23). *Gay marriage will split the Catholic church*. Retrieved from http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2015/05/gay-marriage-will-split-the-catholic-church/

Thornberg, R. (2012). Informed grounded theory. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 55*(1), 1-17.

Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2012). Grounded theory. In S. Lapan, M. Quartaroli, & F. Reimer (Eds.), *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (pp. 41-67). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley/Jossey-Bass.

Thumma, S., & Gray, E. (2005). *Gay religion*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Turner, A. (2013). Same-sex marriage divides churches. *Stuff*. Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/8422312/Same-sex-marriage-divides-churches

Unitarian Universalist Association. *Unitarian Universalist policy and LGBTQ issues*. Retrieved January 2019, 2019, from https://www.uua.org/lgbtq/witness/policy

Van den Berg, M. (2017). Rings for the rainbow family: Religious opposition to the introduction of same-sex marriage in Sweden. *Theology & Sexuality, 23*(3), 229-244. doi:10.1080/13558358.2017.1351125

Van Geest, F. (2007). Changing patterns of denominational political activity in North America: The case of homosexuality. *Review of Religious Research, 49*(2), 199-221.

Via, D., & Gagnon, R. (2003). *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two views.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Wakefield, A. (2014). Searching and critiquing the research literature. *Nursing Standard, 28*(39), 49-57.

Wald, K., Burton, J., & Rienzo, B. (1996). The politics of gay rights in American communities: Explaining antidiscrimination ordinances and policies. *American Journal of Political Science, 40*, 1152-1178.

Walker, D. (2012). Religious orientation and attitudes toward gay marriage and homosexual bishops: An empirical enquiry inside an Anglican cathedral. *Theology & Sexuality, 18*(1), 76-92. doi:10.1179/1355835813Z.0000000005

Walls, E. (2010). Religion and support for same-sex marriage: Implications from the literature. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 22*(1-2), 112-131. doi:10.1080/10538720903332420

Walton, G. (2006). Fag church: Men who integrate gay and Christian identities. *Journal of Homosexuality, 52*(2), 1-17. doi:10.1300/J082v51n02_01

Wang, F. (2018). Social justice leadership-theory and practice: A case of Ontario. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(3), 470-498. doi:org/10.1177/0013 161X18761341

Ward, K., Hoare, K., & Gott, M. (2015). Evolving from a positivist to constructionist epistemology while using grounded theory: Reflections of a novice researcher. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 20*(6), 449-462. doi:10.1177/17449871 15597731

Wasserman, J., Clair, J., & Wilson, K. (2009). Problematics of grounded theory: Innovations for developing an increasingly rigorous qualitative method. *Qualitative Research, 9*(3), 355-381.

Weiss, M. (2014, April 28). Clergy members claim North Carolina gay marriage ban violates their religious freedom. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/28/north-carolina-gay-marriage_n_5228849.html

Whitaker, R. (2017). *Same-sex marriage: What does the Bible really have to say?* Retrieved March 11, 2019, from https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-23/same-sex-marriage-what-bible-has-to-say-robyn-whitaker/8831826

Whitaker, R. (2018). *After a long struggle, the Uniting Church becomes the first to offer same-sex marriage*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from https://theconversation.com/after-a-long-struggle-the-uniting-church-becomes-the-first-to-offer-same-sex-marriage-102842

White, G. E. (2015, November 13). *How to write a literature review step-by-step*. Retrieved from https://www.thedissertationmentor.com/blog

Whitehead, A. (2013). Religious organisations and homosexuality: The acceptance of gays and lesbians in American congregations. *Review of Religious Research, 55*(2), 297-317. doi:10.1007/s13644-012-0066-1

Whitley, B. (2009). Religiosity and attitudes toward lesban and gay men: A meta-analysis. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 19*, 21-38.

Wight, R. G., Leblanc, A. J., & Lee Badgett, M. (2013). Same-sex legal marriage and psychological well-being: Findings from the California Health interview survey *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(2), 339-346. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2012.301113

Wilcox, M. (2002). When Sheila's a lesbian: Religious individualism among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Christians. *Sociology of Religion, 63*(4), 497-513. doi:10.2307/3712304

Wilkinson, S. (1988). The role of reflexivity in feminist psychology. *Women's Studies International Forum, 11*(5), 493-502. doi:org/10.1016/0277-5395(88)90024-6

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Open University Press.

Wilson, K. (2018). *The new hip churches are fooling google. They pop up as "gay-friendly" - it's a hoax.* Retrieved March 14, 2019, from https://medium.com/solus-jesus/the-new-hip-churches-are-fooling-google-they-pop-up-as-gay-friendly-its-a-hoax-6d8c4ae1764c

Winch, P. (1958). *The idea of a social science and its relationship to philosophy*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Witte, J. (2013). *From sacrament to contract: Marriage, religion, and law in the western tradition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Wood, R. (1960). *Christ and the homosexual*. New York, NY: Vantage Press.

Worthington, R. (2004). Sexual identity, sexual orientation, religious identity, and change: Is it possible to depolarize the debate? *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*(5), 741-749. doi:10.1177/0011000004267566

Yarhouse, M., & Nowacki, S. (2007). The many meanings of marriage: Divergent perspectives seeking common ground. *The Family Journal, 15*(1), 36-45. doi:10.1177/1066480706294047

Yates, W. (1985). The Protestant view of marriage. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 22*(1), 41-81.

Young, P. (2006). Same-sex marriage and the Christian churches in Canada. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses, 35*(1), 3-23. doi:10.1177/000842980603500101

Zeininger, K., Holtzman, M., & Kraus, R. (2017). The reciprocal relationship between religious beliefs and acceptance of one's gay or lesbian family member. *Sociological Spectrum, 37*(5), 282-298. doi:10.1080/02732173.2017.1348279

Glossary and Terms Used

Ambivalence	The state of having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.
Clergy	Body of people who are ordained for religious duties, especially in the Christian Church. Also used to denote cross-denominational church leaders responsible for congregations; e.g., minister, vicar, priest, pastor, reverend etc.
Cognitive dissonance	The mental discomfort experienced by a person who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values. This discomfort is triggered by a situation in which a person's belief clashes with new evidence perceived by the person.
Congregant	A member of a congregation, especially that of a Christian church.
Denomination	A recognised autonomous branch of the Christian church.
Gay	(relating to) A homosexual person, usually a man, whose sexual orientation consists solely of same-sex attraction.
Hapū	Māori word for kinship group, clan, tribe, or subtribe. A section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society.
Heterosexual	(relating to) A person attracted to people of the opposite sex.
Homosexual	(relating to) A person attracted to people of their own sex.
Hononga a-ture	Māori term for the registering of a civil union of same-sex and opposite sex couples.
Iwi	Māori word for extended kinship group or tribe. Often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory; e.g., Nga Puhi and Ngati Kuri.
Koha	Māori word for gift, offering or contribution, especially one maintaining social relationships and has connotations of reciprocity.
Latest biblical scholarship	Biblical hermeneutics of, or relating to, suggestions that inaccurate translation of references to certain types of same-sex behaviour in early Greek texts have incorrectly led to negative interpretations about homosexuality that were not originally intended.
Lesbian	(relating to) A homosexual woman.
LGBTIQ+	Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer plus any other related or allied sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression not identified in the term.

Liberal	Favourable to, or respectful of, individual rights and freedoms such as same-sex couples' right to marry. Being open to new ideas and willing to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one's own.
Marriage equality	The situation where same-sex couples have the legal right to marry as opposite-sex couples.
Ngā Puhi	A Māori word for tribal group from Northland, namely the Hokianga, sometime written as one word; i.e., Ngāpuhi.
Ngati Kuri	A Māori word for a tribal group from Northland, namely from Te Hapua.
Opponents	People who reject or oppose same-sex marriage or marriage equality for lesbian and gay people.
Parishioner	An inhabitant or attendant of a particular church parish, especially one who is a regular churchgoer.
Religious institution	An established official organisation founded for a religious purpose and having an important role in a society, such as the Church.
Same-sex marriage	Marriage between partners of the same sex.
Sexual orientation	A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted; e.g., being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.
Supporters	People who support same-sex marriage.
Supportive clergy	Clergy who support same-sex marriage.
Te Ara Tika	Guidelines for Māori research ethics published by the Health Research Council of Aotearoa New Zealand on behalf of the Pūtaiora Writing Group comprising Mr Maui Hudson, Ms Moe Milne, Dr Paul Reynolds, Dr Khyla Russell, and Dr Barry Smith.
Te Pire Marena Takatapui	Māori term for the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill, in this case, introduced to Parliament in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2013.
Theology	The study of religious faith, practice, and experience, especially pertaining to the nature of God and religious belief.
Traditional	Existing in, or as part of, a tradition such perceiving marriage as being between a man and a woman. Relating to a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, especially a religious institution, family, or society for a long time.
Uniana ture	Māori term for the registration of a civil union of same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

Appendices

Appendix A: Search term strategy

Search Term strategy

Used multiple terms to initially identify a similar concept:

#1   Same-sex OR "same sex" OR gay* OR lesbian* OR homosexual*

AND

#2   Marriage* OR "civil union*" OR union*

AND

#3   Clergy* OR pastor* OR priest* OR minister*

Search process

Search 1.0

Database: Scopus

Search initially restricted to Article title, Abstract, and Keywords

#1 AND #2 AND #3

Results/thoughts/notes

Total 40 results identified for screening

10 initially earmarked

6 identified for in-depth screening

Those not considered were because they focus on: same-sex marriage from the perspective of the church, government and politics rather than from the perspective of clergy. Additionally, many were theological explanations of religious institutions on homosexuality and gay rights. Others were from a purely gay perspective about gay rights, including same-sex marriage, within society generally and omitted inclusion of the church and/or religion.

Search 1.1

#1   Add "same gender*" OR "same-gender*"

Results/thoughts/notes

No new results

Search 1.2

#1   (same-sex OR "same sex" OR gay W/5 marriage)

AND

#2   Clergy OR priest* OR minister* OR pastor*

Results/thoughts/notes

50 total results

9 identified for screening

41 Not suitable for the above-mentioned reasons *and* duplicates, negative views by church/clergy on gay rights, and non-Christian (ie Hindu/Indian/Buddhist/Chinese) religious attitudes to same-sex marriage.

Studies concerning African American churches tended to focus more on health issues such as HIV and Men who have sex with men (MSM) although these individuals identified as heterosexual and, in many instances, are married with families.

Search 1.3

#1   Same as Search 1.2

AND

#2   Same as Search 1.2

AND

#3   support* OR affirm* OR friend* OR advocate*

Results/thoughts/notes

15 total results

I identified for screening

14 not identified for reasons above *and* some theological reviews and explanations on gay rights issues from the liberal Christian perspective

Search 1.4

#1   Same as search 1.2

AND

#2   Clergy OR priest* OR minister* OR pastor* OR "Christian clergy" OR Christian

AND

#3   Same as search 1.2

Results/thoughts/notes

48 total results

6 identified for screening

Search 1.5

#1   (same-sex W/5 marriage) OR ("same sex" W/5 marriage OR marriage W/5 equality) OR (gay W/5 marriage) OR (homosex* W/5 marriage) OR ("same gender* W/5 marriage) OR (same-gender* W/5 marriage)

#2   clergy OR minister* OR pastor* OR priest*

#3   support* OR affirm* OR advocat* OR friend*

Results/thoughts/notes

17 total results

0 new results identified

Search 1.6

#1   (support* W/5 clergy)

AND

#2   "same-sex marriage" OR "same sex marriage" OR 'gay marriage" OR "marriage equality

Results/thoughts/notes

No results found

Search 1.7

As no new results were forthcoming, and there was very little to be found in relation to clergy and same-sex marriage, I did a simple Scopus search just to confirm:

#1   support*

AND

#2   clergy*

AND

#3   "same-sex marriage"

Results/thoughts/notes

Still no results found.

Appendix B: Ethics approval

AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

30 November 2015

Barbara McKenzie-Green
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Barbara

Re Ethics Application: **15/386 Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage: A grounded theory study.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 30 November 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 30 November 2018;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 30 November 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Andrew Kirby andrew@info-ware.biz, Judith McAra-Couper

Appendix C: Amended ethics approval

AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

21 November 2016

Barbara McKenzie-Green
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Barbara

Re: Ethics Application: **15/386 Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage: A grounded theory study.**

Thank you for your request for approval of an amendment to your ethics application.

I have approved the minor amendment to the recruitment protocols – expansion of the geographical location of sourcing participants.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC):

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 30 November 2018;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 30 November 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: andrew@info-ware.biz; Judith McAra-Couper

Appendix D: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

6 January 2016

Project Title

Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage: A grounded theory study

An Invitation

Hello. My name is Andrew Kirby and I would like to invite you to take part in a study that will explore the responses of Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. I have been a psychotherapist for eight years and am currently a PhD student at AUT. I am interested in speaking to a range of Christian clergy with different perspectives; whether that be people who are quietly accepting to those who are outwardly advocating of same-sex marriage. Participating in this study is entirely voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study up to two weeks after reading your interview transcript, and no questions will be asked. All information will be kept confidential.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research contributes toward my PhD qualification. The purpose of this study is to generate a theory that explains how Christian clergy, who support same-sex marriage, manage their positions. Information gathered from interviews will be analysed to demonstrate ways of talking about shared understandings that can be formulated into a theory which can potentially assist professionals in the fields of theology, sociology, and psychology. Much attention has been given to the polarised views of religion groups toward same-sex attraction/relationships. However, the perspectives of individual clergy at parishioner level is limited to only a handful of studies. This research will fill a gap as no known studies have yet specifically examined clergy's responses to same-sex marriage. Articles, presentations, and publications are likely to result from this research and made available via professional journals and conferences. Articles might also appear in relevant church, social, and psychological magazines. A book could be published to ensure the information is further accessible to the public.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I wish to interview up to 30 people who will be contacted by word of mouth. You have been approached because your name was mentioned to me via a third person, or because your supportive views on same-sex marriage have, in some way, been made public. Alternatively, you may have contacted me because you heard about the study via a third party and have shown an interest to participate. To participate in this study, you will either be accepting, supportive, or an advocate for same-sex marriage and be a member of Clergy – practising/former/retired – from a mainline Protestant, Catholic, or locally-affiliated Christian denomination in New Zealand or Australia. I am interested in interviewing individuals of any gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, who is over the age of 18.

What will happen in this research?

If you are interested please contact me, indicating your willingness to participate, and I will be happy to answer any questions you have. Before participating you will be given the opportunity to review and discuss a Consent Form, which accompanies this Information Sheet. At the interview, I will explain and be available to answer any questions you might have regarding you giving your consent. Your signature will be required on the Consent Form before the interview can proceed. For participants in Auckland, a room at my private practice in Takapuna will be made available or, if you prefer, the interview can take place at your home or office. You may choose to have whanau or a support person with you at the interview should you wish. During the interview, I will be exploring what influences you in supporting same-sex marriage, and how you sustain the position you do. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be audio recorded and transcribed by myself or a transcriber who will has signed a confidentially contract. You can choose not to answer any questions, and can discontinue the interview/recording at any time. You may withdraw from the study up to two weeks after reading the transcript of your interview. I may request permission to contact you again for a follow up interview for the purposes of elaboration, clarification, or to explore gaps that have been identified in the data.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Some of the topics you discuss have the potential to be emotive, personal, and conflictual, as you tell and relive your experiences. You may feel that participation in this study creates potential risk of being ostracised by your community that holds different views, or having your career jeopardised. Additionally, given the differing perspectives on the topic, someone identifying as quietly accepting of same-sex marriage may feel some discomfort if they were to compare themselves to more outward advocates. These feelings might be exacerbated with a researcher who identifies as gay. It may be possible that some participants who are interviewed at home or in their office may feel jeopardised if someone, such as a colleague or superior who is deemed threatening, arrives while I am there.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

To alleviate any possible feelings of discomfort during the interview, my role as researcher will be made clear, along with my commitment to understand your situation fully, accurately, and without judgement. If, at any point, you are upset or uncomfortable you will be reminded that you can discontinue the interview/recording without any negative consequence. Should I sense any discomfort on your part, I will stop the recording, check if you are alright and whether or not you wish to proceed? If you need any further assistance as a result of something occurring during the interview process, information on relevant support services will be provided. Such support services include AUT Health and Counselling, who offer three free counselling sessions, and Lifeline, a free nationwide telephone counselling service.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of this research are multidimensional. By participating in this study you will have the opportunity to share your views in a self-reflective process that can produce catharsis, self-acknowledgement, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and provide a voice for the disenfranchised. Your stories will contribute to a wider study and add to a body of knowledge where little is known. This could potentially help any individuals and groups, religious and non-religious, straight and gay, who struggle with the issue of same-sex marriage from a Christian perspective. Bringing an affirming position to this subject may foster an additional perspective and provide a new source of reference and support. The benefits to me as the researcher are the gaining of a PhD and a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of issues related to Christian support for same-sex marriage.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure no information provided by you can be directly traced; only I will know your real name. All identifiable material will be excluded or disguised. While no names of organisations will be mentioned the population targeted in this study is small and, therefore, people who know you well may be able to identify you. Personal details will be kept separate to information gathered from the interviews. Recordings, hard copies of interviews, and Consent Forms will be stored securely in locked cabinets and professionally destroyed after six years.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no anticipated costs to you except approximately two hours of your time. This includes an initial telephone conversation, one 90-minute face-to-face interview, and possibly a follow-up interview (face-to-face or skype) of approximately 30 minutes for feedback on concepts as findings begin to develop. You will also be given the opportunity of reviewing your interview transcript. A small amount (koha) of $20 will be offered for those who travel to interviews to assist with some of the petrol costs.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have up to two weeks after receiving this Information Sheet to consider the invitation and ask any questions. Once you have agreed to participate it may take some time before you are contacted with regards to arranging an interview. Gathering of information from participants and analysis occurs concurrently; thus interviews will be on-going until completion of analysis.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate, please contact me indicating your willingness to take part. At the time of the interview you will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and sign the Consent Form. Giving your consent is necessary for the interview to proceed.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript. A copy of the interview recording will also be available upon request. You will receive a summary of the findings, after the research has been completed and formally submitted, unless you state otherwise.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor: Dr. Barbara McKenzie-Green, *BMcKenzi@aut.ac.nz*, (09) 921 9999 ext 7352. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (09) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details: Andrew Kirby, *andrew@info-ware.biz*, 021 723 203

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr. Barbara McKenzie-Green, *bmckenzi@aut.ac.nz*, (09) 921 9999 ext 7352.

Appendix E: Consent form

Consent Form

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Project title:	***Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage: A grounded theory study***
Project Supervisor:	***Dr. Barbara McKenzie-Green***
Researcher:	***Andrew Kirby***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 6 January, 2016.

- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be digitally audio-taped and transcribed.

- ○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project up until two weeks after reading my transcript, without being disadvantaged in any way.

- ○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

- ○ I agree to take part in this research.

- ○ I understand that I will be given a copy of the transcript.

- ○ I wish to receive a copy of the voice recording of the interview (please tick one): Yes ○ No ○

- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the findings from the research (please tick one): Yes ○   No ○

- ○ I agree to being contacted by the researcher to discuss a further interview (please tick one): Yes ○   No ○

- ○ I understand that the population targeted in this study is small and, while participants' names and names of organisations will be kept confidential, people who are known well to me may be able to identify me.

Participant's signature : ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Participant's name : …………………………………………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate) :

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

Date: …………………………………………………………………………

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted ***AUTEC Reference number*** type the AUTEC reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix F: Letter from AUT Health and Counselling

Memorandum

To	Andrew Kirkby
From	Stella McFarlane
Cc	
Subject	Counselling provision for research participants
Date	8th October 2015

Dear Andrew

As manager of AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing, I would like to confirm that we are able to offer confidential counselling support for the participants in your AUT research project entitled:

"Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage."

The free counselling, for participants who require it, will be provided by our professional counsellors for a maximum of three sessions and must be in relation to issues arising from their participation in your research project.

Please inform your participants:

- They will need to drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment
- They will need to let the receptionist know that they are a research participant
- They will need to provide your contact details to confirm this
- They can find out more information about our counsellors and counselling on our website http://www.aut.ac.nz/students/student_services/health_counselling_and_wellbeing

Current AUT students also have access to our counsellors and online counselling as part of our normal service delivery.

Yours sincerely

Stella McFarlane

Practice Manager

Stella McFarlane
Manager, Health, Counselling and Wellbeing
stella.mcfarlane@aut.ac.nz

Appendix G: Participants' demographics

Pseudonym	Location	Denomination	Age (years)	Length of ordination (years)	Education	Relationship status	Sexual orientation
Harry	Rural	Anglican	64	10	Degree	Divorced/Remarried	Gay
George	Inner city	Methodist	76	44	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
Arthur	Inner city	Presbyterian	56	32	Degree	Married	Heterosexual
Emily	Inner city	Baptist	37	11	Postgraduate	Married	Heterosexual
Maria	Inner city	Methodist	65	35	PhD	Divorced/Single	Heterosexual
Grace	Inner city	Anglican	69	37	PhD	Divorced/Remarried	Heterosexual
Jessica	Inner city	Anglican	53	24	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
Thomas	Semi-rural	Anglican	59	27	Institutional	Married	Gay
Sharon	Semi-rural	Presbyterian	62	38	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
Lucy	Urban	Salvation Army	45	6	Institutional	Married	Heterosexual
Daniel	Inner city	Baptist	54	25	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
James	Urban	Roman Catholic	57	28	Postgraduate	Single	Gay
Elliot	Urban	Roman Catholic	82	55	Institutional	Single	Undisclosed
Philip	Inner city	Salvation Army	62	32	Institutional	Married	Heterosexual
Ben	Inner city	Presbyterian	74	34	Degree	Married	Heterosexual
Ann	Inner city	Salvation Army	75	45	Postgraduate	Married	Heterosexual
Ethan	Inner city	Salvation Army	74	45	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
Rachel	Inner city	Presbyterian	65	22	PhD	Married	Heterosexual
Elizabeth	Urban	Anglican	59	31	Postgraduate	Married	Heterosexual
Michael	Inner city	Anglican	47	20	Degree	Married	Heterosexual
Shane	Urban	Presbyterian	54	25	Degree	Single	Gay

Appendix H: Initial email to potential participants

24 August 2016

Andrew Kirby
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
North Shore Campus
90 Akoranga Drive
Northcote
Auckland 0672
New Zealand

Dear (Potential participant's name),

Hello. My name is Andrew Kirby. I am a registered psychotherapist and a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am currently conducting some research on Christian clergy who support same-sex marriage. My supervisor for this project is Dr Barbara McKenzie-Green (bmckenzi@aut.ac.nz). For this study, I am looking to interview between 15 and 30 members of clergy – current/former/retired - from mainline denominations who are either accepting, supportive, or an advocate for same-sex marriage.

You have been approached and invited to take part in this study because your supportive views on same-sex marriage have, in some way, been made public. Your participation in this study, should you choose to take part, is entirely voluntary, and participant details and material obtained will be kept confidential. You may also choose not to take part without being disadvantaged in any way.

Please could you get back to me indicating your intention of whether or not you might be interested in taking part in this study. I would be most appreciative if you could get back to me within two weeks of receiving this email. I can be contacted via email at andrew@info-ware.biz, or by telephone on 021 723 203, and will be happy to answer any questions you have, or provide you with further information.

Kind regards,

Andrew Kirby

Appendix I: Interview guide

To gather participants' perspective as fully as possible questions in early interviews will remain open-ended: Can you tell me your views on same-sex marriage? Alternatively, the initial question might be framed as: Can you tell me your particular path of how you got to your position on same-sex marriage? These initial questions might be sufficient in getting the participant to open up and talk. However, to obtain rich data in an in-depth interview, minimal encourages and open-ended questions will enable full exploration and understanding of the meaning of what participant is saying. Such questions might include:

Can you say more about what you said just then? What does that mean to you? What would you attribute that to? Can you take me through step by step what that process might involve? Would there be a time when you would do something different? Assumptions of both the participant and the researcher will be avoided by constantly seeking clarification and reflecting back (Rogers, 1951) to prevent collusion between both parties, or the researcher imposing his own context on shared or commonly understood experiences. Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin

If the conversation stalls for any reason, a list of questions related to the focus of the study will be kept in reserve, such as:

What influences you in supporting same-sex marriage? How do you sustain your position? Have your views changed over time?

As interviews progress and concepts are developed, more focused theoretical questioning will be used to validate and identify complexities of concepts that are developed, and explore gaps in the data (Charmaz, 2014). Based on the data that emerges, interview questions might be framed as (Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage):

Some people have said (such and such). What are your thoughts on that? I have been told (such and such) is happening. What is your experience? During previous interviews, I have noticed that no one has mentioned (such and such) regarding their views on same-sex marriage. Do you have any thoughts or ideas about this?

Log of interview questions and approach

2016: Initially, for the first 9 interviews (for 2016), I aimed to keep my questions as open as possible.

- Could you tell me about your views on same-sex marriage?
- If participants needed prompting, the following questions were kept at the ready:
- What is it like to hold a view within an organisation/church that holds a different view on same-sex marriage?

January 2017: After analysing P10 I was interested in clergy who had experienced a shift in view toward same-sex marriage (anti-to-pro) and so intend to include in any such interviews:

- Did you view change before or after your ordination?
- What contributed to your shift in views?
- Did daily life for you as a member of the clergy change for you? If so, how?

May 2017: More focused questions including:

- Clarification around whether clergy's acceptance and ultimately their support of same-sex marriage developed in two stages?
  - Did they address and get their heads around homosexuality first, or did it happen more simultaneously?
  - as this study focuses on same-sex marriage: Specifically, how much of a struggle was it to accept same-sex marriage up and above homosexuality?
  - When did they decide on what stance to assume within the institution? Was it around the time they reached a perspective on ssm?
- For those who did experience a shift, were they more ambivalent or really against – can you go back to before you were comfortable about homosexuality/gay people…
- More focus around reflections: would you do things differently now compared to the beginning?
- Did gay clergy experience ambivalence at the beginning (due to it being personal) or were they unsupportive at first (conditioned)?

October 2017: Doing more member-checking her in the 2 interviews conducted in Brisbane. P20 was the first candidate who specifically enquired after what I had already found out in my study/analysis, and so I was able to spend some time giving him a fuller overview of what I had found. What I said appeared to resonate with him and, while I was keen to see if there was anything that did not seem to meet with some form of approval, he seemed to concur with what I was saying. Of course, this does not mean everything I raised was accurate: he may have chosen not to say much but rather be interested in what I had found out speaking to others, but, it was a start in the right direction. More member checking is required where feedback is also asked for.

Additions to previous questions included talking and asking about the Australian situation, and in particular the public postal vote that was happening at the time of the interview. Clarification was sought more clearly on the (denomination name) situation. Apart from listening to any more content that related to the emerging concepts of individuating/diverging ideologies, holding a space, and revisiting, I listened for anything that was said (and asked questions) about how they go about sustaining themselves in what was clearly a difficult position for both P19 and P20 in their roles as supportive clergy in their denomination at this time.

Appendix J: Field note (Thomas)

Part of field note P#8 *08/09/16 4:20 pm* (written same day as interview/waiting at the airport to come home)

This interview felt different from previous interviews in that during the interview, and on reflection, the conversation was more conceptual. This is probably because a) I am becoming less anxious about 'am I missing anything?' and therefore not getting so stuck in the detailed content of what the participants was saying b) my mindset is turning toward thinking of the developing concepts and main categories as a result of memos, diagrams and discussions in supervision. The conversation felt less 'knit-picky' and freer, with more space... distance to follow where the participant led. It's as if I had figuratively stepped back … more reverie perhaps, to reflect, understand what was being said in terms of a larger picture… a developing framework. While this is exciting, I must be aware of not holding any framework too tightly or rigidly but allow what is developing conceptually to be fluid and flexible.

P8 is an out, gay man who is priest-in-charge of a provincial parish. He has chosen to get married to his partner through the civil courts (rather than by a priest or in a church). There appeared to be little conflict or guilt where he is at over his sexual orientation, and his faith or vocation and within his environment/denomination. He explained an evolving awareness of his sexual orientation in his 20s and was raised, and educated, to understand the bible from a perspective of feminism, which was prominent at the time. For P8, context in terms of understanding scripture was importance and he was able to apply the same understanding of the patriarchal lens underpinning "the feminine texts of terror" to the gay "clobber pages" to help him with some early ambivalence about being gay and what scripture was perceived to have said about homosexuality. There is, comparatively, little tension within his parish and diocese and he feels quite well supported by his congregation, the wider community, and even by the bishop. In fact, he defends the bishop for being quietly supportive of him and his relationship to his partner; even mentioning his husband's name in the welcoming service he led at P8's new parish. This was interpreted by P8 as a form of public recognition and endorsement to the congregation that a gay reverend was being placed in charge of them by what he often referred to as the "structure" (some separation of institution and people in it).

Interestingly, this participants views his diocese and one other close by (also a fairly remote rural diocese) as two of the most progressive in terms of supporting same-sex marriage. However, he also acknowledges a provincial conservatism, particularly among males, which he says makes it hard for gay men to come out. As a result, many have left the area. I am wondering why he describes his diocese as being progressive in terms of accepting gay rights, and the general view of gay rights being quite hostile to gay people, particularly men. What is it about men in this instance that causes the difference? Is it referring to a difference between acceptability of same-sex marriage between religious attitudes and secular attitudes in these communities; if so there is little to explain it, neither could this participant account for it? It is because of the strong women's rights background in NZ, including rural areas?

Points:

- Committed to his institution – chosen to remain "true to the path of the church"

- Sensitively manages his life as a gay clergyman and personally supports gay marriage (discerningly not flauntingly)

- Respects and conforms to the institution's regulations and refuses to marry other lesbian and gay couples (even though he himself is married)

- Prepared to "wait it out" patiently until the slow beast catches up; "all in good time." Quietly optimistic of the church getting there eventually. Has "gone as far as he can" and will have a church marriage when that time comes.

Possible concepts: respecting institution, conforming to rules, sitting it out, waiting patiently, anticipating eventual change, living with tension, staying in it to influence it, serving competing traditions, divided loyalties, tolerating tension, compromising, balancing.

Appendix K: Transcriber confidentiality agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

For someone transcribing data, e.g. audio   -tapes of interviews.

Project title: Clergy who support same   -sex marriage

Project Supervisor: Dr B. McKenzie   -Green

Researcher: Andrew Kirby

√   I understand that all the material I will be asked   to transcribe is confidential.

√   I understand that the contents of the tapes   or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.

√   I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them   .

Transcriber's signature: ….…………………………………………..….   …………………………………….

Transcriber's name: Shoba Nayar …….………………….………………………………………………………………

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Email: snayar19@gmail.com·………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: 27.01.17

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………… ………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on   *type the date on which the final approval was granted* **AUTEC Reference number**   *type the AUTEC reference number*

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.