

Constructing a Gender Equity Framework of 'Best Fit' for a Private Coeducational School in
Adelaide

Teaching Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Of

Master of Teaching

(EDUC 7557)

Patrick Johnson

Bachelor of Arts

The University of Adelaide

Due: 7/6/19

Submitted: 15/6/19

Word Count: 18,825

Declaration:

This dissertation contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

Name: Patrick Johnson

Date: 15/6/19

Abstract

The construction of gender identity, as well as culturally acceptable expressions of that identity, can often conflict with the principles of education. Adolescents, in this particularly impressionable period, are forced to choose between what is expected of them as students, and what is expected of them as gendered individuals. Masculinity, for instance, demands that boys prioritise activity over passivity, and participate in the subordination of other, divergent forms of masculinity to ensure their own status as male. As such, boys have garnered a harmful reputation for being more disruptive than their gender counterparts, a perception that problematises boys. Female students are similarly affected by traditional gender norms. Acceptable femininity is often synonymised with subservience, meekness, and passivity. This perception creates a culture that oppresses girls, as they are forced, through social pressures, to adhere to this unfair expectation. However, how society views adolescents with regard to gender is generally the antithesis of expectations around schooling. For instance, through social and familial pressure, students are encouraged to academically excel. Yet, this contradicts many accepted notions of gender. Masculinity, in some forms, idolises apathy, or getting by with the least expended effort. Femininity is similar, in that girls must emphasise sociality over academic achievement. After all, intellect is traditionally associated with masculinity, and any girl that communicates behaviours that lay in the realm of manhood risks ridicule, bullying and harassment from her peers. Boys express tantamount degrees of disdain for males who transgress the threshold between masculinity and femininity, as maintaining heteronormativity can be essential to survival for students of all genders. In this, gender is often in conflict with educative processes. Schools, therefore, require systems that can identify and mitigate potentially harmful gender constructive processes among students. Gender equity frameworks, whole-school approaches that provide mechanisms for achieving equitable outcomes for students of all genders, remain an underutilised resource within educational institutions. Although, while examples of these frameworks exist, however sparse, they are often unsuited for an individual institution. This is because many of them do not consider the specific context and ethos of the school. This study created a gender equity framework for a particular school in Adelaide. Using the 'best fit' method, a framework was constructed through thematic synthesis of previously constructed equity frameworks, as well as through examination of relevant literature. The framework was developed with objectives in mind that emphasise gender issues within Australian education. These included subject gender disparity, as there is a historical trend of girls enrolling in the Humanities, and boys enrolling with Mathematics and Science subjects. Facilitating academic achievement was another objective, as gender can negatively impact the success of students. Student safety was also emphasised, with particular regard for how gender dynamics among students can cultivate bullying or exclusion, especially for gay or transgender students. The final objective recommended the implementation of framework assessment mechanisms, as evaluating the effectiveness of the framework is essential for the goals of gender equity.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank Dr. Linda Westphalen for, without her guidance, I would not have made it this far. Linda was a consistent source of reassurance and understanding, and expressed a degree of kindness and empathy that all teachers should strive for. She will remain an enduring example for my teaching career.

I would similarly like express my gratitude to the school for which this study was conducted. The contribution of their data was especially helpful and enlightening. I hope that this dissertation can instil at least a semblance of the same in return.

Additionally, I would like to thank the School of Education and the University of Adelaide for their help throughout this degree. Especially with regard to the incredible and emphatic lecturers, such as Gareth Prichard.

My colleagues also deserve a mention as, if it weren't for Robert and Beth, I would not have survived the early morning lectures.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, and in particular my mother and father. They have been a constant and monumental source of support. I am sceptical as to whether I would have survived without the care packages of food.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	10
1.1 The Problem	10
1.2 Gap in the Literature	13
1.3 Research Questions	14
1.4 Thesis Outline	14
2 Literature Review	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Definitions	16
2.2.1 Introduction	16
2.2.2 Defining Equity	16
2.2.3 Defining Gender	19
2.2.4 Defining Framework	22
2.2.5 Defining 'Best Fit'	23
2.3 Gender Equity and Subject Choice	25
2.3.1 Introduction	25
2.3.2 Male Students and Subject Enrolment	25
2.3.3 The Conflict Between Gender Expression and Subject Discipline	27
2.3.4 Gendered Ideologies and Subject Choice	28
2.3.4 Institutional Gender	29
2.4 Negotiating Gender and Academic Achievement	31
2.4.1 Introduction	31
2.4.2 Australian Academic Results and Gender	32
2.4.3 Education and the 'What About the Boys?' Discourse	35
2.4.4 Outcomes of the 'Boy Turn'	35
2.4.5 Gender and Achievement	35
3. Methodology	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Methodological Design	39
3.3 Rationale for this Methodology	42
3.4 Limitations	43
3.5 Data Collection	44
3.6 Ethics	45
3.7 Validity and Reliability	45
4. Results	47
4.1 Introduction	47
4.2 Graphs and Tables	47
4.2.1 SACE	47
4.2.2 NAPLAN	52
4.2.2.1 NAPLAN and Writing	53

4.2.2.2 NAPLAN and Numeracy	55
4.3 School A Data	58
4.4 Discussion	62
4.4.1 Evaluating Framework for 'Best Fit'	62
4.4.2 Framework A	62
4.4.3 Framework B	64
4.4.4 Framework C	68
4.4.5 Framework D	70
4.5 Framework Thematic Analysis	72
4.6 Gender Equity Framework of 'Best Fit'	79
4.7 Dissonance	86
5. Conclusion	87
5.1 Conclusion	87
5.2 Recommendations	88
Works Cited	90

List of Abbreviations

- STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- SACE- South Australian Certificate of Education
- PISA- Programme for International Student Assessment
- NAPLAN- National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy
- SES- Socioeconomic Status
- ACARA- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- TAFE- Technical and Further Education
- **USAID- United States Agency for International Development**

Graphs

Graph 1	Student Background by Socioeconomic Status (SES)	58
Graph 2	School A Student Percentages by Gender	59

Tables

Table 1	SACE Stage 2 English- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)	48
Table 2	SACE Stage 2 Health and Physical Education- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)	49
Table 3	SACE Stage 2 Mathematics- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)	50
Table 4	SACE Stage 2 Sciences- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)	51
Table 5	Achievement of Year 3 students in writing, by sex, by state and territory, 2018	53
Table 6	Achievement of Year 5 students in writing by sex, by state and territory, 2018	53
Table 7	Achievement of Year 9 students in writing, by sex, by state and territory, 2018	54
Table 8	Mean scores of Year 3 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018	55
Table 9	Mean scores of Year 9 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018	55
Table 10	Achievement of Year 9 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018	56
Table 11	School A Stage 2 subject enrolments by gender	60
Table 12	Frameworks compared against themes for 'best fit'	72
Table 13	Themes organised into explicit and implicit themes for the construction and organisation of the gender equity framework of 'best fit'	79

Figures

Figure 1	Qualitative evidence synthesis using 'best fit' synthesis	40
Figure 2	Qualitative evidence synthesis using adapted 'best fit' framework method	41

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Historically, the idea of gender equality in Australia has generally been infused with meritocratic ideas, or the ‘best person for the job’. However, despite gender equitable policies, women on average make considerably less money than men. For instance, on average, women have to work an additional 56 days per annum to earn the same pay as men for the same work (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018). Women remain relegated to a secondary status within a culturally perseverant sexual binary that devalues femininity. Discrimination based on pregnancy and maternity highlight this issue. For instance, half of Australian mothers reported experiencing workplace discrimination due to their pregnancy (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018). Twenty percent of mothers, for example, indicated that they were “made redundant, dismissed, or that their contract was not renewed” (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018, p. 3). This demonstrates a societal devaluation of women, both in the failure to model the idealism of a meritocracy, and in the perpetuation of female financial disadvantage.

Men are similarly affected by gendered issues stemming from perceptions of masculinity. For instance, while more women attempt suicide, men, by contrast, are far more likely to be successful in their attempts (Player et al., 2015). This can be partially explained by cultural expectations that preserve harmful masculinities. For example, one theory for the higher suicide rates among men is their habituation towards pain and more “lethal methods of self-harm than women” (Player et al., 2015, p. 2). There is, after all, culturally differing gender-specific beliefs on acceptable self-destructive behaviour (Varnik et al., 2008). Men are more likely to address feelings of “stress, sadness and emptiness”

with “numbing (e.g. alcohol and drugs), risky (e.g. gambling, violence), defensive (e.g., anger, aggression) or otherwise avoidant (e.g., social withdrawal) types of coping behaviour relative to women” (Player et al., 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, men who are more adherent to masculine norms also have a statistically greater chance of experiencing depressive episodes (Olliffe and Phillips, 2008). Despite the dominance of men in society, they, like women, are still restricted to positions that adhere to acceptable expressions of their gender.

Considering these issues, it would be naïve to believe that they are not present within education. In fact, boys and girls are similarly restrained by acceptable gender expression. This, as is with men and women, is highly restricting, and robs boys and girls of the chance to realise their full potential. Much of this is due to the interplay between conceptions of masculinity and femininity, combined with the formative period of puberty.

Girls can be constrained by notions of feminine subservience, which has often labelled female students as less ‘analytical’ compared to their male counterparts (Connell, 2002). Combine this with the consistent out-performance of girls compared to boys in national standard tests such as NAPLAN (National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy), and a culture of overlooking the needs of girls is therein fostered (Ringrose, 2007). This is not aided by political rhetoric, which, due to the academic achievement of girls, has positioned boys as the ‘new disadvantaged’. This is a deficit model that both ignores the issues of female students, and poses boys as chronically underperforming.

Male student must also navigate the societal expectations around masculinity. This means being active or macho, often to the detriment to female students, female teachers, and boys who present with non-traditional forms of masculinity (Robinson, 2000). For

example, a male student's need to project their adherence to masculine norms may involve engaging in hypermasculine behaviours which can involve aggressive physical or sexual harassment of girls and other boys. It is no surprise then that 25 percent of young people do not consider public insults or verbal harassment to be serious, whereas one in four believe it is normal for a male to pressure a female into sex (Hall and Partners Open Mind, 2015).

These conceptions of masculinity are not only damaging to women and girls, but to boys themselves. Although variance of the female form is becoming increasingly acceptable within society, males remain constrained by limited physical standards. The belief that boys must become the paragons of physical excellence has had an insidious impact. As, while eating disorders remain an almost exclusively feminine discourse, figures suggest that anywhere between ten and thirty percent of those with an eating disorder are male (Evans, 2017). In fact, "...[e]ating disorders in boys are the highest cause of death from any psychological illness causing around 20% of fatalities" (Evans, 2017, pp. 38-39). Accordingly, any students who do not align with their respective gender's conceptions of acceptable gender norms often meet ridicule, bullying and exclusion. This often compounds issues related to self-perception.

These self-perceptions of appropriate gendered behaviour can also conflict with institutionally-represented gender. For example, the predominance of certain genders with their typically associated subject disciplines serves to preserve societal inequality. Boys are culturally encouraged to preference more active subjects such as Physical Education, while girls are more likely to dominate the Humanities. This has troubling implications. For instance, boys typically miss out on developing Humanities-based skills. This may make them more susceptible to coercion, as well as limiting their language skills and articulative

abilities (Milvain, 2008). Female students, however, have less inclusion in STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, which limits their employment options to traditionally feminised areas such as teaching or nursing. This further reinforces the gendered nature of employment and limits them to certain areas which are deemed culturally acceptable for women and girls.

Due to these enduring gender issues, many schools have sought for approaches to ensure the safety of their students and promote a more inclusive schooling environment. To this end, some researchers have developed gender equity frameworks. These are a whole-school approach to promoting gender inclusivity and encouraging student success. These also advocate for equity over equality, as equality implies equal outcomes in a society that clearly preferences the masculine over the feminine. Equity frameworks are designed to address the most problematic concerns of gender, especially those concerning the construction of gender identities, as the school can be a particularly formative zone within the reproductive arena (Connell, 2002).

This study constructs one such gender equity framework, for a particular school (School A) in Adelaide. This framework is developed using the 'best fit' method, meaning that it is tailored to the context and ethos of that specific educational institution. Alongside this, themes are extrapolated from other equity frameworks, as well as relevant literature, to be embedded within the 'best fit' framework.

1.2 Gap in the Literature

Gender equity frameworks for educational institutions have previously been developed to address issues of gender within the school context. However, these all present particular issues. For instance, they may be antiquated compared to contemporary educational

discourse, there is no identified evidence of their implementation or evaluation, and they are in response to a certain issue and do not address the key problems that students face. Within the literature there no contemporary gender equity frameworks that have been developed for the use at a specific school. Producing a gender equity framework for a specific school, in conjunction with the school's context and ethos, could facilitate the push towards gender equity within education. The so-called 'best fit' framework is an underutilised construction within the field of education. This study utilises the methodology of 'best fit' to construct a gender equity framework for a specific institution to improve the education of the students and to support equitable schooling outcomes.

1.3 Research Questions

The goal of this study is to ascertain what themes or features a gender equity framework for a particular school are required, and then developing a framework for 'best fit'. For this purpose, this study will determine:

- A. What constitutes 'gender', 'equity', 'framework', and 'best fit' for the purpose of this study and for School A?
- B. What methodology is required to construct an education framework of 'best fit'?
- C. What issues surrounding gender need to be addressed by a prospective gender equity framework?

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis is separated into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction and contains the problem to be addressed, gaps in the literature, and research questions. Chapter Two includes the literature review, which outlines the definitions for significant terminology, and

the issues of education and gender such as subject parity and academic achievement.

Chapter Three addresses the methodology of this study, limitations, ethics, data collection, and validity and reliability. Chapter Four contains the findings, which are illustrated as graphs and tables, the discussion, which analyses the frameworks, as well as the developed 'best fit' framework. Chapter Five includes the conclusion, and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is organised into three sections. The first contains definitions which are pertinent to this study. The meaning of these terms are especially important to clarify to communicate the desired meaning. The second section contains synthesised information about the disparity between subject disciplines, and how gender construction and expression may be an underlining cause. The third and final section addresses how academic achievement relates to gender, and that often, hegemony is the antithesis to educational excellence.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Introduction

Within this section of the literature review important terms are defined. This ensures clarity for the reader, as well as validity for the study, as within qualitative research it is important to evaluate the conceptions of the researcher. Defined within this section is 'equity', 'gender', 'framework', and 'best fit'.

2.2.2 Defining Equity

For the desired outcomes of equity to be achieved it first needs to be properly defined. The Public Policy Institute asserts that there are numerous conceptions of equity, all of which imply different educational outcomes and means for achieving them. For example, 'equity as fairness' is "defined as making sure that personal and social circumstances are not obstacles for achieving educational potential" (Public Policy Institute of Australian Catholic

University, 2011, p. 3). The *National Strategy for Equity in Schooling*, by contrast, defines equity as equal access to education and fairness in resource distribution (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1994). This definition is broad and not universally applicable. Within contemporary South Australia, for instance, the context is much less focussed on attaining equity in access. Considering this, the meaning and definition of equity in education are dependant on the schooling context and desired outcomes.

Equity as minimum is another conception, which stipulates that there should be either a basic minimum standard for all regardless of circumstances. Or, equal outcomes for all despite social or familial context. Conceptions such as this demonstrate one of the issues that pervade defining equity in education- synonymising equity with equality. While this is not inherently problematic, conflating the two terms intrinsically combines equitable outcomes with equal outcomes. This ignores the fairness of outcomes that equity attempts to foster.

Despite the two conceptions implying varying treatment and educational outcomes, equity and education are frequently interconnected. In relation to pedagogy, the EQUATE Project classifies equity as “strategies and processes that provide fair and equal chances for all to pursue and benefit from educational opportunities” (USAID, 2016, p. 2). By contrast, equality is defined as females and males having “equal rights, freedoms, conditions, and opportunities for realizing their full potential in society” (USAID, 2016, p. 2). This is reiterated by Klein et al. (1994), who contends that most would agree that equality is useful when considering the equal treatment of students, and especially regarding “equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities” (p. 3). This is also similarly relevant for educational and

cultural contexts. For example, in some lower socio-economic status (SES) areas the priorities may be around retention rates or providing equal access to schooling. This contrasts with higher SES areas that may prioritise attainment of university pathways over eliminating class disparities, which echoes 'equity and excellence.' 'Equity and excellence' specifies that equity should aim to promote high quality education free of discrimination and ensures that socioeconomic background ceases to be a determinant of educational outcomes. Considering this, the idea of equity as more educationally applicable in comparison to equality is revealed.

Equity and equality are similarly contested in relation to gender. Most teachers would agree that all genders within the school should receive equal treatment, though there may be hidden biases that they are unaware of, or best practices for students of certain genders. For example, studies have shown that teachers tend to communicate more with male students, asking them more complicated and open-ended questions (Hilke and Conway-Gerhardt, 1994). Boys are similarly more likely to be praised for work quality or intellect, while girls are praised more often for form and neatness (Hilke and Conway-Gerhardt, 1994). When defining gender equity, Klein et al. (1994) provides a more comprehensive description:

Ensuring fair, just, and comparable but not always identical treatment during the education process. The differential treatment is based on gender differences in needs, or evidence that it will be more effective in contributing to the desired outcomes (p. 3).

This means that gender differences are not ignored in the name of equal treatment, but rather, are acknowledged in the educative process for the benefit of all students. On the

level of in-class interaction, this definition is the most appropriate. But for a whole-school approach, the desired outcomes of promoting gender equity need to be factored in. For this, attaining gender parity for academic success, reducing gender differences across subject areas, and fostering equitable pathways are the main priorities. In this, the institution needs to be aware of the processes which foster inequality in education and understand the factors that contribute to the construction of masculinities and femininities. This is to ensure that differentiated teaching is not a process that solidifies gender conceptions, but instead, allows students to learn and excel despite social and cultural expectations around gender. For this paper, gender equity is defined as: *ensuring fair, just, and differentiated treatment during the educational process, based on evidence that it will be the most effective for the desired outcomes. It means achieving parity in enrolment of genders across subject areas even if they are typically dominated by a certain gender, and fostering equitable educational outcomes and the academic success of all genders.*

2.2.3 Defining Gender

This paper utilises the term 'gender', instead of 'sex', as it is generally a more inclusive term. 'Sex' provides biological connotations, in that it is usually grounded in a static binary that is presupposed by physical or physiological differences. 'Gender', meanwhile, reflects a greater emphasis on personal qualities that may be typically associated with categories in the biological sex continuum (Klein et al., 1994). This means that attributes that are commonly linked with a certain sex, such as masculinity for males or femininity for females, are no longer monopolised by that sex. It does recognise that these conceptions of sexuality are substantiated by cultural and historical perceptions and expectations. This allows for greater flexibility and acknowledges that the construction of gender is an active process and

not decided by primary or secondary sexual characteristics. For example, under the conceptions of sex, boys that are effeminate or exhibit masculinities that vary from hegemonic masculinity, are considered 'lesser' males or are othered. Hegemonic masculinity or femininity is defined as the dominant gender identity with a culture (Edley and Wetherell, 1998). For instance, in Australia, hegemonic masculinity would be characterised as being a white heterosexual male (Robinson, 2000). In many cases, a male student who displays feminine traits, or those outside of hegemonic masculinity, is categorised as homosexual by their male peers. These ideas can present among other members of the school, as Carole Funk (2002) illustrates, "...[t]rouble occurs when teachers see non-feminine behavior from girls or non-assertive behavior from boys and make judgments about these violations of expected behaviors for both genders" (p. 5). Using gender, by contrast, means that students who display traits which may typically be associated by a certain sex are not considered to be lesser, but accepted.

The shift away from sex in favour of gender within educational terminology is becoming much more prevalent. Koch et al. (2002) argues that this progression has resulted from the need for a definition that "reflects the cultural construct of male and female roles and expectations rather than the biological aspects of sex differences, and includes the notion that many social institutions are gendered, with some form of inequity existing between men and women" (p. 185). This is important as it recognises that institutions can also be gendered. R.W. Connell (2005) stresses that sexualities transcend the level of the individual, citing that corporations, certain professions, and the military can be inherently masculine. Connell's work here is crucial, as attaining gender equity within an educational institution requires the identification and acknowledgement of intrinsically gendered elements, and then changing them to promote inclusivity and equitable outcomes.

When defining gender it is similarly important to consider the discourse the term relates to. As Elizabeth Frazer (1989) notes, “the ‘gender’ constructed by a conservative discourse is not the same ‘gender’ as that constructed by a feminist or other radical discourse” (p. 283). For the purposes of this paper, therefore, the goals of educational gender equity need to be considered, as well as to whom or what the term gender applies. Gender Spectrum, an organisation founded to foster gender inclusive environments for children and teens, argues that it is important to consider three interconnected dimensions: body, identity, and expression. Body is how we experience our own bodies, recognising that society genders bodies, and “how others interact with us based on our bodies” (p. 3). Identity is our internal sense of self as “masculine, feminine, a blend of both, neither, or something else” (p. 3). Identity also involves the term we use to convey our gender. As this self-perception is not necessarily constrained by sex, a person can identify with a gender that does not correspond with what they were assigned at birth. The final dimension is expression, which is how we express our gender and how others perceive, interact, and shape our gender. Expression is also influenced by gender roles which, on a societal level, are used to enforce conformity to acceptable gender norms. The common elements between these interrelated dimensions are that they first, have greater flexibility than a more static biological conception. And second, that they are all influenced by societal and cultural expectations. This is an issue that this paper addresses, in that there can be conflicts between gendered individuals and gendered systems.

A definition for gender needs to consider all these aspects. Specifically, the role of cultures in shaping gender, the idea that institutions can be gendered, and lastly, that gender is an active process which is in constant formation, as opposed to a static construct. For this, Connell (2002) provides an astute classification: “Gender is the structure of social

relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes” (p. 10). As she notes, this definition allows gender to differ cross-culturally, that “gender arrangements are reproduced socially (not biologically) to constrain individual action,” (10) and that gender is an ever-changing construct. Connell also places a great emphasis on what she calls the ‘reproductive arena.’ In this she notes that biological differences are not inherently dictated by our self-perceptions, but rather, that our bodies are brought into social processes and used to act in socially acceptable ways that become rationalised through our physiology. As such, Connell’s definition is what is utilised for the purposes of this paper.

2.2.4 Defining Framework

For this paper the usage of the term ‘framework’ is heavily based on Yosef Jabareen’s (2009) philosophy of conceptual frameworks. Jabareen defines a conceptual framework as “a network, or a ‘plane,’ of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” (p. 51). In this, the interlinked concepts are the interplay between gender, equity, and education. However, this paper diverges from Jabareen in that, while it is essentially hypothetical, it has been developed with the intention of implementation. Yet the framework does adhere to conceptual framework requirements since it “is not merely a collection of concepts but, rather, a construct in which each concept plays an integral role” (p. 51). As well as that, it “can be developed and constructed through a process of qualitative analysis” (p. 51). Though, this study does not deal solely in the qualitative. This framework is constructed with the additional usage of quantitative data and consultation with relevant literature. It is furthermore developed

under the recommendation that qualitative and quantitative analyses be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework.

The context also needs to be considered when defining a term. The Gender Equity Taskforce (1997) are limited when defining their ‘framework’, however, they have extensively considered the context of their framework and desired outcomes. From this, they have constructed a basic framework with strategic directions that provide the areas of action and issues to target. The Gender Equity Taskforce’s framework is more pragmatic in that it can be readily implemented, but however, requires extensive adaptation to individual schools. Considering this, for the purposes of this paper, the term ‘framework’ is defined as *a systematic structure that can be readily implemented within an institution. Or, with more direct application to gender equity, a systematic structure that can be readily implemented in order to highlight key interrelated concepts and resolve issues that pertain to those concepts through a methodological approach.*

2.2.4 Defining ‘Best Fit’

This framework has been developed for a specific school with consideration to the institution’s educational, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts. This is opposed to a framework which could broadly apply to most school settings. The ‘best fit’ method is limited concerning education, however. In this, Carroll et al.’s (2013) refinement of the approach for health frameworks can be adapted to an educational setting. This involves identifying *a priori* framework and analysing it to determine appropriate themes. This *a priori* framework is then cross-analysed with relevant qualitative research, which together, are developed to coalesce with the context of the institution. In this, elements of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) are considered. Praxis, for instance, as Freire

argues, is the “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (Irwin, 2012, p. 65). In this, the ‘struggle for liberation’ can be interpreted as the struggle to be liberated from the oppressive and domineering presence of institutional and cultural gender norms. As the stakeholders themselves cannot be directly consulted, Freire’s conceptualisation of praxis, as well as Carroll et al.’s (2013) are considered for defining ‘best fit’.

‘Best fit’ is important to education as it can consider the interrelated dimensions of gender equity in a specific context. Socioeconomic status, for example, necessitates different approaches dependant on where a school sits in relation to it. Class is another example, as students of different class backgrounds possess varying comprehensions of obstacles to gender (Frazer, 1989). Considering this, ‘best fit’ means that *the framework has been constructed for implementation, with careful consideration of former gender equity frameworks, and with regard for the school’s policies, ethos, context, students, staff and culture.*

2.3 Gender equity and subject choice

2.3.1 Introduction

This section of the literature review engages in the relations between gender equity and subject pathways. A chronic issue in achieving educational gender equity is the gendered nature of subject enrolments. This is largely due to an interplay between gender identification and the institutional masculinisation or feminisation of subject disciplines. For instance, girls tend to predominate the Humanities, while boys tend to dominate STEM subjects. The effects of this translate to post-school pathways, with the Arts and Engineering in tertiary institutions being mostly female and male respectively. The aim for equity in this is not necessarily to achieve a perfect parity across all subjects, but for students to possess autonomy over their own educational and career pathways. And, importantly, not to be pressured by the interrelation of internal and external conflicts related to gender.

2.3.2 Male Students and Subject Enrolment Disparity

Male students overwhelmingly dominate STEM subjects. There tend to be greater male enrolments for Physics and Scientific Studies (See **Table 4**), as well as the highest and lowest levels of Mathematics (See **Table 3**). This is due to numerous reasons which are predominantly linked to the masculinisation of the Maths and Sciences. In this, it is also important to recognise that the schooling years for an adolescent are particularly formative for the construction of gender identities and how they align with conceptions of masculinity and femininity. This means that their notions as gendered individuals are very fragile, and therefore may be more susceptible to cultural expectations on what it means to be a male or female. As, according to Connell (1996), “though we will never have a simple way of measuring the relative influence of different institutions, there seems to be good

warrant for considering schools to be one of the major sites of masculinity formation” (p. 212). For these reasons it is more likely that a male student will follow a STEM pathway rather than one in the Humanities.

The teacher’s gender for male students exemplifies these gendered apprehensions. Male students are less likely to respond to female teachers as they pose a perceived threat to their own notions of masculinity (Robinson, 2000). Boys are likely to possess stereotypically gendered beliefs about authority, such as male teachers being more in control, whereas female teachers are considered to be “ineffectual disciplinarians” (Robinson, 2000, p. 79). This belief pertains to the attribution of masculinities as being more capable of leadership or of handling difficult situations better, meaning that those who typify traditional masculinity will garner more respect in the classroom. Furthermore, the link between masculinity and strength adds to notions of authority for the male teacher (Robinson, 2000). Moreover, if the post-school pathways for STEM are male-dominated, then it is more likely that male students can envision themselves within that pathway due to the presence of gender role-models.

The reasons why boys often diverge from the Humanities’ is generally the inverse of why they are attracted to the Maths and Sciences. For instance, while there are more male teachers within STEM, there are more female teachers in the Humanities. This means that this contestation of gender identities is more likely to occur during subjects such as English. However, the perceived femininity of the Humanities goes far beyond the predominance of female teachers. While masculinity is seen to be associated with action, passivity is associated with femininity. This means reading, which is a large part of the Humanities, is derisively looked down on (Hall and Coles, 1997). It also explains why male students are

more likely than female students to engage in physical education, as it a quintessentially active subject which emphasis traditionally masculine characteristics of strength and competitiveness (See **Table 2**). As Ateh Kah Moma notes, “boys’ engagement with sports is defined in terms of the constructs of their role play as rough, strong powerful and masculine, while girls’ sports are constructed as feminine and deprecated by boys” (2015, p. 43).

2.3.3 The Conflicts Between Gender Expression and Subject Discipline

Girls can easily envision themselves within the Humanities as there are numerous examples to model themselves on. Examples for modelling can take the form of a female teacher, of which there are markedly more of in the Arts, or possibly historically significant figures. For instance, in English there will always be numerous significant female figures to draw from. This is similar within History, especially as the women’s movement and suffrage are encouraged by ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority). STEM subjects, by contrast, have less of an emphasis on influential figures. However, there has been great discourse surrounding gendered examples within textbooks. The gender of examples within textbooks can be particularly informative. If, as in Mathematics, a written problem involves males performing traditionally male activities, then this may be disinteresting for girls. As such, it is difficult for girls to envision themselves within Physics if there is an overwhelmingly masculine presence in the form of her teachers, her peers, and even the examples within the textbooks.

As the school is a crucial place for the formation of gender identity, girls may feel they need to maintain the status quo by engaging in historically feminine activities. It is also important to note that in this vital stage of burgeoning identities, contradicting the societal

consensus of what is appropriately feminine can lead to the risk of ridicule. Especially when students cannot conceive of individuals as being simultaneously masculine and feminine beings. If a boy, for instance, engages in feminine activities they risk being labelled 'sissy's' or 'gay'. Likewise, if female students undertake masculine activities, they risk being labelled a 'tomboy' or a 'lesbian'. These are rooted in ideas around hegemonic masculinity and femininity, as "policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality (Charles, 2010, p. 34; Butler, 1999). Considering this, students are likely to ridicule anyone who is divergent from hegemony, as gender conceptions are largely formulated by contrasts and othering. Importantly, this need to label perceived gender transgressors as 'others' shares many principles with toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity, as defined by Terry A. Kupers (2000), is "the need to aggressively compete and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities of men" (p. 713). However, it is important to note that girls can also display toxic masculinity, as it is many ways the cognitive need to oppress or suppress other masculinities or femininities, usually those outside of hegemony. Toxic masculinity is a term recurrently used within popular media and generally refers to men who exhibit damaging, overtly masculine qualities that detriment themselves or others.

2.3.4 Gendered Ideologies and Subject Choice

There is also a difference between the ideology of male and female students. Female students are more likely to undertake altruistic pathways, such as teaching or nursing. Meanwhile, male students are more likely to pursue more pragmatic outcomes such as those linked to financial gain. However, these ideals are similarly linked with conceptions of gender. For example, woman as carer and man as provider (Billington, 2007). This notion is corroborated by Joanne Baker (2010), who argues that "socialisation disposes women to

adopt the connective and nurturing values and an altruistic orientation while men's socialisation predisposes them to be directed in the more culturally valued, self-interested manner presumed by economic theory" (p. 9). The idea that boys are motivated by external factors such as financial gain, while girls are led by intrinsic factors that links to altruism, are historically demonstrated within subjects such as Biology and Psychology (See **Table 4**). These are scientifically-based subjects that have a prevalent human element. They are also subjects that typically demonstrate higher female enrolments. This is possibly explained by this emphasis on altruism, as success in these fields can directly translate to the betterment of other people (Miller et al., 2006). For instance, Miller et al. (2006) determined that the reason many female students undertake a science subject is because it is required by tertiary institutions to enrol in health professions such as medicine or physical therapy. This may also explain why the disparity between male and female enrolment in chemistry has lessened in recent years.

2.3.5 Institutional Gender

The overbearing presence of gendered institutions within education is important as it poses gender expectations that constrain choice. A feminine presence within the Maths and Sciences is crucial for societal gender equality, as is a masculine presence within the Humanities. Furthermore, these students will be deprived of important life skills since it does not align with gender expectations. Martino et al. (2001), for example, consider English and History to be an especially productive environment for gender to be explored as discussion and textual analyses that examine gender are commonly utilised. A study conducted by Chris Mason and Brad Shipway (2013) further substantiates this. Mason et al. (2013) analysed the level of 'hyper masculine' behaviour within a class of Year 9 and 10

boys. 'Hyper masculinity' here is characterised as the overemphasis on strength, aggression and sexuality (Parrott and Zeichner, 2003). This study worked with a class of particularly difficult boys in English and consisted of viewing and reading texts which critiqued gender. After, they were able to articulate the motivations for their behaviour. And, moreover, "learning about Emotional Intelligence, citizenship and empathy had led the boys to re-evaluate their priorities and to imagine themselves as the men they wished to be rather than the boys that they were" (Mason et al., 2013, p. 26). Girls, by contrast, who have largely benefitted from feminist campaigns, typically possess less toxic traits than boys. However, by avoiding the Maths and Sciences they miss out on higher paying jobs, and contribute fewer role-models within these disciplines, which perpetuates a cycle of inequitable outcomes for girls.

2.4 Negotiating Gender and Academic Achievement

2.4.1 Introduction

This final section of the literature review addresses the gender constraints on academic achievement. To adhere to acceptable gender expression, boys and girls must navigate contradictory societal expectations to be both gender appropriate and academically successful. In this, students are implicitly demanded to become the paragons of their gender. This section postulates that the expectations around students and gender are harmful. As for students to be both academic achievers and acceptably masculine or feminine, is to demand perfection. This section compares the academic achievement across genders to demonstrate how gender expression can impact student performance.

2.4.2 Australian Academic Results and Gender

Concern for the gender disparity of academic achievement can be accurately surmised by NAPLAN and PISA results. Beginning with NAPLAN's 2018 results, there is a consistent reflection of discipline-based skills that each gender tends to outperform the other in. For example, areas such as reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation, are typically associated with the Humanities. Numeracy, meanwhile, is linked with STEM subjects. In Humanities-based areas, girls consistently outperform boys. For example, for Year 3 writing in South Australia, 8.5 percent of boys were below the national standard, compared to 3.5 percent for girls (See **Table 5**). In Year 5 the gap increases, with 16.1 percent of boys below the national standard in South Australia, against 7.6 percent for girls (See **Table 6**). Year 5 writing also demonstrated that 80.6 percent of boys were at or above the national standard, while 90.5 percent of girls were at or above the national standard. This trend continues to Year 9 writing, in which 28 percent of South Australian boys were

below the national standard (See **Table 7**). This increase was present, however, among female students as well at 21.9 percent. Although, this gap is not so consistent across other Humanities-associated areas such as reading, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. In writing, girls have seen a slight advantage within Humanities-related areas which widens across time, whereas with the other Humanities-associated areas, they remain relatively unchanged.

The statistics see an inverse change in numeracy. In the younger years, there is very little separating boys and girls in numerical ability. For instance, in Year 3 across Australia the mean score for boys was 394.9, while girls were slightly lower at 387.3 (See **Table 8**).

Nationally in Year 9, boys had a mean score of 600.3, while girls had a mean score of 590.9 (See **Table 9**). From this it appears that boys lag somewhat behind in areas that pertain to the Humanities, while girls are slightly behind boys in numeracy.

This is relatively consistent within the PISA results for Australia. PISA compares the student performance of fifteen-year-olds across countries, with 80 different countries currently participating. This found that for 2015, Australian students demonstrated no gender difference in scientific literacy and Mathematics. However, for reading girls tend to be a full year ahead of their male counterparts. This can possibly be explained by the varying rate of development across genders. For instance, females tend to develop and mature faster than males (Gogtay et al., 2004). Although, this developmental theory is often overlooked.

Meaning that the statistics, along a cultural backlash to the second-wave feminism, permeate discourses around gender and academic achievement.

2.4.3 Education and the ‘What About the Boys?’ Discourse

So-called 'second-wave feminism' has had a drastic effect on the educational objectives for female students. The movement had many priorities, however, pedagogic and legislative change for education was at the forefront (Gaskill, 2008). Within Australia, this shifted the perception of girls' schooling, as the government began to take a vested interest in achieving greater access to education (McInnis, 1995). This ideological shift is exemplified by the 1984 Commonwealth Schools Commission, which "noted that girls continued to be disadvantaged by an education system that limited their options in and out of school" (McInnis, 1995). Two years later the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* was adopted to raise awareness for girls' educational needs, provide equal access and participation to education, create supportive school environments, and ensure "equitable resource allocation" (McInnis, 1995). This was heavily criticised as it supposedly simplified the issues of educational gender equity and largely ignored the schooling needs for boys. The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-97* was far more comprehensive, focussing on the examination of gender, eliminating sexual harassment, improving educational outcomes for girls, and reforming the curriculum to be more gender inclusive (McInnis, 1995). Legislative change, as demonstrated within the NAPLAN and PISA results, has seemingly had a positive effect on the education of girls.

While an ideological shift has had such a drastic effect for girls, however, little has changed for male students. This has given rise to the 'what about the boys?' debate, a highly politically charged discourse centring on the concern for boys' education, often at the expense of girls. While the moral panic around the so-called 'boy turn' can provide positive outcomes for male students, it is largely a politicised reaction to the success of girls and the gender equity agenda. Within Australia, and similarly the United Kingdom, boys have been positioned as the 'new disadvantaged' (Martino et al., 2001). This rhetoric supposed to

undermine the societal disadvantage of women and girls and posit men and boys as equally disadvantaged, despite men continuing to win out socially and economically. As Martino et al. (2001) argues,

...[t]his obfuscation of the 'material pay-off' which men and boys enjoy as a result of their dominant position in the gender order and the social and political reality of 'male advantage' permits simplistic notions such as the suggestion that men are the new second sex to gain popular acceptance (p. 7).

This has had notable effects for gender in education, as this perceived 'male failure' is often positioned as a "corollary to female success" (Foster et al., 2002, p. 9). This means that the improvement in girls' education is often viewed as the decline of their gender counterparts, despite the issue being far more complex. However, feminist researchers in the UK, such as Valerie Walkerdine (1989), discovered that girls during the 1980s were not as academically disadvantaged as previously thought. In fact, while much of the contemporary rhetoric involves a post-feminist hypothesis, in that girls currently outperform boys and no longer require educational support, research indicates that girls were on par with boys during primary school, and actually surpassed boys in the languages (Ringrose, 2007). This would indicate that the gender disparity in academic achievement has been perpetually present. And, if the NAPLAN and PISA results are historically indicative, this disparity is not so great as has been politically positioned. It may also indicate that the subject divide of girls in the humanities and boys in STEM may be the product of socialisation rather than legislation, explaining why there is a slight disparity early on, which grows as they specialise into their gendered disciplines. Although, with the current emphasis on national standards, this does not end the enduring argument of the "school girl fictions",

where girls' achievement at school becomes synonymous with an overarching 'feminist victory'" (Ringrose, 2007, p. 472). Due to this rhetoric of a post-feminist achievement, the supposed underperformance of boys is met with resource allocation, policy, and research concerns (Osler et al., 2002; Crudas and Haddock, 2005).

2.4.4 Outcomes of the 'Boy Turn'

Although the educational achievements for girls are steeped in a political fiction, it has led to a greater acknowledgement to the schooling needs of boys. For example, there is a widespread consensus that the 'failing boys' argument poses a deficit model that will cause boys more harm, casting them as 'defective'. As Jessica Ringrose (2007) notes, "Australian research has pointed to a discursive shift from a 'deficit framework' that oriented equity politics for helping girls 'measure up to' boys, to a deficit model for boys" (p. 476). This deficit framework, as Ringrose indicates, only works to the detriment of boys as it first, emphasises the negative connotations rather than the positives, and second, ignores vital circumstances that entrench the gender achievement disparity. For instance, many scholars note that the interrelations of gender conceptions and academic achievement play a vital role in how male students perform. One study tracked the relationship between notions of masculinity and grades within a Kentucky high school in the United States. This study determined that male underachievement was largely embedded within the need of male students to subordinate other 'femininities', as well as 'masculinities' which were deemed to be 'otherly' or weaker (Morris, 2008). This is concurrent with hegemonic masculinity, in that gender is constructed through binaries and relativism. Yet also toxic masculinity in that these male students sought to aggressively subordinate differing genders.

2.4.5 Gender and Achievement

The culturally appropriate expressions of gender are also important when navigating achievement. In this, what is appropriately feminine or masculine is often at odds with expectations around achievement and academic success. Girls, for instance, 'walk a very difficult line', having to maintain a perception of ideal femininity, while also adhering to personal and familial expectations of schooling accomplishment. Girls frequently suffer from performing the 'good-girl pupil,' or what is known as 'doing girl', while also conforming to suitable femininity in their peer groups (Ringrose and Renold, 2012). Much of this originates from the relation of boys to girls as underachieving, therefore positioning female students as "unproblematic academic achievers who are easier to teach than boys" (Skelton et al., 2010, p. 186). However, perceiving girls as less overtly difficult pupils compromises the necessity to understand the gendered dynamics that they frequently confront. For example, being an 'acceptable girl' is not synonymous with being an academic achiever. As Skelton et al. (2010) notes, the 'acceptable girl' perception involves "passivity, accommodation, a concern with social relations and projecting feminine 'desirability,'" while being an academic achiever requires "hard-nosed determination, singularity and concern with mental/ intellectual (rather than social) pursuits" (p. 187).

Navigating the 'acceptable girl' personage is often influenced by the need to maintain heteronormativity (Butler, 1999). As Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai (2002) note, "queerness as sexual deviancy is tied to the monstrous figure of the terrorist as a way to otherize and quarantine subjects classified as 'terrorists', but also normalize and discipline a population through these monstrous figures" (p. 126). This is largely due to the attribution of cleverness as intrinsically masculine, and therefore transgressive of appropriate femininity. As a result, amongst peers aversive behaviours can form as academic achievers, both male and female, can be labelled as 'square'. This is a term which Pierre Bourdieu and

Jean Claude Passeron coined in 1997 to mean 'high cultured', therefore evoking an interplay between acceptable gender expression and a classist inferiority complex (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Renold, 2001). Although, within a contemporary context, 'square' is akin to terms such as 'nerd' or 'geek', archetypes which are generally positioned as the opposite of hegemony. It is also a differentiation which can signify the ridicule, bullying, and exclusion of the academic achiever.

While girls can be typically constrained by the need to maintain feminine sensibilities, this bullying can have hidden psychological consequences, which can be internalised and therefore difficult for schools to detect and address (Ringrose, 2008). This combines with the research indicating that girls are particularly susceptible to low self-esteem, which can dangerously coalesce with the internalised response to bullying behaviour (Skelton et al., 2010). However, just because internalising bullying is linked to femininity, it does not mean that boys cannot be similarly affected. Especially boys who do not adhere to hegemonic masculinity.

Boys face similar difficulties when navigating the dichotomy of masculinity and academic achievement. Masculinity, in this, can play a central role to understanding the chronic underachievement of boys. For example, there is a form of masculinity that emphasises apathetic behaviour and 'getting by' with as little expended effort as possible (Martino and Meyenn, 2001). Accordingly, the emphasis on active processes such as sports, as opposed to passive processes such as reading, mean that boys tend to prioritise activities which align with their notions of traditional masculinity. This is significant as, considering the fragility of their self-perceived sexualities and the necessity to maintain heteronormativity, boys will often act out in order to seemingly secure their own masculinity. This might

involve sex-based harassment that relies on the aggressive subordination of 'otherly' sexualities. This poses difficulty for boys as they must be perceived as active, virile, hetero, and sexually willing, while girls walk a tenuous line between being too sexually permissive or not permissive enough. If this balance is not achieved, girls risk being labelled as either 'sluts' or 'frigid' respectively. In either case, boys and girls are similarly constrained by expectations around appropriate gender expression. Emma Renold in her research, however, notes that there are some ways in which students could acceptably achieve academically (2001). First, was to adopt a stereotype that was cognitively accessible for a student's peers. For example, Renold notes that girls who adapted to the 'tom-boy' archetype were accepted by their male peers due to their rejection of feminine qualities. Acceptance from the boys meant that female peers also had to accept them, despite being defeminised (Renold, 2001). The second strategy was to perfectly balance the achievement with the extremes of their respective genders. For girls, to be accepted as an academic achiever meant that they also had to be paragons of femininity, in that they were socially adept and desirable. For boys it meant being skilled sportsmen.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research processes utilised to analyse gender equity frameworks of 'best fit' for a particular educational institution (School A). This chapter consists of the methodological design, rationales for this approach, limitations, data collection, and ethical considerations. Sections pertaining to research validity and reliability are also included within this chapter.

3.2 Methodological Design

This study utilised a dual research design that paired the 'best fit' method with a close textual analysis. For the 'best fit' method, Carroll et al.'s (2011; 2013) research was developed for the purposes of this study. According to this, the 'best fit' design offers a "means to test, reinforce and build on an existing published model, conceived for a potentially different but relevant population" (Carroll et al., 2013, p. 1). This is particularly relevant to this study, as it means determining a former framework that is most relevant to the school's context, while only the data that cannot be accommodated requires analysis. As such, this design is "relatively rapid, transparent and pragmatic" (Carroll et al., 2013, p. 1). It is also different from other qualitative designs because it employs a systematic method for identifying existing frameworks for synthesis, as well as combining both framework and thematic analysis. The 'best fit' design follows the below method (See **Figure 1**), as found in Carroll et al. (2013, p. 3).

The 'best fit' research design utilises two approaches for systematically identifying prior research. These are the BeHEMOTH approach and the SPIDER approach. The former

involves identifying the ‘behaviour of interest’ (Be), the ‘health context’ (H), ‘exclusions’ (E), and the ‘models or theories’ (MoTh). This provides the basis for a thematic analysis that formulates the *a priori* framework. The SPIDER (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation and Research type) approach, meanwhile, is used to narrow relevant studies for a qualitative review using “free text and database thesaurus terms” (Carroll et al., 2013, p.

4). The validity and credibility of these identified

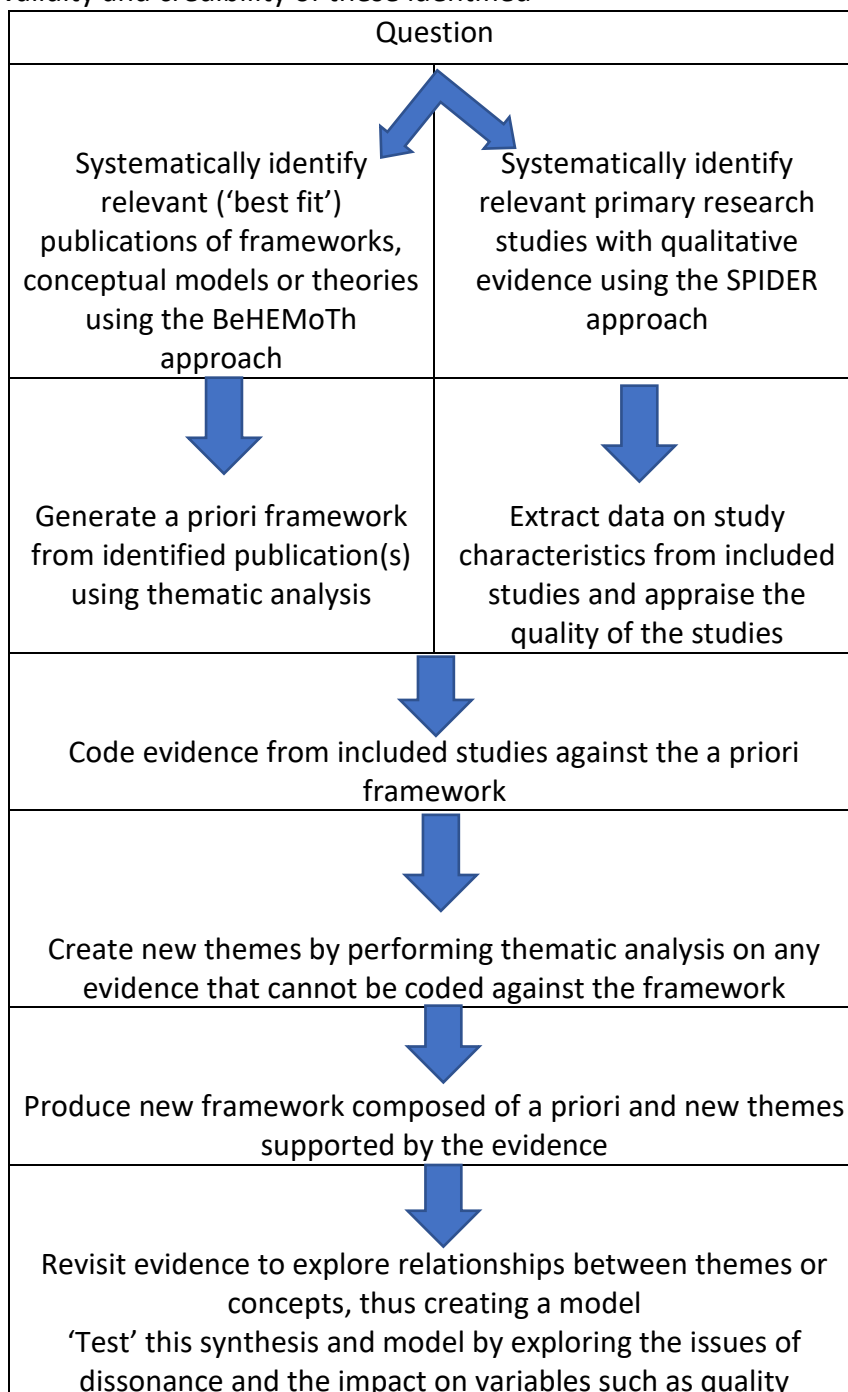


Figure 1: Qualitative evidence synthesis using 'best fit' synthesis

studies are then evaluated and coded against the *a priori* framework. Thematic analysis is conducted on studies which cannot be coded against the *a priori* framework to produce a framework which is credibly and thematically supported. The last component of the framework development involves comparing the final framework with the original *a priori* framework. This process searches for any dissonances between the two, such as themes that were coded out and the reasons for this. This is evaluated against variables such as the goals or intended outcomes of the framework.

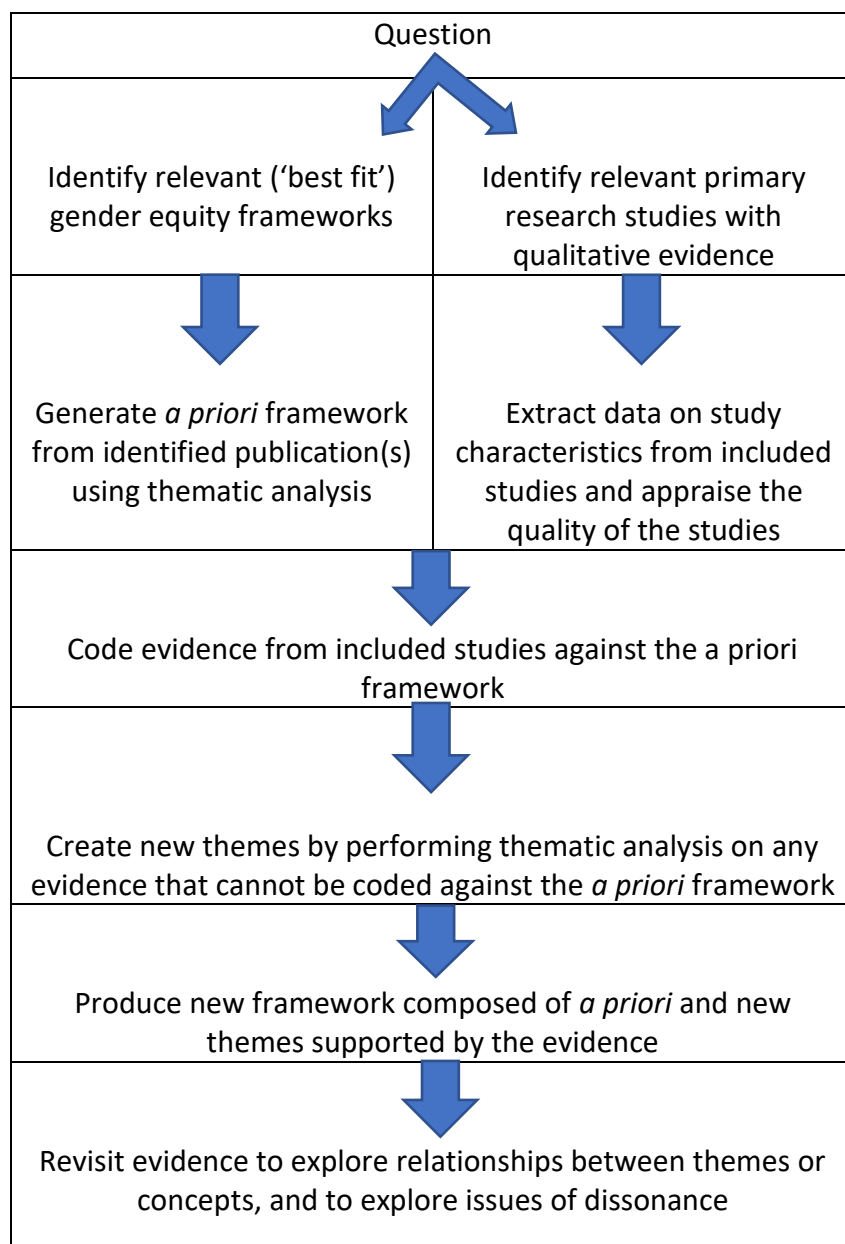


Figure 2: Qualitative evidence synthesis using adapted 'best fit' framework method

Due to a conflict between the 'best fit' thematic analysis methods, a close textual analysis was also used within this study. Close textual analysis, or close reading, involves identifying the underlying elements and themes within a text by making informed claims about their meaning (Gournelos et al., 2019). While the subjectivity of this design can be prone to criticism, analysis of numerous sources incorporates the validity and credibility of that research. In this it is, in a sense, based on the subjectivity of numerous academic sources which determined the same results.

As the 'best fit' methodology was developed for health institutions such as hospitals, it was adapted to the context of this study. While the BeHEMoTh and SPIDER approaches ensure a more systematic method of identifying relevant research for synthesis, they were too exclusive to health studies. Furthermore, locating relevant sources required a far more varied search field. As such, the 'best fit' identification approaches were developed to accommodate an educational context. This adaptation process is outlined in Figure 2, which was developed using Carroll et al.'s (2013) design (see **Figure 1**).

3.3 Rationale for this Methodology

This methodology was the best suited for the central research question, which involved locating and evaluating existing gender equity frameworks for a specific school context. As it was an individual institution and not a whole district, for example, it was important to determine what best matched with School A. A combination of close reading analysis and synthesis for 'best fit' was also the most appropriate for a qualitative study. Especially as the desired outcomes of this study engage in the emotional and social wellbeing of the students. Development of a 'best fit' gender equity framework would, therefore, most comfortably coalesce with the ethos and context of School A. This ensures that the goals

and intended outcomes of the framework are met with the least resistance. Furthermore, synthesis of multiple framework means that limitations present in any one can be overcome.

3.4 Limitations

The 'best fit' methodology has some limitations. For example, it is heavily reliant on existing frameworks and literature to produce a framework of 'best fit'. Another limitation is the necessity for review. As it is unlikely to find a framework that perfectly adheres to the 'best fit' method, there will always be the need to review the framework with concern to relevance and context. This issue was especially prevalent across the analysed frameworks, as they were either contextually irrelevant, or as in the case of the Framework A, temporally questionable. What adhered to 'best fit' was also heavily interpretive. For example, what aligned with the highlighted themes from the frameworks were subject to possible researcher bias. In this, what the researcher considered to be 'marketable' was based on hypothetical reasoning. This is similar for 'school ethos', which was based on School A's mission statement. Due to this, the study is limited in a sense, by the requirement of 'extra-textual' knowledge to inform the research and fill in any gaps (Belsey, 2013). Researcher bias, as Joseph Maxwell (2013) notes, poses two important threats to validity of qualitative conclusions: selection of research that matches the researcher's existing hypothesis, or preconceptions and the selection of research that "stand out" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 263). However, in qualitative research the primary concern is not to eliminate the preconceptions and variance of researchers, but identifying them to mitigate any possible negative consequences (Maxwell, 2013).

The study was also limited to secondary data. A more comprehensive framework could have been constructed with greater consultation with School A. Furthermore, the concept of 'best fit' works in coordination with the staffing body of the institution. As the administrators, teachers, students and parents could not be consulted for the development of this framework, it is highly dependent on data obtained through My School and the school's website to ascertain the context. Primary data collection in the form of interviews and questionnaires would have benefited this study. This study was also limited by the existing literature. For instance, there are few examples of what adheres to a 'gender equity framework'. And for the frameworks that were discovered, there was no identified evidence of their evaluation. This meant that analysing the frameworks was solely based on a thematic evaluation, and not backed by suitable quantitative data. Likewise, the concept of 'best fit' is limited in the context of education research. There are very few examples of utilising this model, despite the advantages it poses for qualitative research. These constraints meant that the systematic resource selection approaches endorsed by the 'best fit' method had to be abandoned. Lastly, time was also a limiting factor. Time affected the degree of depth to which this study could go.

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection within this study was limited to secondary data. This was provided by School A, and also collected from the My School website, NAPLAN, PISA, and SACE. These can be located in the results chapter. The My School website was used as to comprehensively inform of the context of School A. NAPLAN, PISA, and SACE, however, were utilised alongside the literature review to outline issues surrounding gender and education within South Australia. These data sets demonstrated how gender affects academic achievement

and educational pathways. These were cross-referenced against each other to demonstrate the interplay between gender and education, especially how gender expression and identity affected enrolments in the highest levels of English and Mathematics.

3.6 Ethics

Ethical approval was not a requirement for this study as no primary data collection was conducted. Furthermore, per the design of this study, no primary data was collected. Although, ethical considerations were applied to School A. For example, due to the memorandum of agreement, no one other than the researcher and the school were permitted to view the data provided by School A. By extension, the names of students were withheld, allowing for complete anonymity and protection for the school and its stakeholders. The outcomes of this study also required consideration. For instance, any gender equity framework would need to maintain the safety of the students.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The validity of this study was based on the analysis and evaluation of the frameworks and relevant literature. While researcher bias within this study is difficult to overcome, it is mitigated through the subjective analysis and review of other studies. Therefore, the validity of this study is facilitated through communication of the limitations and methodology. This ensures that others can identify any researcher bias within the study. After all, “validity in qualitative research is not the result of indifference, but of integrity (personal communication)” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124).

This study makes no claims to reliability. The subjective analysis, and concurrent synthesis, may be informed by relevant and credible literature. However, it may have no

replicability elsewhere. This is especially pertinent regarding the purpose of this study. As this framework was developed for a specific school context, it is unlikely that this study could be repeated with the same results. Furthermore, as it was the duty of the researcher to interpret and synthesise the data, another researcher may undertake the study with different preconceptions and emphasise different areas. They may also draw different conclusions, or consult different literature, especially as this study did not employ a systematic method for selecting studies for analysis.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the results of this study. It is organised into two sections. The first contains graphs and tables from SACE, NAPLAN and the School A data. These are analysed against each other to reveal patterns of gender in education, and how they may pertain to School A. The second section contains the discussion, and mainly addresses the gender equity framework and its development. This involves the results of the thematic analysis and how they were coded against the framework. The chapter concludes with the finished gender equity framework.

4.2 Graphs and Tables

4.2.1 SACE

This section engages with SACE Stage 2 subject enrolments by gender. The enrolments are taken from the Catholic, government, and independent school sectors. TAFE SA (Technical and Further Education) was omitted as the SACE statistics engage in a certain age range, whereas the age of TAFE enrolments varies. SACE statistics are similarly more pertinent as they can be directly compared to the Year 12 subject enrolments at School A (See **Table 11**). The SACE tables demonstrate the issue of gender subject disparity as outlined in the literature review. These show that female students are more likely to be in Humanities-based subjects, especially in the higher levels such as English Literary Studies (See **Table 1**). Female students are also more likely to undertake certain Science subjects, such as Biology, Health, or Nutrition. Arguments for this propose that it could be due to socialisation towards the Humanities, greater concerns for altruistic career pathways, or to avoid the

entrenched masculinity within other STEM subjects. For male students it is the opposite.

There is also a prevalent trend that students in modified subjects, those that are individualised for certain students with varying learning impairments, tend to be male.

However, the reasons for this are unclear.

Subject	Catholic		Government		Independent		Total				Grand Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	%	M	%	
English	747	589	1810	1078	1010	904	3567	58	2571	42	6138
English as an additional language	54	28	138	148	78	94	270	50	270	50	540
English literary studies	359	169	465	183	447	243	1271	68	595	32	1866
English modified	5	8	52	150	1	5	58	26	163	74	221
Essential English	201	203	731	762	126	163	1058	48	1128	52	2186
Total	1366	997	3196	2321	1662	1409	6224	57	4727	43	10951

Table 1: SACE Stage 2 English- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)

Table 1 shows the gender subject disparity between boys and girls in English. English is dominated by girls, especially in the higher levels such as English Literary Studies. Boys, however, are more likely to be in Modified English. The reasons for this are unclear. Presumably there would be an inverse of these statistics in STEM subjects. Yet this is not the case. For instance, Health and Health Modified in Table 2 demonstrate this gender divide. As, in Modified Health, there is a 33% female to 67% male distribution. In Health, by contrast, 68% are female while 32% are male (See **Table 2**).

Table 2 demonstrates that male students tend enrol in traditionally 'masculinised' subjects. Male students have higher enrolments in Outdoor Education and Physical

Education. These are typically ‘active’ subjects that exercise masculine ideals. Contrast this with English subjects, which have far more female than male role-models and utilises ‘passive’ practices such as reading. The negative perception of femininity by male students is best demonstrated by Child Studies which has a 96% to 4% split in favour of girls. Child Studies, of course, has a direct link to notions of femininity due to the connection with child rearing, a historically female role. Food and Hospitality is another subject linked to traditional femininity, which also has notably more female than male enrolments. This is in spite of the higher number of male than female chefs, demonstrative of the historical relegation of women to domesticity, unless aspects of leadership are involved, in which case it becomes a masculine domain.

Subject	Catholic		Government		Independent		Total				Grand Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	%	M	%	
Child studies	303	12	553	23	169	5	1025	96	40	4	1065
Food and hospitality	228	85	625	201	255	67	1108	76	353	24	1461
Health	96	67	554	243	45	12	695	68	322	32	1017
Health modified	7	5	57	129	4	2	68	33	136	67	204
Outdoor education	32	34	142	186	64	111	238	42	331	58	569
Physical education	174	323	341	640	212	381	727	35	1344	65	2071
Total	840	526	2272	1422	749	578	3861	60	2526	40	6387

Table 2: SACE Stage 2 Health and Physical Education- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)

Subject	Catholic		Government		Independent		Total				Grand Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	%	M	%	
Essential Mathematics	140	163	333	415	163	172	636	46	750	54	1386
General Mathematics	470	456	888	863	621	692	1979	50	2011	50	3990
Mathematical Methods	288	333	505	735	400	549	1193	42	1617	58	2810
Mathematics Modified	1	2	45	117	1	1	47	28	120	72	167
Specialist Mathematics	63	117	145	307	105	226	313	33	650	67	963
Total	962	1071	1916	2437	1290	1640	4168	45	5148	55	9316

Table 3: SACE Stage 2 Mathematics- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)

According to Table 3, male students are more likely to be in the highest and lowest levels of Mathematics, whereas female students are more likely to be in General or Essential Mathematics. This is an inverse of the gender disparity in the highest levels of English.

Table 4 demonstrates that female students are more likely to undertake Biology, Psychology, and Nutrition. This is possibly due to the historical representation of female students in those subjects, theories that girls preference altruism over pragmatism, or the necessitation of science subjects for tertiary health pathways. They are also well represented within Chemistry, in which there is an almost even split between males and females. This demonstrates how the gender gap in Chemistry has lessened across time. Boys in Physics, meanwhile, severely outnumber their gender counterparts.

Subject	Catholic		Government		Independent		Total				Grand Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	%	M	%	
Biology	465	231	986	421	690	436	2141	66	1088	34	3229
Chemistry	254	174	491	419	337	376	1082	53	969	47	2051
Earth and Environmental Science	0	0	15	14	0	0	15	52	14	48	29
Nutrition	181	58	242	103	134	35	557	74	196	26	753
Physics	102	241	198	592	140	414	440	26	1247	74	1687
Psychology	381	128	820	270	497	184	1698	74	582	26	2280
Scientific Studies	111	84	160	102	11	26	282	57	212	43	494
Scientific Studies: Modified	0	1	15	52	0	0	15	22	53	78	68
Total	1514	940	3036	2046	1827	1515	6377	59	4501	41	10878

Table 4: SACE Stage 2 Sciences- Number of completed enrolments, 2018 (SA)

4.2.2 NAPLAN

This section provides a more in-depth analysis of the gendered issues of academic achievement using NAPLAN results. The NAPLAN results demonstrate that boys show a slight advantage in numeracy, while girls consistently outperform boys in Humanities-based areas such as reading, writing, and punctuation and grammar. This can be attributed to numerous underlying causes. One theory stipulates that boys and girls, similar to the subject discipline disparities, are socialised towards certain areas that align with their conceptions of masculinity and femininity. However, this socialisation process is multifaceted, as an individual's own gender identity can be influenced by popular culture, their relationships, and cultural pressures. Although, this is only one explanation.

Another explanation is that boys and girls develop at different rates. For example, while socialisation can explain girls excelling at early years in the Humanities and boys excelling in STEM, the gap widens in the Humanities with boys falling behind, yet the results tend to plateau for traditionally 'masculinised' areas. This may be the result of faster neurological development by girls. However, girls also have distinctly different outlooks on schooling. Girls, on average, have significantly higher levels of achievement motivation than boys (Underwood, 2018). Similarly, girls spend more time studying than boys, as at Year 11, girls study 15 hours a week compared to 11 hours for boys (Fitzsimmons et al., 2018). Though the difference of four hours a week may not appear as substantial, an extra 208 hours of study a year demonstrates a significant degree of commitment to educational outcomes.

4.2.2.1 NAPLAN and Writing

State/ Territory	Sex	Below national minimum standard (%)		At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
		Exempt	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 and above	
NSW	Male	2.1	4.2	7.1	18.2	30.2	26.5	11.7	93.6
	Female	1.0	1.5	3.7	12.7	28.6	33.8	18.7	97.5
Vic	Male	3.6	2.5	5.3	16.0	31.1	30.2	11.4	93.9
	Female	1.7	0.8	2.4	10.2	27.1	38.1	19.7	97.5
Qld	Male	1.4	6.9	10.1	22.4	29.9	21.7	7.6	91.7
	Female	0.8	2.7	5.5	16.8	30.1	30.1	14.0	96.5
WA	Male	1.6	7.4	8.6	19.7	30.2	24.4	8.2	91.0
	Female	0.8	3.7	5.0	14.3	29.4	32.5	14.3	95.5
SA	Male	3.1	8.5	12.3	25.2	30.2	16.7	3.9	88.4
	Female	1.4	3.5	7.2	21	33.3	25.8	7.8	95.1
Tas	Male	2.2	8.3	11.4	22.5	29.3	20.2	6.3	89.5
	Female	1.3	2.9	4.9	15.5	32.1	31.6	11.7	95.8
ACT	Male	2.0	3.9	7.3	20.4	32.9	24.8	8.7	94.0
	Female	1.1	1.6	3.3	13.3	30.3	33.7	16.6	97.3
NT	Male	1.8	34.8	13.3	19.2	17.5	10.1	3.3	63.4
	Female	0.8	26.8	11.4	18.5	21.6	14.6	6.3	72.4
Aust	Male	2.3	5.4	7.9	19.3	30.2	25.1	9.6	92.2
	Female	1.2	2.2	4.2	13.8	29	33.1	16.4	96.6

Table 5: Achievement of Year 3 students in writing, by sex, by state and territory, 2018

Table 5 shows how Year 3 male and female students scored on NAPLAN in each state and territory in 2018. In every state or territory, more female than male students are at or above the national minimum standard. Meanwhile, the reverse is true for students that are below the national minimum standard. Though these percentages are relatively consistent across

State/ Territory	Sex	Below national minimum standard (%)		At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
		Exempt	Band 3 and below	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 and above	
NSW	Male	2.0	10.4	17.5	31.2	26.7	9.3	2.8	87.6
	Female	1.0	4.2	11.1	29.0	34.3	15.2	5.2	94.8
Vic	Male	3.3	6.0	13.9	34.7	31.3	8.9	1.9	90.7
	Female	1.7	2.0	7.2	29.2	39.7	16.2	4.0	96.3
Qld	Male	1.6	15.5	21.7	31.8	21.9	6.1	1.3	82.9
	Female	0.8	7.0	14.8	31.7	30.8	11.7	3.2	92.2
WA	Male	1.4	13.5	18.6	32.4	24.9	7.4	1.7	85.0
	Female	0.8	6.6	12.4	30.1	32.9	13.2	4.0	92.6
SA	Male	3.3	16.1	22.6	33.1	19.3	4.5	1.1	80.6
	Female	1.9	7.6	15.4	34.4	29.1	9.2	2.4	90.5
Tas	Male	2.1	18.8	23.6	32.6	18.6	3.6	0.6	79.1
	Female	1.0	6.4	13.6	35.0	31.4	10.5	2.1	92.6
ACT	Male	1.6	10.0	19.2	33.5	26.1	7.4	2.2	88.4
	Female	1.0	4.3	11.9	31.6	34.8	12.6	3.7	94.7
NT	Male	1.7	41.6	19.5	19.2	11.9	4.5	1.6	56.7
	Female	0.6	32.7	15.9	24.5	17.0	6.6	2.6	66.6
Aust	Male	2.3	11.6	18.1	32.4	25.8	7.8	1.9	86.1
	Female	1.2	5.1	11.5	30.2	34.1	13.8	4.0	93.7

states, there is a

Table 6: Achievement of Year 5 students in writing by sex, by state and territory, 2018

significant spike for students being below the national minimum standard in the Northern Territory. This is the result of multilayered issues, such as the increased rurality, and intersections with race and ethnicity, as there is a large distribution of Indigenous Australians throughout the Northern Territory.

The number of students who are below the national minimum standard has increased. This is particularly predominant in Tasmania, as 79.1% of males are at or above the national minimum standard, compared to 92.6 for females. Similar to Table 5, the percentage of students below the national standard is the highest in the Northern Territory, especially among male students.

State/ Territory	Sex	Below national minimum standard (%)		At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
		Exempt	Band 5 and below	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9	Band 10	
NSW	Male	2.2	22.7	23.6	23.0	17.6	7.7	3.2	75.1
	Female	1.2	11.4	19.5	26.2	24.2	12.3	5.2	87.4
Vic	Male	3.4	18.6	24.8	26.8	17.7	6.7	2.0	77.9
	Female	1.8	9.0	19.6	30.0	25.4	10.8	3.4	89.2
Qld	Male	1.9	31.6	26.2	20.9	13.2	4.9	1.3	66.5
	Female	1.1	16.6	23.9	26.9	20.4	8.8	2.3	82.3
WA	Male	1.6	20.7	23.2	25.6	18.3	7.7	2.9	77.7
	Female	0.9	10.7	17.8	28.2	25.1	12.4	4.9	88.4
SA	Male	3.6	28.0	25.9	21.9	14.0	5.0	1.6	68.4
	Female	2.2	15.5	21.9	26.4	21.5	9.0	3.4	82.3
Tas	Male	2.0	32.6	26.2	22.1	12.2	3.9	0.9	65.4
	Female	0.7	16.4	22.6	28.5	20.9	8.4	2.4	82.9
ACT	Male	1.8	19.4	23.4	25.1	18.3	8.3	3.7	78.8
	Female	1.0	10.4	18.5	26.3	25.6	13.0	5.2	88.6
NT	Male	2.3	55.0	14.7	12.0	9.4	4.9	1.7	42.7
	Female	1.2	44.0	17.7	15.0	12.2	6.5	3.5	54.9
Aust	Male	2.5	24.2	24.5	23.6	16.3	6.6	2.3	73.3
	Female	1.3	12.6	20.5	27.5	23.4	10.8	3.9	86.1

Table 7: Achievement of Year 9 students in writing, by sex, by state and territory, 2018

Comparing Table 5 with Table 7 demonstrates that numerous students are left behind in writing ability. These statistics are not consistent with NAPLAN's results for Year 9 spelling, reading, or grammar and punctuation. These areas mimic Table 5, in which female students remain slightly ahead of males, but only marginally. In writing, however, the gap

widens across time. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for this, as these are not years in which students specialise into their chosen subject areas. For male students, there is no state or territory with more than 78.8% of the population at or above the national minimum standard. There is also an increase across genders for those below the national minimum standard. This is, similarly with Table 5 and Table 6, most prevalent in the Northern Territory. According to Table 7, more than half of the male students who took the test were below the national minimum standard. Female students were not far behind at 44%.

4.2.2.2 NAPLAN and Numeracy

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Male Mean scale score / (S.D.)	417.1 (74.7)	424.1 (70.2)	403.3 (72.2)	406.3 (72.8)	394.9 (69.3)	403.8 (70.3)	423.7 (65.9)	340.0 (95.9)	412.1 (73.6)
Female Mean scale score / (S.D.)	407.8 (70.1)	412.4 (66.8)	395.0 (68.2)	399.0 (69.0)	387.3 (65.3)	400.2 (66.3)	416.1 (62.9)	342.3 (88.5)	403.2 (69.2)

Table 8: Mean scores of Year 3 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018

Table 8 demonstrates a similar pattern to Table 5, however it is the gender inverse. Male students show a slight advantage in numerical ability. Although, in each state the difference is small.

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Male Mean scale score / (S.D.)	604.8 (72.3)	605.4 (66.3)	592.2 (66.2)	606.7 (66.3)	588.6 (59.4)	585.3 (61.3)	605.7 (56.1)	543.4 (85.7)	600.3 (68.3)
Female Mean scale score / (S.D.)	595.1 (67.1)	594.5 (62.2)	584.6 (61.6)	597.1 (61.5)	578.7 (56.0)	577.2 (58.2)	600.9 (49.6)	533.9 (83.7)	590.9 (63.7)

Table 9: Mean scores of Year 9 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018

In the Northern Territory, female students are actually slightly above males. There is also a notable drop in the mean score, from 340 for males, as compared to the highest at 424.1 in Victoria. Table 9 shows little difference to Table 8, despite the gap of 6 years. This is consistent with other NAPLAN areas such as reading, spelling, and punctuation and

grammar. All of which showed a slight advantage to the gender traditionally associated with it. The results are much more indicative in Table 10, which may hold answers to the gender divide in Mathematics.

State/ Territory	Sex	Below national minimum standard (%)		At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
		Exempt	Band 5 and below	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9	Band 10	
NSW	Male	2.2	2.2	11.4	25.4	27.9	18.0	12.9	95.6
	Female	1.2	2.4	12.8	28.9	29.2	16.0	9.4	96.4
Vic	Male	3.4	1.6	9.9	25.5	29.7	18.6	11.3	95.0
	Female	1.8	2.1	11.8	29.2	30.9	16.5	7.7	96.1
Qld	Male	1.9	3.2	13.4	27.6	28.7	17.2	8.0	94.9
	Female	1.1	3.3	14.8	30.7	30.1	14.8	5.3	95.6
WA	Male	1.5	2.1	9.3	23.9	31.0	20.8	11.3	96.4
	Female	0.9	2.2	10.4	27.5	33.1	18.2	7.6	96.9
SA	Male	3.7	2.5	12.6	29.8	31.1	14.9	5.4	93.8
	Female	2.2	2.9	15.0	34.5	30.4	11.5	3.5	94.9
Tas	Male	2.0	2.7	15.9	29.9	28.6	15.1	5.8	95.3
	Female	0.7	3.8	17.0	32.9	29.1	12.9	3.5	95.4
ACT	Male	2.1	1.2	7.1	24.8	36.3	20.7	7.8	96.7
	Female	1.1	0.7	6.4	27.5	41.3	18.0	5.0	98.2
NT	Male	2.3	18.6	21.8	24.6	19.5	9.6	3.5	79.1
	Female	1.2	21.7	22.7	26.4	17.8	8.5	1.7	77.1
Aust	Male	2.4	2.4	11.4	26.1	29.2	18.0	10.5	95.1
	Female	1.4	2.8	12.9	29.6	30.4	15.7	7.2	95.9

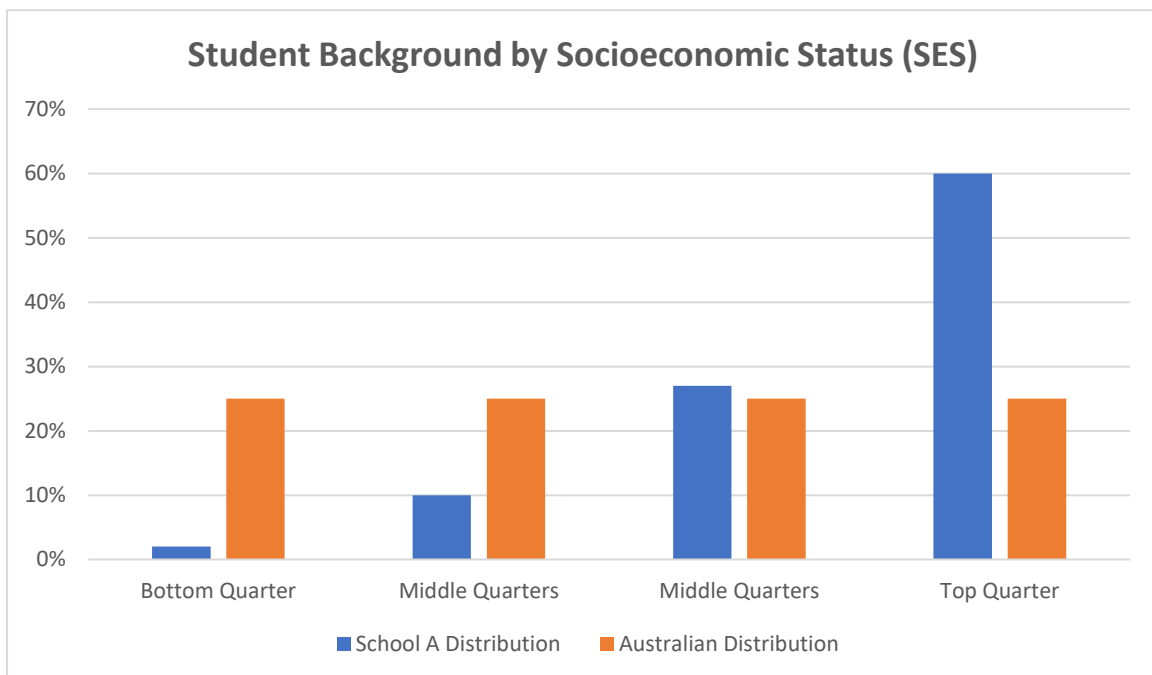
Table 10: Achievement of Year 9 students in numeracy, by sex, by state and territory, 2018

In Table 10, more is revealed in the bands or percentiles. These demonstrate the distribution of scores from the highest at band 10, to the lowest at band 5 and below. In Table 10, there is a considerable degree of female students at the highest levels of bands 9 and 10. Despite the fact that there tends to be more male students at this level, when contrasted with Table 7, the gender distribution is much lower at the highest levels. Considering these statistics for the highest levels in Year 9 writing and numeracy, why are there so little of the non-traditional gender in the highest levels of those associated subjects in Stage 2? For instance, female students far outnumber males in English Literary Studies (See **Table 1**), and males outnumber females in Specialist Mathematics (See **Table 3**). However, there appears to be no significant difference in abilities at Year 9 in these respective areas, save for Year 9 writing. This is also true for School A, which shows a similar

distribution to the SACE Stage 2 enrolment statistics. This would indicate that the subject discipline disparity, at least regarding gender, is not simply due to ability in those areas.

4.3 School A Data

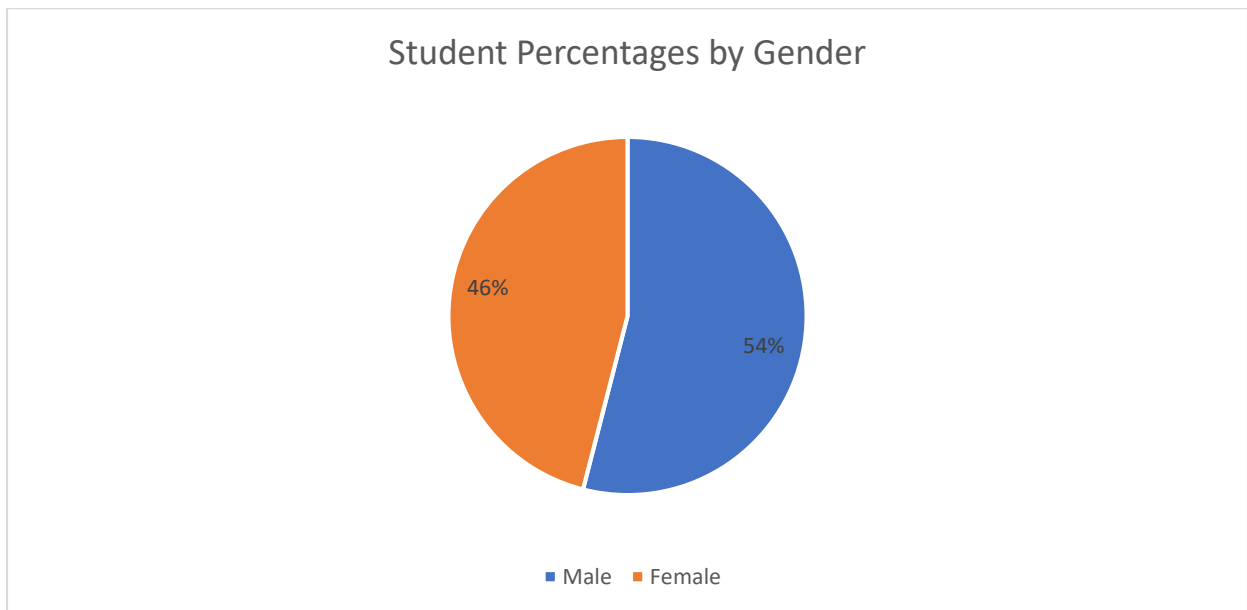
This section contains data and statistics obtained from School A. These statistics demonstrate the gender distributions within the school. How these intersect with other key background factors such as class or SES are also outlined within this section. The School A data is contrasted with the SACE and NAPLAN statistics to demonstrate that School A is also affected by the gendered issues outlined by this study.



Graph 1: Student Background by Socioeconomic Status (SES)

According to the My School website, students of School A are mainly from middle to higher SES backgrounds. This is important as gender can intersect with a student's class or SES background. For instance, working-class girls who are perceived as 'too sexually available' are more susceptible to be labelled as a 'slut', which has a historically classist connotation as it was used to regulate the sexuality of working-class women (Ringrose, 2008; Walkerdine, 1991; Skegg, 1997). This, as Ringrose (2008) notes, can be attributed to a

“cultural milieu... where femininity is marked by norms of ‘niceness’”, meaning that “sexual regulation of self and other appears as one of the *only* legitimate means through which [girls can] openly perform anger and hatred toward another girl” (p. 515). In conjunction, while the student SES distribution within School A is predominantly of upper-class backgrounds, a middle or working-class presence is prevalent.



Graph 2: School A Student Percentages by Gender

According to My School website, School A has a relatively equal representation of male and female students. A framework needs to consider the needs of all genders and the context of a coeducation institution, as gender issues can differ at same-sex institutions. For instance, one study measured accounts of sexism within classrooms across disciplines in same-sex and coeducation schools (Lee et al., 1994). This demonstrated that the gender makeup of the classroom is especially pertinent, as the sexism was found to most likely to occur in all-male English classes. However, sexism it was unlikely to occur English at

coeducation or all-girl schools (Lee et al., 1994).

Subject	Gender	
	Male	Female
Essential Mathematics	10	1
General Mathematics	17	19
Mathematical Methods	12	8
Specialist Mathematics	8	2
English	29	37
English as Additional Language	8	1
English Literary Studies	3	10
Philosophy	5	6
Geography	5	5
History	4	7
Biology	4	11
Physics	15	7
Chemistry	9	4
Psychology	6	17
Music	3	8
Business	13	8
Drama	8	8
VET	4	1
Tech Construction	12	1
Media	4	0
Tech Cad	1	0
Visual Arts	3	10
Chinese	7	1
Japanese	3	7
Physical Education	10	5

Table 11: School A Stage 2 subject enrolments by gender

Table 11 demonstrates that School A is party to the issues outlined in the literature review. English subjects tend to have more females than males, while Mathematics, Tech Construction, Physical Education and Physics are more likely to be male-dominated. This is likely due to their intrinsic link with masculine norms, especially Physical Education and Tech Construction, which idolise physicality. Within Mathematics, however, there is a parallel

between the highest and lowest levels. Both Essential Mathematics and Specialist Mathematics are male dominated. Biology and Psychology are consistent with the SACE data, in that they have more female students (See **Table 4**). Chemistry, by contrast, is less evenly split than the research would indicate. Interestingly, History, Geography, and Philosophy, subjects that are all linked to the Humanities, have a relatively even gender distribution. Lastly, the Language subjects of Japanese and Chinese have inverse results of each other, as Japanese has more female than male students, whereas Chinese is the opposite.

4.4 Discussion:

This section of the results chapter involves the framework development. This process is outlined within the methodology (See **Figure 2**). This section begins by summarising the four equity frameworks that were evaluated. The themes that were extrapolated from these frameworks, as well as from the qualitative research outlined in the literature review and data from the former section. The constructed gender equity framework of 'best fit' concludes this chapter.

4.4.1 Evaluating Frameworks for 'Best Fit'

For a *priori* framework of 'best fit' to be constructed, the most contextually relevant educational frameworks need to be identified. Afterwards, an analysis to determine the thematic commonalities needs to occur to ascertain which framework is most suitable to be adapted for School A (See **Table 12**). Table 12 illustrates the highlighted themes, as well as the frameworks which contain them.

4.4.2 Framework A: *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* (Gender Equity Taskforce, 1997)

Framework A was developed in 1997 as a companion document to the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-97*. This framework employs a whole-school approach that permeates all the levels of the school. The framework is based on five strategic directions which are used as central tenets. They are as follows:

- Understanding the process of construction of gender
- Curriculum, teaching and learning
- Violence and school culture

- Post-school pathways
- Supporting change (Gender Equity Taskforce, 1997, pp. 3-4)

Framework A proposes initiatives to deconstruct gender and its development. This is done through delivering the curriculum with a specific regard for gender. That may involve exploring “the role of language in the construction of gender,” or critically examining “the influence of popular culture on gender” (1997, p. 12). Framework A also suggests increasing the comprehension of teachers, managers and parents where gender construction is concerned. These suggestions are provided with the support of a strong research foundation. However, Framework A was constructed in 1997, and is therefore comparatively older than some of the other frameworks. Although this does not lessen the efficacy of Framework A, it does increase the need to scrutinise it and update it for contemporary usage. Framework A is also more contextually generalised, as its implementation was originally meant to coincide with gender equity legislation. This means that it can be adapted to suit an individual school but is unlikely to perfectly match a particular institution. Evidence of schools implementing Framework A, let alone evaluating it, could not be identified.

4.4.3 Framework B: *Access, Inclusion, Climate, Empowerment (AICE): A Framework for Gender Equity in Market-Driven Education* (Larkin and Staton, 2001)

Framework B is a Canadian framework that has an emphasis on supplying gender equity in the midst of market-driven education. This concept stipulates that schools serve to instill students with marketable skills to support national economic interests, as well the interests of transnational corporations (Larkin et al., 2001). This discourse has gained traction within the political neoliberal climate as some are concerned that the privatisation of industries, especially education, can be more detrimental than beneficial. The idea of market-driven education has therefore been met with considerable opposition. However, this appears to be more harmful than helpful, as the shift highlights national economic gain over the needs of the student. As such, Framework B has been developed in order to achieve a better quality, and more equitable education in spite of the encroachment of neoliberal motives. For example, regarding the negotiation of femininity and market-driven ideals:

Girls are disadvantaged if their school values a competitive ethos and they have internalized the idea that demonstrating competitive or aggressive behaviour is anti-feminine. On the other hand, girls who exhibit competitive and aggressive behaviour can be chastised for violating feminine norms (Larkin et al., 2001, p. 367).

This is important to recognise as improving national economic competitiveness may conflict with the process of gender identity construction, or acceptable gender norms of expression. This may serve to exacerbate inequalities, rather than creating equitable outcomes.

Framework B was developed with four key equity components in mind. This is similar to the strategic directives in Framework A. They are:

- Access. Ensuring equal access to educational resources and opportunities. Encouraging students to consider non-traditional areas of study.
- Inclusion. Looking at bias in teaching and learning materials in terms of inclusive language, content, and pedagogical practices.
- Climate. Creating an educational atmosphere that is safe and supports equity. Dealing with harassment and violence.
- Empowerment. Involving students in the process of social change. Taking a social action approach to education (Larking et al., 2001, p. 363).

These four elements all resonate with inequitable areas within Australian education.

Although the debate over market-driven education is a prevalent discourse, Framework B may place too great of an emphasis on it. For example, most institutions would agree that teaching students skills is an important tenet of education. Within the subject area of History, for instance, teaching a student to analyse a historical document is not necessarily because they will become a historian, but because the skill of analysis can be crucial to them throughout their life. Furthermore, while the corporate or capitalist interests concerning education are an issue, promoting marketable skills within students for post-school pathways is similarly important for improving national inequity. Especially with the rising age of technology and mechanisation of labour.

Framework B also utilises the ideology of critical pedagogy. Framework B intends to use this pedagogy as a means of empowering students and encouraging them to critique the power dynamics within society. This would be beneficial in the context of gender, especially in analysing the masculine and feminine power systems that serve to oppress gendered individuals. In this, Friere's conscientisation evoked. As "the transformation of

consciousness from an acceptance of oppression/reality to a belief that reality can be changed” is essential for addressing the so-called ‘subjugated knowledges’ imposed by the reproductive arena (Cho, 2013, p. 80).

However, this appears to be less about gender, and more a reaction to market-driven education. As Larkin et al. states, “...[t]he partnership between education and business may seem a dead end for the possibilities of developing critical thinking with students, particularly with an increasingly corporate designed curriculum” (2001, p. 371). This supposes a dichotomy of marketable skills and critical thinking, which can be interpreted as a deficit model that insists that students cannot possess both. This ideology is flawed and especially disadvantageous for students. Teaching them to become the masters of both worlds would be more suitable, rather than an ideology that insists they must be compliant and employable, or critical thinkers.

While critical pedagogy and market-driven education are charged with essentialist binarism, humanistic management is a consonance between the contrary ideologies. Humanistic management, as Domènec Melé (2003) states, is “a management that emphasizes the human condition and is oriented to the development of human virtue, in all its forms, to its fullest extent” (p. 79). This is a bridge between the conflicting ideals of conscientisation, which is heavily entrenched in Marxist critical theory, and the neoliberal motives of market-driven education. It is also less intrinsically opposed to the status quo, which is a major critique of critical pedagogy. Furthermore, humanistic management, by contrast to market-driven education in particular, shifts from the ‘factory’ style of teaching in order to create individuals capable of true self-actualisation. Or, to “become everything that one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1970, p. 46). This means moving away from a

teacher-student relationship in which the teacher (manager) sets the work, which the student's (workers) sole goal is to complete. This dynamic has sparse regard for the human development of a student.

Humanistic management would align with the framework in that it can embed within the school a "culture which fosters character..." and "takes into account human needs and motivations, like... the need for self-actualization" (Melé, 2003, p.82). In this, pedagogy is not either contradictory or complicit with the political climate, but rather, consistent with a moral ethos that is shared across the school community. This similarly considers the role of the wider community in the shaping of the school, as "corporations are connected networks of stakeholder interests" (Freeman and Liedtka, 1991, p. 96). In this, the school (corporation) is a "nexus of activity where stakeholders satisfy their desires," which in this case, is the cultivation of equitable outcomes and the human development of students (Freeman, 2000, p. 176).

4.4.4 Framework C: USAID (United States Agency for International Development) *Gender Equality Framework* (USAID, 2008)

Framework C was developed by USAID in 2008. It centres around four dimensions of gender equality in education:

- Equality of access: boys and girls are provided with equal opportunities to access education.
- Equality in the learning process: boys and girls receive the same curricula and pedagogic styles, although differentiation of teaching strategies is encouraged should they best suit a student of a particular gender.
- Equality of educational outcomes: boys and girls receive equal opportunities to achieve, with educational outcomes that are based on individual efforts or skill, and not based solely on gender.
- Equality of external results: this relates to post-school pathways; “when the status of men and women; their access to goods, and resources; and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal” (USAID, 2008, p. 7)

While there is an obvious emphasis placed on ‘equality’, it is important to recognise that this is seen as an end goal. Strategies of equity, here, are utilised to attain social and cultural equality.

Context is the biggest critique for Framework C, as it was engineered to guide educational improvements in the international community. In this, Framework C’s fundamental principles surround issues of access, especially educational access for girls. Access, however, is less of a concern for School A’s context of equity.

Although it does provide applicable tenets, such as the importance of recognising cultural norms that perpetuate inequality, Framework C also places an emphasis on the enduring elements of educational change. This is important as discourse can shift away from gender, causing it to become an ignored or disregarded issue in education.

4.4.5 Framework D: Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) Educational Equity Framework (2016)

Framework D was constructed to achieve educational equity for students of varying racial backgrounds. As such, Framework D is was evaluated to determine whether it can be adapted for gender equity purposes.

Central to Framework D is the belief that equity is achieved when personal and collective responsibility for education are encouraged. In this, the framework assesses the current structures that perpetuate inequality and challenges them. This is achieved through four different interrelated elements, which are as follows:

- Pedagogy of equity: “reduces the gaps between student learning and teacher knowledge, skills and attitude. It brings the student with their culture and the teacher with their knowledge about student experience into closer proximity to make the educational experience more equitable” (MPS, 2016, p. 8). Pedagogy of equity recognises the issues that create inequality, and aims to adjust the pedagogical practices of teachers, the classroom materials, and the curriculum to promote equitable outcomes.
- Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment (EDIA): EDIA operates to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework through collaboration with numerous EDIA working members. This ensures the involvement of community members, as well as actively developing the framework work most efficiently. This evaluation occurs throughout the year in accordance with the MPS district plan.
- Families as education partners: This tenet consists of the belief that families are central to the educational outcomes of students, and that equitable outcomes are

best achieved when these beliefs are shared among the community, families, the schools, teachers, and the students themselves. Having a consistent objective that everyone is actively attempting to achieve will ensure the effectiveness of the process.

- Equity in operations: This acknowledges the role of operations that facilitate education and the aims of equity. These may include “transportation, finance, grounds, security, maintenance, facilities, nutrition, information technologies, communications, human capital and human resources” (MPS, 2016, p. 26). These all have implications for an equitable framework, and therefore must consistently be utilised with an ‘equity lens.’ This is unlike the other frameworks as it acknowledges the systems that facilitate the needs of the school.

While Framework D has aims specifically constructed for equitable outcomes of those disadvantaged by racial discrimination and violence, it is one of the most comprehensive and can be easily adapted for a gendered lens. It is also important to note that factors other than gender, such as race, ethnicity, and/or or class, can intersect to compound disadvantages. This means having a gender equity framework with an emphasis on addressing racial inequality as well may more comprehensively improve equitable outcomes for the students. Although, this supposes that the same racial inequalities are present within the US and in Australia. The main limitation, other than its originally designated purpose of racial equity, is that it is for an entire district, and not an individual school. In this, the data used to support it and motivations for its construction are contextually divergent from School A.

4.5 Framework Thematic Analysis

Developing framework ‘best fit’ means cross-referencing it with the ten extrapolated themes (for reference see **Table 12**).

	Frameworks			
	Framework A	Framework B	Framework C	Framework D
School Context	✓			
School Ethos	✓		✓	✓
Identifies Gender Construction Processes	✓	✓	✓	
Supportive of Academic Achievement	✓	✓		
Ensures Student Safety	✓		✓	✓
Encourages Subject Parity	✓	✓	✓	
Permeates All Schooling Areas	✓	✓		✓
Marketability	✓		✓	✓
Self-assesses	✓			✓
Informs Pedagogy	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 12: Frameworks compared against themes for ‘best fit’

1. School context.

Framework A is most applicable to the context of School A because it was developed in Australia and was constructed for the Australian educational context. Framework B, by contrast, would work for a school that has a greater multicultural element. Although, according to My School’s data, School A has a zero percentage of Indigenous students, and eight percent of the students have a language background other than English. This is

similar for Framework D, especially in that it specifically refers to students with varying racial backgrounds. As School A is predominantly Caucasian, Frameworks B, C, and D, would need to be adapted far more substantially than Framework A, which would generally need to give greater emphasis to the SES and class background of School A.

2. School ethos.

All the frameworks place a great emphasis on inclusivity and excellence, which School A prioritises. However, of these, Framework C would be the least faithful to the ethos of School A, due to the priorities it places on achieving equitable school attendance across genders. This is not an issue for School A and is therefore the least applicable of the frameworks. Framework B is also relatively less applicable due to the emphasis placed on market-driven schools. As, though this has troubling implications for education, the negative connotations placed on teaching marketable skills to students does not adhere to School A's ethos. In this, Frameworks A and D are the most applicable. Of these, Framework A is less likely to conflict with the school ethos as it provides numerous recommendations that can fit within the school's structure.

3. Identifies gender construction processes.

Recognising factors that contribute to the gender construction process in students and providing a framework that mitigates issues arising from these processes is crucial for any gender equity framework. This is especially so because many of the issues indicate conflicts between students' gender identification and culturally appropriate ways of expressing that identification. Due to this, Framework D, which engages in racial, and not gender equity, is the least appropriate for School A. Frameworks B and C acknowledge the issues surrounding the gender construction process but are limited in

their recommendations on how to safely support students as they negotiate the troubling arena of gender construction. They can, however, inform Framework A, which is the most applicable to the School A.

4. Supports academic achievement.

All the frameworks support academic achievement, but each has different priorities, and varying degrees of understanding of how achievement interacts with gender. For example, Framework C is less concerned with academic achievement and more concerned with gaining parity of access to all genders. This is to produce equality in an educational context that is quite distanced from that of School A. Framework A gives the greatest regard for the implications of gender and academic achievement. However, it mainly engages with the former, the central hypothesis stipulating that masculinity and femininity are the chief hindrances to student performance. This largely ignores the other factors that can contribute to student achievement. Framework B is very similar, in that it mainly engages with the gendered elements that surround academic achievement. Although, a gender equity framework must, in order to later raise the academic performance of students, first consider and negotiate the role gender plays in impeding academic excellence. This means creating and further fostering an educational environment that encourages performance, while mitigating issues surrounding gender. Due to this, Framework A is the most appropriate. However, it should be informed by Frameworks B and D: Framework B places similar stress around gender, and Framework

D because the primary function of it is to produce equitable outcomes by improving academic progress.

5. Ensures student safety.

Ensuring the safety of students is one of the paramount responsibilities of a school. Any framework adopted by School A needs to stress the importance of provisions that support the wellbeing of a student and ensure their emotional, psychological, and physical safety. Due to the context in which Framework C engages, this has the greatest provisions for student safety. Important, however, is the stress placed upon the student body in informing safety provisions. For instance, it is likely that the students possess a greater knowledge of the unsafe areas within a school's environment. Engaging with students on how to create a safer school is therefore integral. Due to School A's context and SES, physical dangers for students are generally accounted for. This would mean that the framework needs to address gendered bullying and sexuality policing.

Frameworks A and B are useful in this, due to the emphasis they place on gender construction. Considering this, Framework A, being the most applicable to the school context, should be adapted with reference to Frameworks B and C.

6. Encourages subject parity.

A gender equity framework needs to support student in undertaking subject areas that are not traditionally associated with their gender. This also means ending subject streaming that places boys and girls into STEM and the Humanities respectively. Due to the identification of gendered factors that contribute to this, Frameworks A, B and C are

the most applicable. Framework B and C, due to their contexts are less applicable to School A. However, Framework A can be adapted with the aid of Frameworks B and C to accomplish these ends. It is also important to update any antiquated concepts within Framework A, as the biggest criticism of it is its lack of relevance to contemporary issues.

7. Permeates all schooling areas.

A gender equity framework needs to inform all areas of an educational institution. If the implementation is solely undertaken by the administration, staff, or community, then it will not succeed. This is why the framework needs to engage with all bodies of the institution. If it is seriously assumed by all areas, then it will have the most equitable and successful outcomes for the students. Frameworks A, B, and D all have provisions that pertain to the multi-levelled necessity of a framework. Framework A, for instance, stresses the importance of the community and administrative members in achieving gender equity. Framework D has the most comprehensive policies, evident in their strategic directive of 'equity in operations' and emphasis on personal and collective responsibility. As such, to achieve 'best fit' for School A, it needs to be informed by Frameworks A and B, and adapted to the policies within the school. This is to avoid any conflicts or contradictions of policies.

8. Marketability.

Importantly, a gender equity framework needs to be attractive to existing and prospective stakeholders. If a framework is not marketable, then it may not be taken seriously and could be implemented grudgingly or piecemeal. This would do more harm than good for any prospects of gender equity. In this, Framework B is likely the less suitable, in that it may conflict with School A's intentions regarding marketable skills and

the political views of the community. Framework C is marketable, but it is inapplicable to the context of the school. Frameworks A and D appear to be the most marketable for School A, but it is similarly contingent on how the school advertises and implements the Framework. This involves how students, the community, families, and investors are informed, and how convinced these stakeholders are of the framework's merits.

Framework A is most suitable for the context of the school, however, it is largely reliant on what directions the school takes in marketing the framework.

9. Self-assesses.

A suitable gender equity framework must provide provisions to assess its effectiveness and ensure that the goals of gender equity are always being considered and coveted.

Frameworks A and D provide the best options for self-assessment. Framework A suggests the implementation of a gender equity committee that can convene and oversee the framework as it develops, and to evaluate it through data analytics as time progresses. This also provides accountability as, while the framework and committee serve the school, it ensures that there is less bias in the analysis. A third-party analysis means that they are not subject to the interests of the school, so much as they are in the equitable outcomes for the students. This could utilise the assistance of researchers.

Although, family and community members could also be included. This, importantly, ensures that there are shared goals across educational dimensions which will allow for greater consistency in ethos and approach. This is an approach that Framework D advocates. However, as Framework D is designed to be utilised across an entire school district, it has larger considerations, and therefore many parts of it will not apply to

School A. In this, Framework A is most suitable for School A, although it should be informed with the contemporary practices of Framework D wherever suitable.

10. Informs pedagogy.

One of the most crucial components of a gender equity framework is adapting pedagogy to be more gender equitable. Framework A has the greatest regard for gender in this regard. Due to this, it is most compatible with the Australian Curriculum, as well as SACE. Framework A is also less invasive, in that it informs teachers' existing pedagogical practices. Framework B, which promotes critical pedagogy, or Framework D, which promotes pedagogy of equity, are far more comprehensive. Yet this has disadvantages. Adopting these would require teachers to become indoctrinated in these teaching styles, which may vary greatly with their own. Furthermore, a teacher may utilise elements of critical pedagogy, yet that does not mean they need to adopt the whole of it as their own. How a teacher guides their classes should be autonomous but informed by best practice. In this, all the frameworks provide suggestions of best practice on how to inform an educator. All are limited, however, in how they suggest that these pedagogies be adopted. Teacher professional development would need to be implemented alongside the framework to aid in undertaking these new practices. Consultation with staff and teachers would also need to occur in order to disseminate any issues and address concerns, and to allow for the best fit with the teaching body, as well as the school as a whole.

4.6 Gender Equity Framework of 'Best Fit'

The School A Gender Equity Framework is developed to incorporate the above themes (See **Table 12**). These themes were evaluated into explicit and implicit categories. The explicit themes form the four strategic directives of the framework. The implicit themes inform these explicit themes and permeate the framework (See **Table 13**). The strategic directives contain methods and recommendations for achieving that particular objective.

Explicit Themes	Academic Achievement
	Subject Parity
	Student Safety
	Self-assesses
Implicit Themes	Context
	Ethos
	Identifies Gender Construction Processes
	Multi-levelled
	Marketability
	Informs Pedagogy

Table 13: Themes organised into explicit and implicit themes for the construction and organisation of the gender equity framework of 'best fit'

1. Encourage and support the academic excellence of students across genders

Create a supportive environment for students of all genders to academically excel. This requires recognition of gender construction processes among students that may hinder academic success.

A. *Among the administrative level, including school leadership and policy makers, academic excellence can be achieved by:*

- i.** Ensuring that principles of gender equity are imbedded within assessment across subject disciplines;
- ii.** Upholding equal expectations of excellence across genders, while recognising the gendered factors that may inhibit achievement;

- iii. Creating benchmarks to measure the success of this objective such as monitoring student grades across genders and year levels;
- iv. Delivering knowledge and understanding around factors of masculinity and femininity and how they intersect with expectations around excellence.

B. For teachers, academic achievement across genders can be achieved by:

- i. Understanding how the construction of gender can inhibit the academic achievement of students;
- ii. Ensuring that assessments reflect ideals of equity and are designed with adherence to best teaching practice;
- iii. Having high expectations for all students;
- iv. Attending to both passive and active behaviour of students that may inhibit the learning of students;
- v. Understanding that cultivating competitiveness as opposed to excellence can detriment student learning and may cause some, especially female students, to become disillusioned;
- vi. Rejecting deficit views pertaining to class, SES, culture, ethnicity, race, or gender.

2. Facilitate parity across subject disciplines for genders that have historically been underrepresented in

Achieving more evenly distributed gender enrolments across subject areas means that students are provided with skills and opportunities from all disciplines. This ensures that they can develop as individuals and not as intrinsically gendered beings.

A. Administrative staff, including school leadership and policy makers, can achieve gender subject parity by:

- i. Ensuring that all subjects within the school receive equitable funding;
- ii. Upholding the expectation in all years of schooling that development of both literacy and numeracy are essential for all genders;

- iii. Developing systems that ensure the equitable attainment of literacy and numeracy skills for all genders, such as writing or mathematical assistance programs;
- iv. Ensuring that intervention strategies such as those for literacy and numeracy are sensitive to gender construction processes;
- v. Celebrating student success across all subject disciplines, without placing an emphasis on one area such as Physical Education;
- vi. Encouraging the enrolment of female students in Physical and Outdoor Education by creating more gender inclusive programs;
- vii. Providing students, from the earliest schooling years and across all genders, opportunities to develop skills necessary for familial and household management;
- viii. Ensuring that work experience programs in both paid and unpaid work environments are provided for students of all genders;
- ix. Equally encouraging vocational pathways for all students;
- x. Providing information, such as in newsletters or brochures, about changing employment patterns and how the school is nurturing students for them;
- xi. Ending academic streaming based on gender, such as males into STEM or females into the Humanities;
- xii. Ensuring that pastoral care programs are considerate of gender requirements and policies.

B. *Teachers can encourage subject parity across genders by ensuring that unit and lesson plans:*

- i. Incorporate perspectives on the construction of gender across historical, cultural and socioeconomic contexts;
- ii. Examine the role of language in the construction of gender;
- iii. Incorporate analysis on the influence of popular culture on gender;
- iv. Address gender divisions within the workplace such as the implications of paid and unpaid work.

C. Within the classroom, teachers should:

- v.** Utilise teaching methods that encourage social critique, such as those within critical pedagogy or humanistic management;
- vi.** Develop an ethos that promotes equality for all students;
- vii.** Encourage students to undertake subjects which may not traditionally align with their gender identity;
- viii.** Establish links between what students are learning and career aspirations;
- ix.** Ensure that students find lessons relevant to them as gendered individuals;
- x.** Be responsive to gender-based bullying;
- xi.** Use gender neutral teaching resources and materials;
- xii.** Group students in ways that do not emphasise gender, such as table groups.

3. Ensure the physical and emotional safety of students across genders, with particular consideration for how gender impacts the wellbeing of students

Gender-based bullying is especially prevalent as construction of personal gender identity often involves the harassment or exclusion of students who do not adhere to traditional gender conceptions. Students have a general need to posit themselves within hegemony, and therefore 'other' students that are perceptively different. Certain groups can be particularly at risk in this, such as gay or transgender students.

A. The school leadership can ensure student safety by:

- i.** Embedding best practices for addressing difficult or disruptive behaviour within the school disciplinary plan;
- ii.** Educating teachers and community members such as families on how bullying can be linked to gender and how they can help facilitate student safety;

- iii. Fostering an ethos that encourages students to seek assistance from the school if they are facing issues pertaining to their physical, emotional, or psychological wellbeing;
- iv. Identifying ways that school staff and parents can overcome resistance to learning about gender construction;
- v. Delivering teacher professional development courses for school staff which include analysis of, and strategies for addressing gender inequity;
- vi. Design and implement programs that provide strategies for conflict resolution among students;
- vii. Allowing students to inform the safety policies of the school, as they may have a personal understanding of unsafe areas or practices within the school;
- viii. Implementing methods that encourage and allow staff and students to report unsafe practices within the school;
- ix. Ensuring the safety of students who are particularly vulnerable to gender-based discrimination;
- x. Establishing processes for effectively and respectfully addressing complaints by staff or students;
- xi. Ensuring that students feel safe to access and use all areas of learning and recreation within the school;
- xii. Being responsive to student's needs about appropriate facilities concerning their gender;
- xiii. Clarifying within employment advertisements, and within staff and preservice teacher inductions, the emphasis placed on gender equity within the school;
- xiv. Ensuring that all areas within the school have supervision, especially in hallways and playgrounds;
- xv. Developing support services to be mindful of the needs of students with varying gender identities.

B. Teachers and staff can facilitate student safety by:

- i. Implementing teaching methods that allow students to develop skills, behaviour, and understandings which enables them to create and foster respectful relationships;
- ii. Undertaking teacher professional development that informs on the best practice for teaching students of varying gender identities;
- iii. Understanding how current conceptions of masculinity and femininity are linked to damaging behaviours for boys and men, as well as girls and women;
- iv. Challenging violence and sexual harassment in the classroom and throughout the school;
- v. Providing opportunities for students to learn of sexual violence, gendered dynamics of power, homophobia, and transphobia;
- vi. Utilising disciplinary and behavioural management strategies that operate within the school's policies;
- vii. Respecting the need for students' privacy, safety, and personal hygiene;
- viii. Understanding that students may receive harassment if they undertake subjects that do not traditionally align with their gender, such as females in Physics or males in English;
- ix. Discussing ways that students can respond to bullying, harassment and put-downs;
- x. Informing students on the role of bystanders and how they can actively support gender inclusivity;
- xi. Ensuring flexibility in response to personal circumstances, especially those where students of a particular gender are more at risk, such as female students and pregnancy.

4. Uphold structures of framework assessment to evaluate the progress towards gender equity

To assess the effectiveness of this framework in achieving gender equity within the school there needs to be mechanisms of evaluation. For this purpose, a gender equity committee should be constructed which consists of school leadership and teaching staff, as well as

representative community members. This also ensures that gender equity principles are consistent within the community and not isolated to the microcosm of the school. This committee should convene regularly, such as each semester, to evaluate the framework and to ensure that gender equity remains emphasised within the school. Within faculty, staff, and leadership meetings, gender equity should become an agenda item, so the staff may communicate ideas or concerns. Notes taken within these meetings can be delivered to the gender equity committee to ensure consistency across all levels of the school's hierarchy.

- A.** To assess the effectiveness of the gender equity framework, school leadership should:
- i.** Implement a committee or framework assessment body that consists of school leadership and staff, as well as representative community members;
 - ii.** Develop benchmarks for assessing the development of key skills for students of all gender to provide equitable career pathways;
 - iii.** Design methods for teachers to report issues of inequity within the school;
 - iv.** Discuss with students, via questionnaires or similar methods, ways in which gender inequity is present within the school and implement ways to address them;
 - v.** Collect and analyse data such as student participation, subject enrolment, or academic achievement;
 - vi.** Encourage discussion between the school and the community about the framework and gender equity, such as through assemblies or parent nights;
 - vii.** Implement methods for students to report the degree to which their teachers support gender inclusivity;
 - viii.** Measure the attitudes of students towards gender and gender equity such as through questionnaires or scenario vignettes;
 - ix.** Evaluate current policies within the school to determine whether they adhere to gender equity principles;

- x. Include issues of gender equity in performance management;
- xi. Ensure staff understand that they will be held accountable for practices that contradict the principles of gender equity.

B. *The gender equity committee should:*

- i. Convene each semester to review and evaluate the efficacy of the framework;
- ii. Update the framework to ensure it remains relevant and effective;
- iii. Develop benchmarks for assessing gender equity within the school;
- iv. Evaluate school data such as subject enrolments by gender, or student grades by gender;
- v. Work in collaboration with community members;
- vi. Evaluate policies in the school and update them to ensure they adhere to gender equity principles.

4.7 Dissonance

This framework is different from the original *a priori* framework in a number of ways. The main differences are a result of updating for relevant and contemporary literature. This is because Framework A, in comparison to the others, was older and therefore questionable in its applicability for School A. This is evident in the omission of provisions that highlight gender equity as it pertains to information technology, or delivery of the ‘civics and citizenship curriculum.’ The largest omission was in the case for post-school pathways. Though this was somewhat of a silent ‘implicit theme’ for the framework, it was too intrinsically tied to the original conception of Framework A, which was for an Australia-wide push for gender equity. Added to the framework are more comprehensive recommendations regarding pedagogical practices and elements within the curriculum. These have been informed by the research outlined in the literature review. As such, they emphasise the critique of gender inequalities in society, to effectively raise the consciousness of the students and to instil them with vital skills for later in life.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The microcosm of the school is a crucial space for the construction and contestation of gender. The processes that facilitate gender construction often contend with the ideals and principles of education. For students, who are navigating the development of their gender identity during this formative period, maintaining heteronormativity and achieving in school can often become a binary. This not only detracts their own educational outcomes, but of those around them, particularly students who are perceived as 'otherly' and therefore susceptible to harassment and bullying. Identifying and mitigating the key gender constructive processes within the school environment is fundamental in achieving gender equity. Especially when those processes emphasise physicality over learning, as is often the case with masculinity and boys. Or, likewise, sociality and leaning, as is the issue with female students and femininity.

The gender disparity in subject enrolments across disciplines is both a cause and a consequence of these gender negotiations. Due to the supposed feminisation of the Humanities and the masculinisation of STEM subjects, female and male students feel constrained to subjects, and later career pathways, that align with traditional conceptions of their genders. As subject choice is a form of gender expression, students must adhere to disciplines that align with culturally acceptable gender norms. This is a cycle that is socially, culturally, and systematically perpetuated, causing the gender trends in subject enrolments to endure.

Student achievement is another facet of education that conflicts with gender. For equitable outcomes across genders to be achieved, the cultural constraints on students first need to be identified and resolved. Some of these constraints include the navigation of acceptable masculinity or femininity, while also maintaining the high expectations placed on students. This can be especially troublesome for the student, who may find it difficult to reconcile these two seemingly antithetical cultural outlooks. In this, if students cannot perfectly balance internal gendered processes and academic achievement, they must choose one or the other. This effectively means that students are forced to decide between social acceptance and potentially risk their educational prospects, or face bullying or ridicule and ensure academic success.

Schools require comprehensive policies that are conscious of the interplay between education and gender, such as gender equity frameworks. However, many of these are irrelevant to the context of a single school. For instance, many of the frameworks examined are irrelevant, antiquated, or too politically motivated. Adapting the 'best fit' method for an educational context ensures that students of all genders are provided with equitable outcomes that are otherwise overlooked.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that future research further adapts the 'best fit' method for an educational context. While the methodology has been refined for the health sector, it remains underutilised within education, despite evidence of its benefits to individual institutions.

Evaluation of existing gender equity frameworks is another area that future studies should emphasise. This study was unable to identify any evidence of evaluation for equity

frameworks. As such, future research needs to assess their effectiveness and best practices for their implementation.

Equity frameworks that focus on areas other than gender also require examination. This is especially pertinent, as variables such as class, SES, race, and ethnicity, can impact conceptions of gender. Identifying these would also benefit the principles of 'best fit'.

Works Cited

- ACARA (2018). NAPLAN Results. Retrieved from: <https://www.acara.edu.au/assessment/online-assessment>
- PISA (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.acer.org/au/ozpisa>
- Baker, J. (2010). Great expectations and post-feminist accountability: young women living up to the 'successful girls' discourse. *Gender and Education*, 22(1), 1-15.
- Belsey, C. (2013). *Textual analysis as a research method*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press in Jones, A. (2017). *Britain and the European Union*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Billington, J., Baron-Cohen, S., & Wheelwright, S. (2007). Cognitive style predicts entry into physical sciences and humanities: Questionnaire and performance tests of empathy and systemizing. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 17(3), 260-268.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. (1977) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. 10th Anniversary ed.. New York: Routledge.
- Carroll, C., Booth, A., & Cooper, K. (2011). A worked example of "best fit" framework synthesis: a systematic review of views concerning the taking of some potential chemopreventive agents. *BMC medical research methodology*, 11(1), 29.
- Carroll, C., Booth, A., Leaviss, J., & Rick, J. (2013). "Best fit" framework synthesis: refining the method. *BMC medical research methodology*, 13(1), 37.
- Charles, C. E. (2010). Complicating hetero-femininities: young women, sexualities and 'girl power' at school. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(1), 33-47.
- Connell, R. W. (1996). *Teaching the Boys: New Research on Masculinity, and Gender Strategies for Schools*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (2002). *Gender Short Introductions*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cruddas, L., & Haddock, L. (2005). Engaging girls' voices: Learning as social practice. *Problem girls: Understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women*, 161-71.
- Evans, D. (2017). The crisis for our adolescent boys: how adolescent girls objectify adolescent boys and the challenges for gender equity. *Australian Educational Leader*, 39(2), 38.
- Fitzsimmons, T. W., Yates, M. S., & Callan, V. J. (2018). Hands up for gender equality: A major study into confidence and career intentions of adolescent girls and boys. Retrieved from : <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:dcee289>

- Foster, V., Kimmel, M., & Skelton, C. (2001). What about the boys?. *An overview of the debates*. In W. Martino & B. Meyenn (Eds.), *What about the boys*, 1-23.
- Frazer, E. (1989). Feminist talk and talking about feminism: teenage girls' discourses of gender. *Oxford Review of Education*, 15(3), 281-290.
- Freeman, R. E. (2000). Business ethics at the Millennium. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 10(1), 169-180.
- Freeman, R. E., & Liedtka, J. (1991). Corporate social responsibility: A critical approach. *Business Horizons*, 34(4), 92-99.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (MB Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum, 2007.
- Funk, C. (2002). Gender Equity in Educational Institutions: Problems, Practices, and Strategies for Change. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED476601.pdf>
- Gaskell, J. (2008). Learning from the women's movement about educational change. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 29(4), 437-449.
- Gender Equality Framework (2008). United States Agency for International Development. Retrieved from: http://www.ungei.org/Gender_Equality_Framework.pdf
- Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* (1997). Canberra: Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Gender Spectrum. Gender Inclusive Schools Toolkit. Retrieved from: <https://www.genderspectrum.org/>
- Gogtay, N., Giedd, J.N., Lusk, L., Hayashi, K.M., Greenstein, D., Vaituzis, A.C., Nugent, T.F., Herman, D.H., Clasen, L.S., Toga, A.W. and Rapoport, J.L., (2004). Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 101(21), 8174-8179.
- Gournelos, T., Hammonds, J. R., & Wilson, M. A. (2019). *Doing Academic Research: A Practical Guide to Research Methods and Analysis*. Routledge.
- Hall and Partners Open Mind. (2015). The Line Campaign. Summary of Research Findings. Melbourne: Our Watch. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Cd1O5c>
- Hall, C., & Coles, M. (1997). Gendered readings: Helping boys develop as critical readers. *Gender and education*, 9(1), 61-68.
- Hilke, E. V., & Conway-Gerhardt, C. (1994). *Gender Equity in Education*. Fastback 372.
- Irwin, J. (2012). *Paulo Freire's philosophy of education: Origins, developments, impacts and legacies*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Jabareen, Y. (2009). Building a conceptual framework: philosophy, definitions, and procedure. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(4), 49-62.
- Klein, S.S., Ortman, P.E., Campbell, P., Greenberg, S., Hollingsworth, S., Jacobs, J., Kachuck, B., McClelland, A., Pollard, D., Sadker, D. and Sadker, M. (1994). Continuing the journey toward gender equity. *Educational Researcher*, 23(8), 13-21.

- Koch, J., & Irby, B., & Brown, G. (2002). Epilogue: Redefining gender equity. In J. Koch & B. Irby, *Defining and redefining gender equity in education*, pp. 181-192. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.
- Kupers, T. A. (2005). Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 61*(6), 713-724.
- Larkin, J., & Staton, P. (2001). Access, inclusion, climate, empowerment (AICE): A framework for gender equity in market-driven education. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation, 36*1-376.
- Lee, V. E., Marks, H. M., & Byrd, T. (1994). Sexism in Single-Sex and Coeducational Independent Secondary School Classrooms. *Sociology of Education, 92*-120.
- Martino, W., & Meyenn, B. (2001). *What About the Boys?: Issues of Masculinity in Schools*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Mason, C., & Shipway, B. (2013). Building a dingo trap: Using an all-boys English class to battle hyper-masculine behaviour. *Australian Educational Leader, 35*(1), 24-27.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- McInnis, S. (1996). *Girls, Schools and Boys Promoting Gender Equity Through Schools: Twenty Years of Gender Equity Policy Development*. Department of the Parliamentary Library.
- Melé, D. (2003). The challenge of humanistic management. *Journal of Business Ethics, 44*(1), 77-88.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miller, P. H., Slawinski Blessing, J., & Schwartz, S. (2006). Gender differences in high-school students' views about science. *International journal of science education, 28*(4), 363-381.
- Milvain, C. (2008). Thinking skills within the humanities discipline. *Ethos, 16*(4), 6.
- Minneapolis Public Schools Education Equity Framework (2016). Minneapolis Public Schools. Retrieved from: https://mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/mps_equity_framework_6_1_2016.pdf
- Moma, A. K. (2015). Informing school-led intervention and prevention of sexual violence against girls at school: Voices from the school playground. *Agenda, 29*(3), 42-52.
- Morris, E. W. (2008). "Rednecks," "Rutters," and Rithmetic: Social Class, Masculinity, and Schooling in a Rural Context. *Gender & Society, 22*(6), 728-751.
- MySchool (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.myschool.edu.au/>
- National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* (1993) (Aus).
- National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* (1987) (Aus).

- National Strategy for the Equity in Schooling* (1994) (Aus).
- Oliffe, J. L., & Phillips, M. J. (2008). Men, depression and masculinities: A review and recommendations. *Journal of Men's Health*, 5(3), 194-202.
- Osler, A., Street, C., Lall, M., & Vincent, K. (2002). Not a problem? Girls and exclusion from school. *New Policy Institute and Centre for Citizenship Studies in Education*.
- Parrott, D. J., & Zeichner, A. (2003). Effects of hypermasculinity on physical aggression against women. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 4(1), 70.
- Player, M. J., Proudfoot, J., Fogarty, A., Whittle, E., Spurrier, M., Shand, F., Christensen, H., Hadzi-Pavlovic, D. & Wilhelm, K. (2015). What interrupts suicide attempts in men: a qualitative study. *PLoS One*, 10(6). Retrieved from: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0128180>
- Puar, J. K., & Rai, A. (2002). Monster, terrorist, fag: The war on terrorism and the production of docile patriots. *Social Text*, 20(3), 117-148.
- Public Policy Institute of Australian Catholic University (2011). Issues Paper 1: Equity and Education. Retrieved from: https://www.aph.gov.au/.../House_of_Representatives_Committees?url.../auseducation/...
- Renold, E. (2001). 'Square-girls', femininity and the negotiation of academic success in the primary school. *British educational research journal*, 27(5), 577-588.
- Ringrose, J. (2007). Successful girls? Complicating post-feminist, neoliberal discourses of educational achievement and gender equality. *Gender and education*, 19(4), 471-489.
- Ringrose, J., & Renold, E. (2012). Slut-shaming, girl power and 'sexualisation': Thinking through the politics of the international SlutWalks with teen girls. *Gender and Education*, 24(3), 333-343.
- Robinson, K. (2000). "Great Tits, Miss!" The Silencing of Male Students' Sexual Harassment of Female Teachers in Secondary Schools: A focus on gendered authority. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 21(1), 75-90.
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class & gender: Becoming respectable* (Vol. 51). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing.
- Skelton, C., Francis, B., & Read, B. (2010). "Brains before 'beauty'?" High achieving girls, school and gender identities. *Educational Studies*, 36(2), 185-194.
- Underwood, C. (2018). PISA Australia in Focus Number 3: Motivation. Retrieved from: <https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/32/>
- Värnik, A., Kõlves, K., van der Feltz-Cornelis, C. M., Marusic, A., Oskarsson, H., Palmer, A. ... Giupponi, G. (2008). Suicide methods in Europe: a gender-specific analysis of countries participating in the "European Alliance Against Depression". *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 62(6), 545-551.
- Walkerdine, V. (1989) *Counting girls out*. London: Virago.
- Walkerdine, V. (1991). *Schoolgirl fictions*. London: Verso.

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1998). *Gender practices: Steps in the analysis of men and masculinities*.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2018). Gender pay gap statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-gender-equality-2018>