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**Peruvian Trainee Teachers as Mestizas.  
Pedagogies of Tolerance and Respect Towards Gay and Lesbian People**

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## **Abstract**

Given the polarized political context in Peru that was provoked by the inclusion of LGTBIQ+ identities in the official school curriculum, this study analyzes the meanings that students of pedagogy in Lima ascribe to tolerance and respect towards gay and lesbian people, and how these meanings inform their pedagogical practices. Based on two focus groups and eight individual interviews grounded in standpoint theory, this study engages in a dialogue with the work of Wendy Brown regarding tolerance. This scholar argues that tolerance is a discourse of power and depolitization that primarily aims to regulate aversion towards the Other. On the one hand, within some participants' accounts tolerance and respect discourses frame gay and lesbian identities as marginal/undesired within the school, especially when cisgender borders are crossed. On the other hand, within other participants' accounts these meanings of tolerance and respect are contested. In these later cases, participants commit to an engaged pedagogy, as bell hooks describes this concept. They confront homophobia within the classroom and open the door to the transcendence of binary gender discourses. Since these two contradictory perspectives can be present within one individual, this thesis argues that future teachers can be seen as *Mestizas*, the concept coined by Gloria Anzaldúa. Therefore, they can embrace ambiguity and operate in a pluralistic mode, turning porous the socially constructed border between straight and queer people.

Keywords: Tolerance, Respect, Standpoint theory, Gay, Lesbian, Engaged pedagogy, Mestiza consciousness, Nos/otras, Gender binary discourse, Border crossing.

Word count: 21,990

## **List of Abbreviations**

APA	American Psychological Association
LGTBIQ+	Lesbian, gay, trans*, bisexual, intersexual, queer identities
MINEDU	Peruvian Ministry of Education
NC	National Curriculum for the Basic Education in Peru
SRC	Swedish Research Council
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
SUNEDU	National Superintendence of University Education

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*There are so many borders  
that divide people  
but for each border  
there's also a bridge*

(Gina Valdés, in Gloria, 2012, p.107. My translation)

### 1.1. A polarized political context

In 2016 a new political struggle erupted in Peru. One of its pivotal axes was the recognition of LGTBQI+<sup>1</sup> identities in schools. In June of that year, the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) approved a new National Curriculum (NC)<sup>2</sup> which included the recognition of gender identities beyond the heterosexual dichotomy men/women. Provoked by this, fundamentalist groups related to evangelical and catholic churches came out in strong opposition to the NC. Organized through the *Don't you mess with my kids* (*Don't Mess onwards*) campaign, the fundamentalists took over the media, organized mass demonstrations and managed to destabilize the government<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, two different standpoints on LGTBQI+ identities and the role of the school became sharply outlined in the political arena: a conservative one led by *Don't Mess*, and a more progressive one articulated by the MINEDU and civil

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<sup>1</sup> I'll use the acronym LGTBQI+, which refers to lesbian, gay, trans\*, bisexual, intersexual, and queer identities. The '+' represents an open end for acknowledging other non-normative identities. I chose this term being conscious of its vantages and limitations. Following Merrill et al (2016:unpaginated) this term can be seen as an umbrella, used to combine efforts of non-heterosexually and non-cisgender-identifying members in addressing problems affecting the community (as legal recognition, discrimination and violence). The acronym has been criticized for being exclusionary, white-dominated and unable to support the needs of their members in an equal way -bisexual and trans\* identities have been marginalized.

<sup>2</sup> The NC establishes the learning outcomes expected for pre-school, elementary and high school students.

<sup>3</sup> Between 2016 and 2019 three Ministers of Education (J. Saavedra, M. Martens and F. Pablo) were interpellated by the Congress. During this period, the majority of Congress was hold by the political party *Fuerza Popular*, which had publicly supported the *Don't Mess* campaign. In the lists of questions that the Ministers had to answer at the Congress there were several ones related to gender and the NC. In the case of Martens, her Interpellation ended up in the fall of the whole Ministers' Cabinet.

society groups. While the first standpoint argued that “the gender ideology will homosexualize students at school”<sup>4</sup>, the second stated that “the NC does not promote any sexual orientation in particular. It educates our students to adopt values of respect and tolerance, and to reject all forms of discrimination within and outside the school”<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2. Purpose and research question

Tolerance and respect are terms present in MINEDU’s statements when defending the NC from fundamentalists attacks. Furthermore, during fieldwork -which consisted of two focus groups and eight individual interviews with students of pedagogy in Lima- I found that these two terms appeared systematically in participant’s accounts. This led to the formulation of the following research question: What meanings do students of pedagogy ascribe to ‘tolerance’ and ‘respect’ towards gay and lesbian people, and how do these meanings inform their pedagogical practices?

The circulation of tolerance talk —as the feminist political philosopher Brown (2006) calls it— within pedagogical debates is not new. It has been a major issue in debates about multicultural education (see for instance McLaren, 2012; da Silva, 1999), especially during the last decades of the XXth century. But the use of the term tolerance has now become much more widespread, one finds references to it in many different venues (Brown, 2006:4). As a result, Brown, argues in her book *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the age of identity and empire* (2006) that tolerance can be seen as a discourse of power and depolitization, directed primarily to regulate aversion towards the Other.

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<sup>4</sup> Gender Ideology is how fundamentalist groups refer to the “Gender Equality Approach” of the NC. *Homosexualize* (homosexualizar) is a verb introduced by *Don’t Mess*. This is a new word. I tried to grasp this intervention in language in the translation.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.minedu.gob.pe/pdf/infografia-cn.pdf> Date of access: October 2019



Taking inspiration from feminist critical pedagogies as well as from Chicana feminist<sup>6</sup> and queer critiques - especially hooks (1994) and Anzaldúa (2012 and 2015)- this thesis engages on a dialogue with Brown's (2006) perspective on tolerance, by taking into account the standpoints and situated knowledges of Peruvian students of pedagogy. I argue that within these standpoints certain meanings are ascribed to tolerance and respect, and that these meanings influence the future teachers' pedagogical practices<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, in certain cases these pedagogies manage to break down the equation between tolerance and aversion in the classroom.

I shall also argue that these standpoints have been formed by participants' life experiences, and that far from being rigid or fixed, they embrace ambiguity. By acknowledging these particular perspectives, participants in this study can be seen as Mestizas, subjects inhabiting the Borderlands, the term Anzaldúa (2012) uses to describe the places where physical and social borders are built and which are also most susceptible to *la mezcla* or hybridity.

The focus on students currently being trained to become teachers is important for three reasons. First, during the political struggle in Peru over LGTBIQ+ identities their voices were hardly heard in the public arena, which was flooded with homophobic statements coming from *Don't Mess* supporters -who included teachers with many years of experience- and from MINEDU's defence. Second, they constitute a 'hinge' generation. Many of them had recently attended schools where classes were designed following the previous Curriculum, but they will soon be in charge of operationalizing the new, polemical NC. Third, and more broadly, young voices are currently playing a key role in social transformations elsewhere

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<sup>6</sup> The term *Chicano/a* was popularized in the late 1960s during the Chicano Movement. The term aimed to affix a political orientation that sustained the need to struggle against historical oppression of people of Mexican descent in United States (De la Torre and Pesquera, 1993:xiii). Nowadays Chicana studies is an institutionalized field within social science. Some remarkable feminist scholars within this field are Chela Sandoval and Gloria Anzaldúa.

<sup>7</sup> As will be specified in Chapter 4, seven of the eight interviewed participants have teaching experience.

in Latin America. These include the current Chilean movement against the neoliberal model<sup>8</sup>, and the feminist movement, *Ni Una Menos*, across the region. These, and other examples, show that the young can mobilise to confront patriarchal gender traditions and the status quo in the region.

At a more abstract level, and following Connell, this study is grounded in an understanding of social science as embodied practice (Connell, 2007:217), which is done by particular individuals in particular locations. Thus, while Brown (2006) carries out a remarkable analysis of tolerance discourse and builds an important theory which aims to explain a global dynamic, she focuses on cases situated in USA and Europe. In this way, her work contributes to picturing a world as seen from the perspective of the relatively rich countries that comprise the ‘global metropole’, still a common practice in theory-building within the social sciences (Connell, 2007). This study then aims to focus on voices that have been marginalized or excluded from Northern debates. These voices can contribute to a broader understanding of how tolerance and respect discourses work within countries from the Global South, where the far-right and anti-gender radicalism have dramatically increased in recent years —a trend not only present in Latin America, but also in other parts of the world.

After this Introduction, Chapter 2 provides additional material regarding the political struggle on the recognition of LGTBIQ+ identities in Peruvian schools, since this context has played an important role in the formation of the participants’ standpoints regarding gay and lesbian people. Chapter 3 introduces the conceptual framework guiding the analysis. Brown’s (2006) work on tolerance is introduced, and the connections between her work and pedagogical debates are outlined. Afterwards, works by hooks (1994) and Anzaldúa (2012, 2015) are presented; their analytical tools are later used to construct a critical dialogue with Brown (2006). Chapter 4 presents and discusses the methodological framework. Chapters 5, 6 and

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<sup>8</sup> Source: [https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/evasion-masiva-estudiantes-metro\\_20191015/](https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/evasion-masiva-estudiantes-metro_20191015/) and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48444884>. Date of access: October 2019.

7 present the results of the fieldwork-based research. Chapter 5 offers fieldwork-based results prior to the central analysis. Participants are presented as Mestizas and their opinions outlined regarding why and when the school should talk about gay and lesbian identities. Chapter 6 discusses the evidence that supports Brown (2006) regarding tolerance and respect as power and depolitization discourses. Chapter 7 deepens this discussion to show how participants' standpoints can also break the link between tolerance and aversion in classroom, underlining the importance of creating a space where the binary logic dividing "heterosexual/homosexual" people can be transcended. Chapter 8 goes deeper into the analysis of participants' accounts that transcend this referred binary logic, and takes up again the vision of students of pedagogy as Mestizas. Finally, Chapter 9 presents the study's conclusions.

## **Chapter 2. Context: The political struggle over LGBTBIQ+ identities and the school**

This chapter presents material relating to the context in which this research was conducted. It outlines the representation of LGBTBIQ+ identities both within the NC and the *Don't Mess* campaign. This information is significant as it represents the context in which teachers' standpoints regarding gay and lesbian people have been nurtured.

### **2.1. What does the National Curriculum establish regarding LGBTBIQ+ identities?**

The first issue to consider is that the NC uses two terms to refer to gender diversity: 'gender identity' and 'sexual orientation'. However, the only gender identities explicitly mentioned are "men" and "women"; no additional information is given which could allow these terms to be interpreted as other than heterosexual and cisgender people<sup>9</sup>. Neither 'LGTBIQ+' nor any of the terms comprising this acronym are mentioned. As a result, the NC seems to be caught in a tension: taking a step forward in the recognition of gender diversity but failing to explicitly recognise non-normative gender subjectivities.

This tension is palpable in two specific sections of the NC where the terms 'gender identity' and 'sexual orientation' appear: The "Gender Equality Approach"<sup>10</sup>, and the description of 2 (out of 31) competences -the main learning outcomes school students should acquire through their basic education. These two competences are:

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<sup>9</sup> "For many individuals, gender is "aligned." That is, gender biology (assigned gender), gender expression (presentation of gender), and gender identity (internal sense of self) line up. An adjective sometimes used to capture this alignment is cisgender. The prefix cis- comes from Latin and means 'on the same side as' or 'on this side of.' (...) the term cisgender is an important one in that it names the dominant experience, rather than simply assuming it to be the default or "normal" way to be." (Baum, 2016: unpaginated).

<sup>10</sup> The Gender Equality Approach is one of the seven transversal approaches of the CN. These are "perceptions, ways of understanding the world" that are translated into "specific ways of acting" that students, teachers and authorities must try to show in the daily dynamic of the school (MINEDU, 2016:19)

“Builds his/her identity”<sup>11</sup> and “Coexists and Participates democratically in the search for the common good”. Both competences belong to the Curricular Area of Social Science.

This tension can be illustrated by using the NC’s Gender Equality Approach as an example. There the NC refers in one sentence to “women and men” and in the following one, it points to transcend this dichotomy by using the term ‘gender identity’. According to the NC: “Gender Equality refers to the equal valuation of the different behaviours, aspiration and needs that women and men have. In a situation of real equality, the rights, duties and opportunities of people should not depend on their gender identity” (MINEDU, 2016:23). But no specific non-normative gender identities are named.

A second issue is how gender and “homosexuality” are understood by the NC. On the one hand, the NC states: “What we consider as ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ is based on a biological-sexual difference, however these are notions that we construct day to day in our interactions.” (MINEDU, 2016:23)<sup>12</sup>. This sentence appears to open the door to seeing gender as a social construction. However, as Butler (1990) would argue, it is based on an understanding of gender that reifies the sexual division as being that which *causes* gender, without acknowledging that our understanding of sex is already gendered (loaded with how gender is conceived within heteronormativity). Therefore, the NC still frames gender within the heterosexual dichotomy of femininity/ masculinity, and thereby also marginalizes gender identities that defy this binary vision.

On the other hand, when defending the NC, the MINEDU explicitly addressed the category “homosexuality” and position itself against homophobia<sup>13</sup>. But

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<sup>11</sup> In the NC this competence’s title has no specific gender, it’s called: “Construye su identidad”.

<sup>12</sup> This sentence was systematically attacked by *Don’t Mess* on the grounds that it implied that children’s sexual orientation could be changed (“constructed”) at schools.

<sup>13</sup> This was not a constant through the NC defence. The Minister Saavedra, who was in charge of the MINEDU when the NC was approved, presented a heteronormative approach to gender, stating

simultaneously represents “homosexuality” as a fixed sexual orientation that cannot be taught at school. With this, in a subtle way gays and lesbian are still framed as what is not the norm and as *a difference* needs to be respected.

“To value and respect our differences does not mean to promote homosexuality nor any kind of ideology. Homosexuality is not taught. The issues that can be learnt are homophobia, violence and racism. These are what we have to eliminate” (Marilú Martens, Minister of Education, institutional video released on February 2017).

A third issue is that the MINEDU systematically employs the terms tolerance and respect with regard to all forms of sexual orientation, and as values that the school students should learn. Specifically, tolerance and respect are mentioned as part of the “students’ graduated profile” of the NC. As noted in Chapter 1, these terms are also present in the MINEDU’s defence of the NC against fundamentalist attacks.

## **2.2. Key aspects of the fundamentalist discourse on LGBTBIQ+ identities**

### ***2.2.1. “The Gender Ideology”: a ghost that walks through the globe***

Presented as a spontaneous civic initiative or *movement*<sup>14</sup>, this campaign of the fundamentalists claimed that the NC contained elements of the “Gender Ideology” which sought to homosexualize children in schools (Motta and Amat y León, 2018). The derogatory use of the term “Gender Ideology” first appeared in Peru in 1998 with the publication of a book, *Gender ideology: it’s risks and effects*, by the Peruvian Episcopal Conference. This was a translation of a book first published in English in 1997 by the Catholic Church in USA, written by Dale O’Leary, a North-American pro-family activist and researcher.

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repeatedly on the media that gender equality had to do with equal rights, duties and opportunities for women and men.

<sup>14</sup> For the insistence on calling the *Don’t Mess* a social movement, see the *Don’t Mess* facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/ConMisHijosNoTeMetasOficial/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/ConMisHijosNoTeMetasOficial/about/?ref=page_internal)  
Date of access: November 2019.

O’Leary had participated in the International Conference on Population and Development held in 1994 in Cairo, and also in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, both being ground breaking in UN and global debates regarding gender and women’s issues. O’Leary claimed that feminists at these conferences did not seek to guarantee women’s exercise of their rights. Instead they tried to impose, by force, a radical feminist ideology based on a Marxist interpretation of the class-struggle, which sought to destroy the traditional family by proposing identities different from the feminine and masculine (Muñoz and Laura, 2017:212).

The *Don’t Mess* campaign emerging in Peru is a local version of that global anti-gender trend. Similar campaigns (in terms of arguments and communication strategies) have been launched in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Panamá, Uruguay (Motta and Amat y León, 2018; Miskolci, 2018). The gendered conservative backlash has also been present in Russia, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Australia as well as in some African countries (Sperling, 2014; Correa, 2018).

### ***2.2.2. Pathologizing LGBTIQ+ people***

Although the *Don’t Mess* campaign is couched in religious principles, it presents its arguments through a rhetorical strategy using scientific “facts”. More specifically, gender and sexuality are considered to be purely biological issues, and to represent ‘natural’ inequalities between men and women (Parents in Action, 2016). One’s heterosexual identity, they argue, is not something constructed but something “you have” (Parents in Action, 2016:12); that you are born with. In this context, any sexual orientation differing from heterosexuality is explained in “pshychological” terms.

“The [sexual] attractions belong to the human being’s psychology. This is different from the other components of the human being, as characteristics that are inherent, for example, in sex. A human being is either a man or a woman, and the sex precedes

birth. In the very moment of conception, a new genetic charge is generated with a completely independent DNA. So before one is born, one already has an identity” (Christian Rosas, spokesman of *Don’t Mess*, speech quoted in Motta and Amat y León, 2018:120. My translation)

According to the fundamentalist campaigners, LGTBIQ+ identities represent a “mental disorder” identified as “gender dysphoria” (Parents in Action, 2016:16). Here it should be mentioned that after “homosexuality” was removed from the list of mental health disorders recognised by the main international psychiatric institutions, fundamentalists adopted the term “gender dysphoria” from the list of mental disorders of the APA but altered its meaning to suit their purposes (Motta and Amat y León, 2018). According to the APA, non-conformity with the gender assigned by society is not a mental disorder per se; instead, it refers to “the discomfort that might accompany the incongruence between the gender experienced or expressed and the gender that is assigned” (APA, quoted by Mas, 2017:6).

### ***2.2.3. Sexuality as a private topic that does not belong to the schools***

Fundamentalist groups believe that LGTBIQ+ identities should not be addressed in schools. According to them, through the NC the State would be implementing an abusive “anti-pedagogy”, where the notion of sexuality taught would not be the *natural* one. Furthermore, this would turn gay/lesbian presumably heterosexual children.

“With anti-pedagogical methods that constitute child abuse, they intend homosexualizing the children of the whole world, producing gender dysphoria in them, since this is the real objective of all the anti-educative material (...)” (Beatriz Mejía, spokeswoman of *Don’t Mess*, in Motta and Amat y León, 2018:122).

In addition, the *Don’t mess* campaign claims that the topic of sexuality should be purely a responsibility of the parents. Sexuality, including LGTBIQ+ identities, is a topic that belongs to private sphere, as the following quotation shows.



“We believe that there are concepts, such as the sexual affective attractions [...] that do not require protection because they belong to the private ambit of the human being” (Christian Rosas, spokesmen of *Don't Mess*; in Motta, 2018:121).

Moreover, in this argumentative line the school should not address LGTBIQ+ identities, since “[the school] exists to provide the scientific formation of the children, not ideologize or indoctrinate them” (Parents in Action, 2016:3).

## **Chapter 3. Conceptual framework**

This chapter presents key concepts of the theories that underpin the way I have chosen to analyse my data. More concretely, I discuss the analytical tools which allowed me to discern the meanings of tolerance and respect towards gay and lesbian people ascribed by participants, as well as how these meanings inform their pedagogical practices.

As noted above, this thesis engages in a critical dialogue with Brown's (2006) work, and my arguments build on the analytical tools developed by hooks (1994) and Anzaldúa (2012, 2015). This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I discuss Brown's analysis of tolerance as a discourse of power and depolitization. The second section focusses on hooks (1994) and on how she explores the way that radical pedagogies aimed at confronting structural power relations at the classroom. The third section builds on Anzaldúa's work, and provides a perspective as to how the construction of difference transcends the dualistic "heterosexual/homosexual" or us/them logic.

The choice of these two scholars has been influenced by my feminist, post-colonial perspective. Given their life experiences, hooks and Anzaldúa produce critical knowledge within the Global North academy but from marginal positions. Their work has greatly contributed to anti-colonial as well as to feminist and queer thinking, and it cannot be detached from their queer identities and their African American and Chicana backgrounds.

### **3.1. A critique of the liberal discourse of tolerance in educational settings**

After fieldwork was carried out, a pattern in the participants' accounts became apparent: the terms tolerance and respect appeared systematically. This, combined with the MINEDU's use of these terms when defending the NC from fundamentalists attacks, convinced me that I should focus the study on tolerance and respect discourses. Therefore, Brown's (2006) work on tolerance discourse

became a useful analytical tool to analyse the results. In this section, I shall present Brown's theory and draw out some of the links between her work and earlier discussions of tolerance within the field of pedagogy.

Within pedagogical debates, tolerance has been part of what critical pedagogy scholars have called "liberal multiculturalism". This establishes that respect, tolerance and peaceful conviviality should be present among the different cultures represented in the school. Moreover, tolerance and respect of difference are based on the idea of sameness in terms of a common humanity shared by all (da Silva, 1999). But some scholars have argued that liberal multiculturalism is problematic since it fails to address —indeed reproduces— the power relations that produce these differences (da Silva, 1999; McLaren, 2012; Žižek, 1997).

According to Brown, since the mid-1980s there has been a global renaissance in tolerance talk. The term tolerance, which only a generation ago was used in the USA as a code word for mannered racialism, is currently being reproduced in many different venues (Brown, 2006:1). Brown (2006) argues that tolerance is not a mere universal concept, principle or virtue, but rather a discourse of power and depolitization. Although her work is primarily concerned with tolerance in liberal democracies -mainly the USA and some European countries, and does not focus exclusively on education, Brown is interested in building a theory of tolerance discourse at a global scale. She proceeds to address tolerance discourse as historically and geographically variable in purpose, contents, agents and objects (Brown, 2006:4). Therefore, her work provides an interesting starting point for the analysis of the effects of tolerance discourse in educational settings located in other parts of the world.

### ***3.1.1. Tolerance as a discourse of power***

According to Brown, within liberal discourse tolerance can be understood as respect for all differences, whether these are based on culture, race, gender or sexuality. But Brown clearly wants to take the understanding of tolerance beyond this

superficial definition; she is also concerned with addressing tolerance as a discourse of power. She argues that tolerance does not simply address identity/difference but actively contributes to its production within a certain power structure: “Discourses of tolerance inevitably articulate identity and difference, belonging and marginality, civilization and barbarism, and [they] inevitably do so on behalf of hegemonic social or political powers” (Brown, 2006:10).

Furthermore, Brown argues that tolerance exemplifies Foucault’s account of governmentality -that which organizes ‘the conduct of conduct’ at a diversity of sites and through rationalities that are not limited to those formally considered as political (Brown, 2006:4). Tolerance then produces and positions subjects, orchestrates meanings and practices of identities, marks bodies and conditions political subjectivities not through a rule or concentration of power, but rather through a dissemination of tolerance discourse through several sites: state institutions, civic venues as schools, churches or neighbourhood associations, ad hoc social groups, political events and international institutions as the UN (Brown, 2006:4).

The construction of identity/difference through tolerance is rooted in a dialectical production of certain identities as superior and others as inferior and undesired: “Almost all objects of tolerance are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable by virtue of being tolerated, and the action of tolerance inevitably affords some access to superiority” (Brown, 2006:14). In this sense, tolerance involves managing the presence of the undesirable, and therefore it has a normative aspect: to be a subject of tolerance is to embody a presence outside the centre or norm, it is to be different and to be marked as such within a public space or social institution (Gray, 2016:423).

Furthermore, what is considered different in terms of gender, sexuality and/or race through tolerance discourse is interwoven with the public/private dichotomy. Thus, Gray states that subjects of tolerance are endured by the mainstream so long as they

are not too visible, vocal or demonstrative; that is, so long as they exist within certain parameters (Gray, 2016:424).

### ***3.1.2. Tolerance as a discourse of depolitization***

Tolerance can also be seen as a discourse of depolitization. Brown argues that “depolitization involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its *historical* emergence and from recognition of the *powers* that produce and contour it” (Brown, 2006:15; italics in original). In this sense, instead of presenting identity and difference as contingent products of power relations, tolerance discourse tends to naturalize these differences through the essentialization of social identities: “tolerance tends to cast group conflict as rooted in ontologically natural hostility towards essentialized religious, ethnic, or cultural difference” (Brown, 2006:15).

In addition, Brown argues that power discursively disappears when a hegemonic population tolerates a marked minoritized one. In this context, the unmarked-because-hegemonic identity aligns itself with universality and relative neutrality, while the objects of tolerance are associated with particularity and partiality (Brown, 2006:186). Following this line of argument, heterosexual people tend to present themselves as the universal identity which grants tolerance to particularized and marginalized LGTBQ+ people.

Not only are the sources of politically produced differences concealed; Brown highlights another consequence of tolerance as depolitization discourse. This is the reduction of political action and justice projects through sensitivity training or improvement in manners: “[Tolerance] substitutes emotional and personal vocabularies for political ones in formulating *solutions* to political problems (...) A justice project is replaced with a therapeutic or behavioural one” (Brown, 2006:16; italics in original). Tolerance then becomes fundamentally a strategy for coping with what liberal individuals cannot imagine themselves to be (Brown, 2006:178) —at least in public.

### ***3.1.3. The limits of a pedagogy of Tolerance***

In line with Brown's critique of tolerance as discourse of depolitization, McLaren states that a pedagogy of tolerance is reduced to mere attitude adjustments, and is thereby insufficient for the practice of a critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2012:34). The limits of tolerance talk within schools is also outlined by Brown. According to her, when students are urged to tolerate one another's race, ethnicity, culture, religion or sexual orientation, there is no suggestion that the differences at stake, or the identities through which these differences are negotiated, have been socially and historically constituted. Rather than being questioned, difference itself is what students learn they must tolerate (Brown, 2006:16).

Furthermore, following Žižek, tolerance can be considered as utterly impotent (Žižek, 1997:37), since it radically diminishes the possibility of mutual recognition. Tolerance, when taken as a primary civic virtue, involves a view of citizenship as passive, and of social life as reduced to relatively isolated individuals or groups that barely contain their aversions toward each other (Brown, 2006:88). Tolerance thereby excludes the possibility of developing a deeper knowledge among people. Therefore, following Brown, when tolerance becomes a dominant political ethos and ideal, equality is abandoned, so too are projects of community and building connections across differences. As a consequence, tolerance becomes problematic for the deconstruction of power relations, which is a crucial element of any radical pedagogy—which is the focus of the next Section.

## **3.2. Outlining radical pedagogical horizons for the practice of education for freedom**

When analysing the participants' accounts of tolerance and respect, I found that the meanings ascribed to these words, challenged Brown's work on tolerance. Some results seemed to confirm Brown's line of analysis, but others just would not fit. At this point, hooks' (1994) and Anzaldúa's (2012, 2015) theoretical and conceptual work helped me to analyse these results. In this section, three concepts developed by hooks (1994) will be introduced: engaged pedagogy, the classroom as a learning

community, and the mind/body split present in traditional pedagogies. All three concepts turn relevant to analyse participants' pedagogical practices. Anzaldúa's concepts will be introduced in the following section.

### ***3.2.1. Engaged pedagogy: education beyond the mere transmission of information***

Deeply influenced by her experience as an African American student, hooks develops important contributions to radical pedagogy, from a standpoint that integrates anti-colonial, critical and feminist pedagogies. In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks aims to promote pedagogies that transform consciousness and celebrate transgressions (hooks, 1994:12).

Engaged pedagogy, a concept introduced by hooks (1994), seeks to achieve what Freire called “conscientization” in the classroom<sup>15</sup>. Understanding this term as “critical awareness and engagement” (hooks, 1994:15), an engaged pedagogy embraces the teachers' commitment to offer not only information in the classroom but also to address the connections between what students learn at school and their overall life experiences (hooks, 1995:19). Based on her readings of Freire and Thich Nhat Hanh, for hooks engaged pedagogy aims to create connections between awareness and practice, and to transfer knowledge that is meaningful for students both inside and outside the classroom.

Additionally, engaged pedagogy is based on the recognition of students as “unique beings” (hooks, 1994:13). This implies that they need to be seen in their particularity as individuals and interacted with according to their needs (hooks, 1994:7). Experience turns crucial in the construction of an engaged pedagogy. Often seen as something belonging to the private sphere, experience has the

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<sup>15</sup> Hooks (1994) works is particularly nurtured by two “teachers” -as she calls them: Paulo Freire and Thich Nhat Hanh. Paulo Freire is a Brazilian scholar; perhaps the most famous book of his is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was published in the 1970s. Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. The book that hooks (1994) quotes from is *The Raft Is Not the Shore*, also published during the 1970s.

potential to illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material (hooks, 1994:21).

When teachers' work is rooted in engaged pedagogy, students should learn "to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstance" (hooks, 1994:47). Teachers themselves should also engage in a parallel process. They are expected to be actively committed to reflect on their own life as well as on the power relations operating within society. More concretely, they should unlearn categories that reproduce social hierarchies among individuals, including racism, sexism and homophobia.

### ***3.2.2. The class as a learning community***

As a pedagogical practice, the creation of a "learning community" is based on a shared commitment: "what we all ideally share is the desire to learn – to receive actively knowledge that enhances our intellectual development and our capacity to live fully in the world" (hooks, 1994:40). Moreover, the classroom as a learning community is by definition a communal space. On the one hand, everyone's presence should be acknowledged; on the other, teachers and students should all feel responsible for the classroom dynamic and see it as a product of a "collective effort". This way of envisioning the classroom turns radical since it addresses the lack of neutrality usually present in educational settings, where certain students are seen as having little to contribute due to their social background.

According to hooks, one way to acknowledge people's presence is to recognize the value of each individual voice. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers keep in mind the questions: Who speaks? Who listens? And Why? To do this, two important skills need to be developed: speaking and listening.

It is important to note that although an engaged pedagogy necessarily values on the students' expressions (hooks, 1994:20), this does not imply that everything said in class should be listened to uncritically. Here Ludlow's (2004) work on the



classroom as a contested space becomes relevant. For her, the feminist classroom is “a space that is not necessarily defined by conflict, but which includes room for [it]”. Ludlow highlights that “contested” means both disputed and collaborative; therefore, in a contested classroom any invocation of experience is subject to critique and expectations of “accountability” (Haraway, quoted in Ludlow: 2004:48). In this sense, standpoints and experiences brought to the classroom can be discussed and analysed, through reference to issues of power and privilege.

Additionally, regarding listening, hooks states:

“Hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts, and sometimes associating these voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other. That moment of collective participation and dialogue means that students and professor respect—and here I invoke the root meaning of the word, "to look at"—each other, engage in acts of recognition with one another” (hooks, 1994:186).

As the previous quote shows, listening allows mutual recognition and respect among subjects to emerge. In this sense, for hooks, the ability to listen is fundamental for the construction of a learning community.

### ***3.2.3. Transcending the mind/body split in classrooms***

One of the central principles of feminist critical pedagogy is the insistence on not engaging with the mind/body split (hooks, 1994:193). This division becomes an obstacle for the achievement of a radical pedagogy, since it presents teachers as well as students as disembodied individuals. And this, in turn, precludes the addressing of gender, sexuality, race and/or ethnicity differences among subjects, as well as the power relations that produce those differences.

hooks argues that most teachers will accept and reproduce this split through their pedagogical practice. As a consequence, the public world of institutional learning is a site where the body has been erased or goes unnoticed (hooks, 1994:193). Teachers and students are willing to enter the classroom not as ‘whole beings’, but as beings for whom only the mind (not the body) is present (hooks, 1994:191).

The mind/body split presents serious obstacles for teachers who want their students to be acknowledged as embodied subjects in history, with specific experiences and locations within the social structure. It becomes even more problematic for teachers and students whose bodies would be “against the odds” or “at the margins” in educational institutions—as LGTBIQ+ people. To illustrate this, hooks shares her own experience as an African American female student and scholar.

“I have always been acutely aware of the presence of my body in those [educational] settings that, in fact, invite us to invest so deeply in a mind/body split, in a sense, you’re almost always at odds with the existing structure (...) But if you want to remain, you’ve got, in a sense, to remember your-self—because to remember yourself is to see yourself always as a body in a system that has not become accustomed to your presence or your physicality” (hooks, 1994:135).

Scapp and hooks (whose dialogue is presented in hooks, 1994) advocate a radical consciousness of the body in educational settings in order to tackle the body/mind split. This split, they argue, is connected to the power relations within classroom settings, since: “the person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body” (hooks 1994:137). This means that heterosexual people tend to present themselves as the norm, and can claim the privilege of denying their bodies (as being invisible), and mark queer bodies as marginal or non-fitting since they transgress the traditional (dichotomic, heterosexual and cisnormative) understanding of gender and sexuality.

hooks and Scapp argue that the limits of the body should be contested in the classroom. As Scapp notes, the reconfiguration of how teachers’ and students’ bodies interact in the classroom opens up the possibility of mutual recognition: “When you leave the podium and walk around (...) [you] become very apparent to your students. Also, you bring with you a certain kind of potential, though not guaranteed, for a certain kind of face-to-face relationship and respect (hooks, 1994:138). The acknowledgement of students’ bodies also plays a key role. As Scapp states: “[teachers] are compelled to acknowledge that we are addressing folks

who (...) are coming from histories that might be threatening to the established ways of knowing if acknowledged” (hooks, 1994:139).

### **3.3. Anzaldúa's concepts of Mestizas and Nos/otras**

While carrying out the individual interviews, I became aware that several participants held multiple perspectives or *locations* regarding how they conceived of gay and lesbian identities, and its reception in the schools. Sometimes they would locate themselves in a rather conservative position, but at other times they would elaborate less conservative arguments. Sometimes these changes of *location* would occur during the same interview, or even during the same section of an interview. At first, I was troubled by this. I was looking for “a” location from where participants would speak, but this narrow view proved to be inadequate and insufficient to grasp what the participants were telling me. This is when Anzaldúa’s concepts of mestiza consciousness and nos/otras became important analytical tools.

#### **3.3.1. Mestiza Consciousness**

Rooted in Anzaldúa’s own life experience, mestiza consciousness is a concept coined by Anzaldúa (2012) to address the perspectives and experiences of people who belong to more than one culture, the ones living in the Borderlands. Anzaldúa, a descendant of Mexican migrants, was born and grew up in the USA side of the Mexico-USA border during mid twentieth century. There, she experienced oppression both through her schooling (where Mexican culture and the Spanish language were persistently presented as inferior) and through the sexism present in intimate family relations. These experiences taught her to both navigate and also stand within and outside different cultures, languages and social structures (Cantú and Hurtado, 2012:5).

Addressing the turbulent and violent history of the Mexican-USA border and highlighting the contingency inherent in its definition, Anzaldúa defines *La Frontera* (the border) as: “a dividing line (...) a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state

of transition” (Anzaldúa, 2012:25). Moreover, the border is a geographical area that is more susceptible to *la mezcla* (hybridity), being neither fully Mexico nor fully of the United States (Cantú and Hurtado, 2012:6). In this sense, borderlands are considered as a third space between cultures and social systems since: “[t]he convergence has created a shock culture, a border culture, a third country” (Anzaldúa, 2012:33).

For Anzaldúa, Mestizas —the ones inhabiting borderlands— are provided with a particular perspective that allows a critical view of the two cultures contributing to their life experiences<sup>16</sup>. “Living between cultures results in ‘seeing’ double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Seeing from two or more perspectives simultaneously renders those cultures transparent.” (Anzaldúa quoted in Keating, 2006:8). Anzaldúa argues that being exposed to two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference allows Mestizas to locate in what Anzaldúa calls *nepantla*, an Aztec word that means torn between ways: “Negotiating with borders results in mestizaje, the new hybrid, the new mestiza, a new category of identity. Mestizas live in between different worlds, in nepantla (...) we [mestizas] must constantly operate in a negotiation mode” (Anzaldúa, 2015:71).

The concept of borderlands refers not only to geopolitical borders. Anzaldúa uses the border between Mexico and USA also as a metaphor for all types of crossings: between geopolitical boundaries, sexual transgressions, social dislocations, and the crossing necessary to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts (Cantú and Hurtado 2012:6). In this sense, mestizas can be defined as the ones who do not fit the norm (Anzaldúa, 2015:73). They defy binary and rigid social labels through their own life experiences and perspective.

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<sup>16</sup> Anzaldúa developed the Mestiza concept mainly based on Chicana women experience (though it can be extended to anyone who crosses social borders). I’ll refer to Mestizas as feminine subjects in this document just like Anzaldúa (2012, 2015) does. See Cantú and Hurtado (2012:9) for a description of Anzaldúa’s focus on women experience.

For Mestizas, inhabiting nepantla means to live with clashing ideas and emotions. This is not an easy task; as Keating (2006) states: “nepantla hurts”. “Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza*, undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (Anzaldúa, 2012:100). There, Mestizas can experiment anxiety, space/times of great confusion, and loss of control (Keating, 2006:7). Mestizas then are compelled to develop a tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity; they learn to juggle cultures, to have a plural personality and to operate in a “pluralistic mode” (Anzaldúa, 2012:101).

For Anzaldúa, the contradictions inherent in Mestizas give them the ability and flexibility necessary to transform ambivalence into something else. Nepantla, then, is not only the place of inner-struggle and pain, but the liminal space where transformation can occur (Keating, 2006:8). Mestizas can transcend ambivalence by creating a new mythos, that is: “a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave” (Anzaldúa, 2012:102). In this way mestizas create a new consciousness, a *mestiza* consciousness, one characterized by movement towards a more whole perspective (Anzaldúa, 2012:102).

“In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and through it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm” (Anzaldúa, 2012:102)

Reaching a *mestiza* consciousness demands that the dualistic logic inherent in relations of the type oppressor-oppressed is abandoned, and an attempt made to see reality from the perspective of “the other”. “At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal

combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes” (Anzaldúa, 2012:100)<sup>17</sup>.

### **3.3.2. *Nos/otras, a tool for bridging splits***

After the publication of her book *Borderlands*, where the concept of Mestiza consciousness was introduced, Anzaldúa continued to develop new tools to reflect individual and social transformation. Her theory of “nos/otras” can be seen as an enrichment and development of her reflections on the possibilities for healing social splits.

For Anzaldúa, traditional identity labels are stuck in binaries, trapped in *jaulas* (cages) that end up limiting the growth of our individual and collective lives, instead of allowing us to portray ourselves in all our complexities and potentialities (Anzaldúa, 2015:66). Additionally, for Anzaldúa the notion of “the self” is deeply connected to “the others”: “we are also the things and the people that surround us” (Anzaldúa, 2015:68; my translation). At this point, it’s important to bring in Anzaldúa’s notion of the border as *una herida abierta* (an open wound) (Anzaldúa, 2012:25). For social borders that divide two or more people are like wounds that break the connections between them.

Nosotras is the Spanish word for the feminine “we”. Anzaldúa divides this word in two, nos/otras, and through this intervention highlights a tension. On the one hand, nos/otras affirms the possibility of a collectivity that the pronoun refers to, but it also acknowledges the divisiveness so often felt in contemporary societies (Keating, 2006:10). Nos/otras makes evident the slash between “nos” (us) and “otros” (others)”. The split underlines how we “disregard the fact that we live in intricate relationships with others, that our very existence depends on our intimate

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<sup>17</sup> Following Anzaldúa, the serpent and the eagle present in the Mexican National Emblem, symbolize a gendered dichotomy with two opposite sides. “The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (the earth, the mother). Together they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/celestial/male and the underworld/earth/feminine” (Anzaldúa, 2012:27).

interaction with all life forms” (Anzaldúa, 2015:76). But the term nos/otras also holds out the promise of healing social divisions through the transcendence of aggressions and borders.

Anzaldúa’s notion of Mestiza Consciousness suggests that for social healing to occur we need to transcend the us-versus-them mentality of irreconcilable positions, and to move beyond us/them binaries present in divisions as men and women, queer and straight, able and disabled (Anzaldúa, 2015:77). We need to dismantle the identity markers that promote divisions, and make the slash of nos/otras increasingly permeable (Anzaldúa, 2015:88). Here it is important to underline that nos/otras does not imply or demand sameness. The differences among us still exist but they function dialogically, generating previously unrecognized commonalities and connections which Anzaldúa describes as “an unmapped common ground” (Keating, 2006:10).

## **Chapter 4. Methods**

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. More specifically, it discusses how the research question introduced in Chapter 1 came into being and what methodological choices were taken in order to answer it.

### **4.1. A study grounded in standpoint epistemology**

A master thesis, like all research projects, would be impossible to do without making epistemological assumptions that deal with the question of how we come to know what there is to know. In this section I present key arguments of feminist standpoint epistemology, which provides me a point of departure both when conceiving this research (why focus on students of pedagogy) and when taking corresponding methodological decisions.

One of the major contributions of standpoint epistemology lies in its challenge to descriptions and classifications of social life based on universalistic assumptions (Maynard, 2004:1073). Following this line of thought, Harding highlights that all human thought can be only partial: “It is always limited by the fact of having only a particular historical location” (Harding, 1995:331). Harding also argues that social sciences is not a neutral site of knowledge production, since research projects are embedded in power relations which means that some particular locations present themselves as “universals”. Therefore, for research to take a critical view when seeking explanations of the social, standpoint scholars must focus research on “marginal lives”, the ones marginalized or excluded according to the dominant power relations (Harding, 1995; Hill Collins, 1997; Smith, 1997).

According to Hill Collins, the notion of standpoint refers to groups having shared histories based on shared locations in relations of power. But the existence of the group as a unit of analysis “neither means that all individuals within the group have the same experiences nor that they interpret them in the same way. Using the group as the focal point provides space for individual agency” (Hill Collins, 1997:377).



In this context, the students of pedagogy I interviewed qualify as a marginal group, not only because they do not come from privileged families, but also because their voices have barely been heard during the political struggles presented in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, it is important to note the central role played by experience as the basis of knowledge within standpoint theory. According to Smith, we all have “tacit knowledge” based on our everyday/everynight experiences, and this knowledge comes to the “surface” through discourse, in the “course of telling” (Smith, 1997:395). Based on this, the methods employed in this study—both the focus groups and interviews—were chosen so as to let participants speak for themselves and from their own experiences, as Smith (1997:36) suggests.

## **4.2. Study Design**

### ***4.2.1. Data collection***

Fieldwork was carried out in Lima with students of pedagogy from two different public institutions, between February and June 2019. The study was designed with a two-staged methodology for data collection. First, one focus group<sup>18</sup> was undertaken in each institution. Following this, eight individual semi-structured interviews were carried out. This study design reflects Hill Collins’s (1997) insight that members of a group do not necessarily interpret their common experiences in the same way. While focus groups were designed to map the heterogeneity of

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<sup>18</sup> The focus group guide had four parts. First, a group dynamic was made so participants could introduce themselves. Second, the topic was introduced through the question “what critiques has the MINEDU received for including the Gender Equality Approach in the schools?” Participants talked about the inclusion of LGTBIQ+ identities as a polemical issue. Third, an image viralized by fundamentalist groups, where a boy dressed as the red riding hood (the famous fairy tale) is depicted, was put on the wall. Participants had to create collectively a story for this character. Finally, stereotypes and previous knowledge about LGTBIQ+ identities were worked through small groups and a following open discussion, based on typical phrases from the Peruvian context, as “He’s gay because someone raped him when he was a kid”. Focus groups were inspired in my job experience, where I facilitated several workshop on the topic of gender equality with different school actors in Lima. For the thesis the data collection method is a focus group, since the accent was not put in the group of people learning, acquiring new knowledge or in problem-solving situations (Ørngreen R and Levinsen, 2017:71) but on the interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning (Bryman, 2012:502).

standpoints on “homosexuality” expressed by students of pedagogy, the interviews would go into detail with respect to the different standpoints of the future teachers, who in a face-to-face interview could distance themselves from the interaction held during the focus groups.

Although discussions in the focus groups were useful to gain access to the variety of the pedagogy students’ standpoints, they could not provide strictly comparable results. For instance, while in one Institution male and female students were separate—as was initially designed—at least for during half of the session, in the other Institution this was not possible. Authorities in the latter Institution allowed me less time with the students than I had expected. Therefore, I decided that all students should be present throughout the session. The focus groups provided crucial background information but there were shortcomings as the one just described. I therefore decided to prioritize the semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. In the following I describe how the interviews were designed and applied.

Eight face-to-face, individual interviews were undertaken. They were designed and carried out from the perspective of the Active Interview developed by Holstein and Grubin (1995). This meant that both parties, researcher and interviewee, were conceived as necessarily and unavoidably involved in meaning-making work (Holstein and Grubin, 1995:3). I found that semi-structured interviews worked best as this allowed collaboration as Holstein and Grubin suggest. This type of interview allowed me to add relevant questions that had not been pre-defined, but had arisen as a product of the interview itself, and from my position as an active listener. As suggested by Hesse-Biber (2013), the interview guide provided a flexible frame for the interviews; the order of the questions acted as a reference, since spontaneity and deep listening were important and desirable elements. The interviews were semi-structured, as this allowed a degree of comparability (Bryman, 2002:472) and lasted one hour on average. They were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The complete interview guide is given in Appendix 1. Here it is important to underline that the design of this qualitative research was not linear. The interviews were organised around a preliminary research question, which was rather broader than the one presented in Chapter 1. The preliminary question was: “how do future teachers locate themselves regarding the conception of “homosexual” identities and how are these identities addressed in the school?”. This guiding question was operationalized through four sub-themes: i) how was “homosexuality” as a topic talked about at school, ii) how did participants imagine their pedagogical practice when addressing “homosexuality” at schools (giving space to concrete experiences when possible), iii) what reactions would participants experience when confronting gay or lesbian students and colleagues, and iv) what previous life experiences did participants find relevant for explaining their particular standpoint on “homosexuality”. The concepts of tolerance and respect appeared in all these subsections within participants’ accounts. This was the reason why my research question became redefined.

One last issue regarding data collection, is that following Smith et al (2009), participants were asked to select the place where they wanted the interviews to be carried out. In this way the participants could exercise some control over the space and time of the interview, and probably feel more comfortable and at ease.

#### ***4.2.2. Sampling***

##### ***The institutions***

Fieldwork was conducted in two public institutions that train future teachers in Lima: Institution A and Institution B. In both, the study focused on students enrolled in the speciality of “Social Sciences” who were completing the final year of their undergraduate studies. The Institutions selected represent two end points of a *continuum* of public institutions (universities and pedagogical institutes) in Lima

that train future teachers<sup>19</sup>, in terms of their size (number of students) and the socio-economic situation of their students (given the neighbourhoods where Institutions are located).

The focus on these institutions took into account the following four elements: i) as public institutions and part of the State, they would be closer to MINEDU (than private ones) and more likely to actively train students according to the NC; ii) they offered the speciality of “Social Science”, the Curricular Area of the NC where specific learning outcomes related to the Gender Equality Approach are to be found; iii) the study focused on secondary education future teachers, since they might be aware/involved in recent political struggles, since *Don't mess* campaigners demonstrated against official curricular material of this level of education where non normative sexualities were explicitly addressed; iv) the focus on students who are about to finish their undergraduate studies allowed the study to include participants with teaching experience, which was considered relevant for the nurturing of pedagogy students' standpoints on tolerance and respect towards gay and lesbian people.

### ***Participants of the study***

Invitations to attend the focus group were distributed to all students enrolled in the last year of the speciality of Social Science of Higher Education. In the case of Institution A, 27 participants attended the focus group (13 women and 14 men), and in Institution B there were 11 (9 women and 2 men).

Following these, eight individual interviews were conducted: 5 with participants from Institution A and 3 from Institution B. Table 1 presents some demographic characteristics of the eight participants interviewed. Among them, 50% are female students and one, Oscar, identifies himself as gay. The group's average age is 26.1

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<sup>19</sup> The official list of Universities was taken from web site of the National Superintendence of University Higher Education SUNEDU <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/sibe/> (Date of access: February 2019). The list of Pedagogical Institutes was taken from the web site of the MINEDU <http://escale.minedu.gob.pe> Date of access: February 2019.

years, with Institution B’s participants being slightly older. Most of the participants already had teaching experience. Additionally, all interviewees from Institution B are parents.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewed participants**

<b>Institution A</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Parent experience</b>
Ana	Female	Straight	21	Yes (Internship)	No
Lorena	Female	Straight	24	Yes (Work)	No
Pedro	Male	Straight	25	Yes (Work)	No
Julio	Male	Straight	23	Yes (Internship)	No
Oscar	Male	Gay	27	No	No
<b>Institution B</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Parent experience</b>
Elena	Female	Straight	24	Yes (Work)	1 five-year-old daughter
Violeta	Female	Straight	30	Yes (Work)	1 ten-year-old daughter
Antonio	Male	Straight	35	Yes (Work)	1 one-year-old son

Source: Own elaboration based on fieldwork for this study

#### **4.2.3. Access**

Gaining access to both Institutions was difficult. It took a long time and multiple visits to gain the confidence of the Institutions’ authorities. The first meetings were especially awkward; authorities, and their secretaries in particular, played the role of gate keepers, preventing outsiders from reaching their students. The support from middle-range authorities and specific teachers in the end became key to making this research possible.

I had chosen at the start to contact the students through the authorities of the Institutions where they are enrolled. I considered important that the Institutions’ authorities be aware of my research for ethical issues, although I knew this path would take much more time, since it’s a bureaucratic entrance. Another option had been to make direct contact with the students —using a snowball technique, for instance. But I wanted to avoid the possibility of the authorities generating uncomfortable or problematic situations for the students, fearing that they were talking about polemical issues with an “outsider” —a researcher with no formal link to the institutions.

### **4.3. Analytical Process**

The principal analytical method employed in this study is qualitative content analysis, which can be understood as the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1278).

The qualitative content analysis was done in two stages, using two different correspondent specific methods. First, a conventional content analysis was carried out, where coding categories were derived directly from the text data; then, a directed approach was applied, where codes and categories were grounded in theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1277). This two-stage method analysis corresponds to the non-linearity of this research, where the research question was refined after the fieldwork was done. At both stages, the process of coding was made manually over hard copies of the transcript interviews.

The first stage of the analysis was done using the conventional content analysis approach, based on Mayring (2014) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). Since this study is grounded on standpoint theory, this approach was preferred to others, because it allows the analysis both to be based on each participant's unique perspective and to be grounded in the actual data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1280). Data analysis started with the repeated reading of all data in order to achieve immersion and gain a sense of the whole (Tesch, 1990). A pre-coding selection was then done—as suggested by Saldaña (2009)—, so as to focus on data that seemed more relevant for the study. In these pre-coded sections, data was read word by word to derive codes, highlighting the words from the text that appeared to capture key thoughts. Side notes for registering first impressions, thoughts and initial analysis were also done.

While carrying out this first inductive stage of the analysis, tolerance and respect emerged from data as salient categories, since they were mentioned systematically

by participants. This allow me to refine the research question and chose the relevant theoretical framework. When taking these decisions, Lund's insights concerning delimitation of case studies were helpful. As he states: "A case is an edited chunk of empirical reality where certain features are marked out, emphasized, and privileged while others recede into the background. As such, a case is not 'natural,' but a mental, or analytical, construct aimed at organizing knowledge about reality in a manageable way" (Lund, 2014:224).

The second part of the analysis was done using a directed content analysis approach, based on Mayring (2014) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). This particular method can be seen as the most central (Mayring, 2014:95), since its goal is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Given this, I chose this approach in order to engage in a dialogue with Brown (2006).

All interview data was read again and recoded, now using key concepts taken from Brown's work—including tolerance, power, depolitization—as initial codes. But as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) point out, I found that some parts of the text could not be categorized using this initial coding scheme. Some participants' accounts did not fit with Brown's (2006) perspective of tolerance. At this point, I found that the concepts from hooks (1994) and Anzaldúa (2012, 2015) presented in Chapter 3 became relevant for the analysis. New codes based on these concepts were then created. After the coding was done, codes were organized into themes, and themes into categories. This analytical structure is the basis for the results presented in the following chapters.

As Hsieh and Shannon state, the direct approach of qualitative content analysis also presents challenges that must be considered. First, when data analysis is done through theory-based codes, researchers are more likely to find evidence that is supportive rather than non-supportive of a particular theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1283). I tried to tackle this by engaging in a dialogue with Brown's (2006)

theoretical work on tolerance. Second, an overemphasis on theory can prevent researchers from seeing contextual aspects of the phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1283). This challenge was addressed by spending a relatively long time in the field and making repeated visits to both Institutions, which allowed a prolonged engagement with the context. Additionally, I organised a peer debriefing in Lima in June 2019, where teachers and students of a Master's programme in Gender Studies could give feedback to the preliminary results of the study.

#### **4.4. Regarding language**

An important issue to address is the vocabulary that this thesis has chosen when naming the human experience of gender and sexuality. Based on Anzaldúa (2015), I became aware that labels that try to capture our lived experience can be seen as cages, especially when they are stuck in binaries. Therefore, I realize that the terms I use can be challenged when portraying our complexities as humans. Furthermore, I am aware that some words that are apparently synonymous for particular people, such as “homosexual” and “gay”, have actual political consequences (Smith et al, 2018). This is grounded in the negative stereotypes that the word homosexual carries because of its historical association with pathology and criminal behaviour, as the APA states in the document “Avoiding heterosexual bias in language”<sup>20</sup>. In fact, as seen in section 2.2.3., *Don't mess* campaigners do use the term “homosexuality” in their fundamentalist and homophobic statements.

Given this context, I chose to use the terms gay and lesbian instead of homosexual. Whenever the term “homosexuality” is used in this study, I put it in inverted commas so as to detach it from the clinical/pathological inheritance of this term. My choice of terms is grounded in three reasons. First, they were used by gay and lesbian activists in USA, who in the 1960s and early 1970s were searching for ways to publicly claim their identities as constitutive of their sense of self and outside of medical discourse (Smith et al, 2018:339). Second, the terms seem suitable for a

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<sup>20</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language> Date of access: December 2019.



thesis written in English, since they have gained recognition among the English-speaking academia. However, this was not an easy choice. Activists, artists and scholars in Latin America are also contesting these terms given their foreign origin. Other terms such as *loca*, *marica*, *coliza*, *leca* among others are used and claimed, and this can be seen as a decolonial political statement (see for instance Perlongher, 2013; Cornejo, 2010; and the work of the Chilean artist Lemebel). Third, the terms gay and lesbian were indeed used by most participants during the interviews (seven out of eight), although they also used the term “homosexuality” as a synonym.

Nevertheless, I did use the term “homosexuality” in the focus groups and interviews, in order to use a term that participants might already be familiar with (Bryman, 2002:473). As seen in Chapter 2, this term was used both by MINEDU and by the *Don't Mess* campaign. It must also be said that during the focus groups, the terms gay and lesbian appeared only once within participants' answers, and they did not critique the use of the term “homosexuality”. Similarly, during the interviews, this term did not seem problematic for the interviewees.

#### **4.5. Ethical considerations**

The “Good Research Practice” guide published by the Swedish Research Council (SRC) in 2017 was the basis for methodological decisions taken concerning ethical issues. As this guide proposes, researchers should be aware of ethical codes at all stages: i) before conducting the research, ii) during the research and iii) after it is done.

The guidelines advise that before the research begins, participants should be informed that they are the subjects of research and give their written consent (SRC, 2017:26). All participants were verbally informed of the objective of the study, how data would be collected (through focus groups and interviews) as well as the voluntary nature of their participation. They were also informed that the focus groups and interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed, and their identities

would be protected. All participants signed a written consent form where this information was described.

All the material forthcoming from focus groups and interviews was anonymized. As the SRC (2017:41) specifies, personal information was removed so that it would be impossible in practice to link particular answers to specific individuals. Participants were assigned a different name, which could be feminine or masculine depending on how they referred to themselves during the interviews. The list that matched old and new names was later destroyed. I am conscious that the act of naming is an act of power (Halberstam, 2018), and that no neutral new names can be given<sup>21</sup>. However, I chose to give new names to participants, instead of using numbers or other codes, in order to keep a human texture in their voices. In addition, both Institutions participating in the study were anonymized, in order to prevent negative consequences, given the polemical political situation regarding gender issues and education in Peru.

Finally, regarding ethical issues after research, the audio tapes will not be stored longer than necessary; after the defence of this thesis, they will also be destroyed.

#### **4.6. Limitations**

In the following, I present and reflect on the research's limitations, as well as the decisions I took to deal with them as they appeared. Attention is also paid to how this could have influenced the study's results.

The study does not claim to be representative of the universe of pedagogy students in Lima. To begin with, the study focused on public institutions and excluded private ones<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, the study's results refer primarily to the students

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<sup>21</sup> This statement comes from a thesis seminar with Marta Kolankiewicz at Lund University held in December 2019.

<sup>22</sup> In Peru, the percentage of students of pedagogy that attend public (and not private) universities is 53%. And in the case of Pedagogical Institutes this percentage arises to 69%. Estimations were done

involved. However, it should be pointed out that since the study aimed to present a heterogeneity of standpoints on gay and lesbian people, the results may well be relevant in other similar contexts.

A second limitation is that the number of participants in the focus group in Institution A might have been too big. I only knew the number of students who might be interested in participating when I entered the classrooms to introduce the study. After meeting them, I realized that the focus group would have a maximum of 13 participants, so I invited all the students present in the classroom. Surprisingly, most of them came. Had the group been smaller, it would have been easier to insist that all participants express their opinions, and the results may then have been more diverse. This is one reason why the study came to focus more on the interview results.

I am aware that the interviews held in both institutions may over-represent the voices of more progressive students. In the case of Institution A, most participants expressed relatively progressive standpoints during the focus group. To deal with possible bias, I decided to interview two students (Julio and Lorena) who had participated very little in the focus group. According to the results, they held relatively more conservative standpoints within the Institution A group. So, by selecting these students for interview, the bias may have been overcome. In the case of the focus group held in Institution B, probably because fewer people attended, the opinions expressed were more heterogeneous and standpoints against “homosexuality” in the school were shared by several participants. However, I was unable to interview the most conservative one, as she responded my messages only after I left Peru.

Language and translation are additional limitations that this study has had to deal with. Spanish is my native language, as it is for all participants of this study. Given

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by the author based on data from the official web sites of MINEDU <http://escale.minedu.gob.pe> and SUNEDU <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/sibe/>. Date of access: January 2020.

that this thesis must be written in English, I have needed to translate the participants' voices and insert them into another context. In this exercise I am aware that some things have been lost. In particular, I am aware of Widerberg's warning on how: "translating understandings of gender implies eliminating some contextual understandings and concepts that can be expressed in one's native language, in favour of the foreign language and its concepts" (Widerberg 1998:133). To compensate for this, I have tried to contextualize every quotation that is included. Finally, although in the interviews I tried to address standpoints regarding "homosexuality" in the broadest sense, during conversations participants tended to talk more about gays. I made a conscious effort to pose the questions in terms of lesbian students or colleagues, but many participants would come back on referring to gays in their accounts. I could have repeated the question, but I felt that this would obscure what the participants were actually telling me. As a result, the study pays more attention to male gay identities than to lesbian ones.

#### **4.7. Reflexive considerations**

Scholars like Haraway (1988) and Harding (1997) argue that objectivity actually comes from partial and situated perspectives, and from the researcher being accountable for what she/he has learnt to see (Haraway, 1988:583). Given this, in this section I outline my own position and how this might have influenced my research results.

First, my connection to this topic is grounded in my job experience. During 2016 I was one of the panel of "experts" who wrote the NC and later I was part of a team that would give technical advice on how to defend the NC against attacks by fundamentalist groups. This work experience later came into dialogue with my recent experience of studying this Master's degree, allowing me to reflect on my previous location as a Peruvian technocrat in educational matters. Both experiences are present in my *vision* of students of pedagogy's discourses and experiences.

Therefore, in order to deal with this location, I took some decisions that might have influenced the research results.

To begin with, I decided to present myself to the authorities and students of both institutions of the study, as a Master's student (not a worker) who lives in Sweden (not Peru). This allowed me to detach from my previous position as "local expert". Secondly, I felt more comfortable when interacting with students who agreed with the welcoming of non-normative sexualities at school. This might have encouraged them to locate discursively themselves in this position. To deal with this I was conscious of myself as an active interviewer in Holstein & Gubrium's (1995) terms. I did my best to listen. And here the interview format was crucial, since it allowed me to construct a one-to-one interaction and to focus my attention on the interviewee's personal accounts.

Thirdly, data collection was also influenced by the fact that I am a 37-year-old cis-woman who grew up in a middle-class neighbourhood in Lima. This meant I occupy a particular position in local power relations. Here I refer not only to the relations inherent in being the person facilitating the focus groups and interviews (the one who posted questions), but also in terms of my class, gender and age. Here, it is also interesting to note that students were also aware of their own positions in these power relations. For instance, when I called students to ask them for an interview many of them would say "Ok miss, I'll help you", making explicit their position as *helpers* and my dependence on their contribution for this research.

## **Chapter 5. Future teachers as mestizas and other results prior to the central analysis**

This chapter presents results of fieldwork preceding the central analysis, which is carried out in Chapters 6 and 7. The information provided here can be seen as contextual, aiming to enhance the understanding of participants' standpoints on gay and lesbian people. Section 5.1. argues that future teachers can be seen as mestizas in Anzaldúa (2012) terms, since all of them have experienced different border crossings in their lives. Section 5.2. presents descriptive results concerning how participants conceive "homosexuality", whether the school should talk about it, why and when.

### **5.1. Future teachers as mestizas**

#### ***5.1.1. Crossing borders through life experience***

All participants in this study can be seen as mestizas, in Anzaldúa (2012) terms, in the sense that their life experiences have exposed them to the "in between" zones among two (or more) different social groups, in terms of culture (family migration), class (being working class and studying) and/or parenthood.

First, most of the participants live in relatively poor neighbourhoods of Lima but they have had access to tertiary education, which is not a common experience among young people living in poverty<sup>23</sup>. Second, most of their parents have come to Lima from the provinces, some from small rural villages. Consequently, the majority belong to the first generation to be born or raised in the capital within their families. This is not a minor detail. Since discrimination in Peru is largely based on

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<sup>23</sup> In Perú, among people who are 15 years old or older only 14.3% access to non-university tertiary education, and 19.7% access to universities (INEI, 2018). The percentage of people who access to tertiary education is considerably lower among young people living on poverty. Taken from: <https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/861568-solo-3-de-cada-10-jovenes-accede-la-educacion-superior-en-el-peru/> Date of access: September 2019.

place of origin and/or perceived race<sup>24</sup>, the participants are most likely to have experienced this.

Third, only three participants (Lorena, Julio and Ana) have been able to become full-time students after leaving secondary school. Therefore, the majority of participants have been forced to stop their tertiary education at some point due to economic problems. As a consequence, they have experienced being simultaneously tertiary education students and workers; some with physically highly demanding jobs. Antonio and Violeta worked as night guards in factories; Pedro worked as a stevedore during the summers, with daily shifts from midnight until 5:00 am; Elena began working as an NGO assistant when she was sixteen years old. Furthermore, Elena, Violeta and Antonio have experienced being students and parents at the same time, dividing their time between study activities, work and childcare.

The case of Oscar has an extra layer in terms of being a mestiza, since besides the border crossings of class and culture, he is gay. Being an effeminate boy located him in the borderland in terms of gender and sexuality at an early age. Back then, he experienced not fitting the norm either in his family or at school, and this exposed him to the homophobic discourses of others, aimed to define him as being outside ‘normality’: “When I was at elementary school a teacher would tell me ‘Oscar you have to change because that is not normal’ (...) ‘the society does not accepts that’”.

### ***5.1.2. Juggling with different standpoints at school***

Participants can also be seen as mestizas in another sense. Given the context of the political struggle described on Chapter 2, participants have been exposed to (at least) two different, usually opposing, views regarding “homosexuality” and the

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<sup>24</sup> According to a national survey, 53% of population of the country think that Peruvians are racists (Ipsos, 2018) [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-03/percepciones\\_sobre\\_diversidad\\_cultural\\_y\\_discriminacion\\_etico-racial.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-03/percepciones_sobre_diversidad_cultural_y_discriminacion_etico-racial.pdf) Date of access: September 2019.

recognition of LGTBIQ+ identities at school. All the participants showed during the focus groups that they were aware of this political struggle and could identify the central ideas promoted by the *Don't Mess* campaign and MINEDU.

Additionally, many participants who had teaching experience could see the consequences of this political struggle in their work environments. While some colleagues and parents had expressed their support for the NC, others did not accept LGTBIQ+ people in schools. This had created conflicts, and turned schools into places with clashing ideas and emotions which the trainee teachers had to navigate. Moreover, participants had to struggle to navigate these situations due to a lack of information. All participants agreed that neither issues of gender nor LGTBIQ+ identities had been addressed by teachers in their undergraduate classes.

## **5.2. Other results prior to the central analysis**

### ***5.2.1. "Homosexuality" as a troubling choice***

Participants' accounts of how "homosexuality" was conceived differed from both the fundamentalist standpoint and from the NC's perspective (See Chapter 2). According to Lorena and Ana (from Institution A), Violeta, Elena and Antonio (from Institution B) being gay or lesbian should be a matter of personal choice, and therefore be related to individual will. Moreover, when taking this decision, gays and lesbians become accountable for it. The following quote shows this, where Elena is talking to a hypothetical gay colleague:

"I would tell her not to be ashamed, because as they say she has already chosen, and nobody, despite what they would tell her repeatedly, no one will make her change her mind, because she's a grown up person, she has already chosen what she had to choose, and she's now responsible for what she has chosen" (Elena).

Oscar and Pedro are exceptions within the group, since they do see "homosexuality" as a sexual orientation. Both recognize the marginal position that this identity is



given by society, but both are willing to transcend this. Pedro wants his students to see “homosexuality” as something “normal” and “natural”; while Oscar describes being gay as what he really is and what makes him feel free.

Additionally, in the opinion of several participants, “homosexual” people are located outside the norm when they cross cisgender borders. The following quotations show this. Here Lorena and Antonio describe how they would react as teachers if a student tells them he/she is gay.

“First we would talk. About how she feels, right? Because it’s also about accepting yourself. Coming to accept or realize that these gestures, or aspects, or characteristics, they are not of her body, right?” (Lorena).

“I would talk with the student. ‘Hey I’ve seen that you behave in a different way. Are you gay?’” (Antonio).

As Anzaldúa (2012) would argue, previous quotes show how non-cisgender people trouble participants because they defy the dominant discourse of sexuality and gender. Their behaviour or gestures (gender) are not seen as corresponding with their physical bodies (which can be read as sex).

### ***5.2.2. The school should talk about “homosexuality”***

All participants agreed that “homosexuality” should be talked about in schools, the reason being that it is part of the students’ reality. However, the way “homosexuality” is considered as being part of society varies among participants. While for Oscar and Pedro (from Institution A) gays and lesbians are seen as a valuable part of society, for Violeta and Elena (from Institution B) and Julio and Lorena (from Institution A) they represent an undesirable part. The following quotations illustrate this; these are participants’ responses to the question of whether schools should talk about “homosexuality”:

I think that yes (...) From my point of view, everything that happens here in our country or what is seen in society must be talked about in the schools (...) in the street you'll find homosexuals, you'll find gays, they are there, they are not ghosts. If they are there, then why not talk about them? If they exist it is for a reason, they are people and human beings" (Oscar)

"It is part of our reality. Just as there are rapists, there are thieves, there are corrupt people, well it's part of the reality and nobody can hide it" (Violeta)

### ***5.2.3. A topic to talk about at high school***

Most participants tend to assume in their first responses that their students will be heterosexual. Under this premise, Elena and Antonio (from Institution B) and Julio (from Institution A)<sup>25</sup> think it would be better to talk about "homosexuality" at high school level, and preferably during the final years. Antonio and Elena think that doing this with elementary school children would "wake them up" (as from a dream) or "change their vision" in terms of sexuality. For these two participants, talking about "homosexuality" would interfere with or "harm" the children's assumed heterosexuality.

- Magrith: Do you think that the school is a place to talk about homosexuality?
- Elena: Yes, I think students need to be informed (...) But [elementary] children not. The kids are just opening their eyes and understanding which one is their sexuality. Then they can be harmed, and their vision can be changed.
- Magrith: What do you mean when you say their vision could be changed?
- Elena: If the kid sees two women kissing each other, they would ask, right? 'Why [they kiss] if they are women' (...) How can we make a kid understand that there are lesbians, homosexuals? This wouldn't be good. It could be explained to them, but they would imitate.
- Magrith. And what would be the problem if they start imitating?
- Elena. It would turn into a habit, and I think this would be the starting point for them to change their sexuality

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<sup>25</sup> I couldn't ask Pedro and Oscar this question during their interviews

Other participants would not agree with this statement. Moreover, in the case of Violeta and Lorena, they have both talked about LGTBIQ+ identities with their pre-school (Violeta) and elementary school students (Lorena). They managed to do this even though both have some concerns regarding the recognition of LGTBIQ+ identities at school.

## **Chapter 6. Evidence of Tolerance as discourse of power and depolitization**

This chapter focuses on the results where participants' standpoints on gay and lesbian people tend to corroborate Brown's (2006) work. It will be argued that teachers' standpoints on tolerance and respect towards "homosexual" people can be seen as a discourse of power and depolitization. The first section addresses participant's answers to the question of what should students learn about "homosexuality" in the school. The second tackles how participants would react when having students and colleagues that are gay or lesbian.

### **6.1. Tolerance and Respect as desirable values towards gays and lesbians**

Tolerance and respect were part of the participants' vocabulary when describing what students should learn at school regarding "homosexuality". Tolerance was mentioned as an expected learning outcome by five participants (Pedro, Lorena and Ana from Institution A; and Violeta and Elena from Institution B); respect was even more popular since it was mentioned by all of them.

As the following quotations show, tolerance and respect appear as desirable learnings that presumably heterosexual students should have towards gays and lesbians. All the quotations refer to the participants' answer to the question: "what should students learn about homosexuality at school?"

"I think that students have to understand that there are preferences, and that you have to tolerate them. And if you do not like them [these preferences], then get away from the scene, but do not attack this other person (...) [to teach students,] [w]hat happens if I'm in a situation that I don't like, if I'm in the situation of meeting a scandalous couple in the street for instance" (Ana).

"To teach the children that homosexuals are people, they are human beings that must be respected. They should not be excluded from society just because they have changed

their gender, or because they have chosen [emphasis] this kind of lesbian or homosexual gender. They are human beings and they must be respected” (Elena)

“I would teach it as a topic, as a way to cultivate values towards people. To understand that being homosexual does not make you less human [hesitating] (...) Because you have the same rights and the same duties. Just this. And the respect for people, because we all are free to be how we are” (Julio)

The first point to make is that the tolerance and respect discourse coming through in these quotations locates “homosexuality” outside of the classroom/school. The trainee teachers elaborate a message for their students about people who are not present in the classroom. Through this, Brown (2006) would argue, participants engage in the reproduction of tolerance as a discourse of power that establishes a norm: the ones who grant tolerance (heterosexuals) are considered to be the universal/normal identity, while the objects of tolerance (gays and lesbians) are the particular/marginal one.

A second point is the construction of gays and lesbians as undesirable identities that can become objects of violence. This violence is expressed through attacks (described by Ana) or exclusion from society (described by Elena). “Homosexual” people, especially in Ana’s case, are presented as having a gender identity that would generate a desire for aggression within heterosexuals. This violent desire, far from being questioned, gets to be legitimated in Ana’s discourse. As Brown (2006) would argue, this use of tolerance underlines how difference among people is considered to be ontologically natural which, in turn, prevents a deeper knowledge of the other. In fact, what Ana envisions is that a presumably heterosexual tolerant student must leave the place (construct a physical separation based on aversion) as a way to avoid attacking the “homosexual” person.

A third element present in the quotations is the claim of tolerance and respect towards “homosexual” people on the grounds of common humanity. However, in these kinds of statements the only humanity that is put in question is the one held

by queer people; heterosexual's humanity remains unquestionable. As da Silva (1999) argues, this claim of homogeneity actually conceals the differences and the power relations that produced them. Therefore, tolerance towards "homosexuals" grounded in their humanity works as a depolitization discourse in Brown's (2006) terms, in that it conceals the contingency of the constructed hierarchy "heterosexual/homosexual" people.

One further element needs to be taken into consideration: the construction of gays and lesbians as the other is entangled with a vision of "homosexuality" as a matter of choice (see Section 5.2.1). Through this vision, gays and lesbians are made responsible for not fitting with the norm, as can be seen in Elena's words.

"They are human beings who must be respected. Just like us, they also have rights. But they have chosen, right? to have another sexuality, to have another kind of life" (Elena, Institution B)

Following Brown (2006), one can see that tolerance and respect talk, when entangled with a discourse that represents sexual orientation as a matter of choice, contributes to a depolitization process. Attention is diverted from the power relations that socially produce the "heterosexual/homosexual" hierarchy; instead focus is put on the individual "decisions" of gays and lesbians.

It should be underlined that tolerance and respect do not appear as synonyms in the participants' accounts. Tolerance tends to be employed to define what heterosexual students should feel and express towards "homosexual" people. Unlike tolerance, respect is used in a more reciprocal way. It is not only demanded from heterosexual students towards "homosexual" people, but also the other way around. While tolerance is used to educate presumably heterosexual students about a "homosexuality" located outside the school, respect appears as a what should regulate the coexistence of heterosexual and "homosexual" people within the school. This is the topic taken up in the next section.

## 6.2. When “homosexuality” stops being a topic to become embodied subjects

### 6.2.1. *‘Respect’ as a demand for gays and lesbians to censor their identities in school*

When participants are confronted with the possibility of gay and lesbian students or colleagues openly expressing their gender identities in the classroom and school, respect tends to take precedence over tolerance in guiding what school actors (students and teachers) should show towards other people. What being respectful means, however, varies according to the subject’s sexuality. While for heterosexual people to be respectful means not attacking “homosexual” people (as described in the previous section), for gays and lesbians it means concealing or censoring bodily expressions of their gender identity.

Five participants (Lorena and Julio from Institution A; Elena, Violeta and Antonio from Institution B) think that high school students should not make their non-normative identities (“homosexuality”) explicit in school. The main reason being that this would expose the gay and lesbian student to violent reactions from the rest of the class.

“[To hypothetical gay student:] Here [at school] you have to behave, because here your friends, if you give them confidence, maybe they will see you as a girl, and they will want to get their hands into you<sup>26</sup>, they will want to insult you. This must be handled in a way that they have respect for each other, among all of them” (Antonio).

“I think that in the school, no; I think it’s too complicated, because of the bullying cases, and all that stuff. At [Institution A] [gay or lesbian students] are also seen, but it’s not so much (...). And besides here we already have another idea, another mentality (...) Oppositely, in the school no, in the school they’re too aggressive, they transgress against you, your body, right? They hit you, only because you have those gestures” (Lorena).

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<sup>26</sup> It’s a common expression in Peru, “meter la mano”, means that a person (usually a man), touches the genitals or the buttocks of another person without his/her explicit consent. In Peru it is a rather common type of sexual violence, specially within schools and other public spaces such as buses.

Like Antonio and Lorena, Violeta thinks that gay and lesbian students need to respect the school by controlling their gender expressions as in “movements”, “manners”, “gestures”, in order to avoid being the target of mockery and offence. However, Violeta also suggests that teachers could take on the role of explaining to these students their marginal position in the school.

“But as the others will have to respect you for what you will choose [being homosexual], you also have to respect the environment of the rest. (...) He has certain movements, some manners, some gestures, [he must] control these to avoid mockery and offensive reactions. I mean, one must explain to him his position, and ask him what it is that he [the gay student] desires? If he wishes to be ok with the rest, and be included with the rest (...) The right is for both sides, right? The right is for both sides. They will respect you, they will include you, but likewise, you must respect them, include them in your ways. It will be difficult but not impossible” (Violeta)

On the other hand, the same five participants believe that gay teachers should not express their gender identities at the school. Similar to the case of gay or lesbian students, participants mentioned that such teachers would expose themselves to violence from other school members, such as parents and students. “He would deserve the mockery” states Julio; “It could be harmful to the [gay] teacher” argues Lorena; “authorities might fire him because parents would demand that he leaves” says Antonio.

The following quotations demonstrate how respect discourse is present in participants’ standpoints regarding the presence of gay teachers in the school. As in the case of students, the demand is for gay and lesbian teachers to conceal their gender identities. Special attention is given to effeminate male teachers, who should not cross the cisnormative gender norms of society. Their effeminacy is considered as disrespectful.

“Doors get closed for them everywhere, right? Because there are times when they do not respect, they do not respect the environment where they are, they show



themselves just like they are, and no, they do not have the fair judgement to behave according to where they are, in the environment where they are (...) They are too crazy, they yell, they do not respect (..) they like calling attention to themselves and if they see a man it is even worse” (Elena).

“For sure homosexual teachers already exist (...) But I would say (...) if a teacher is a man, he should dress as a man. Of course, respecting this norm. And if a teacher is a woman, she should dress as a woman” (Julio).

Violeta argues that effeminacy in a male body belongs to the private life, not to the public one like the school.

“I don’t know if I’m wrong. Years ago, in the school of my nephew there was a teacher, who was very degenerate, it was too much (...) Since he would use this gesture or another gesture (...) and all those famous sounds they [gays] emit, right? I approached him and told him, ‘I think that in front of the students one should emanate respect. If I want the students to respect me, to love and respect me. But if you do this, it is like inviting the students to disrespect you’ (...) ‘I don’t know about the rest of the parents’ I told him, ‘but I think you must be a respect machine. I can have whatever option [sexual orientation], but the life I have is my own personal life, and my personal life does not have to enter into my working life’” (Violeta).

### ***6.2.2. ‘Respect’ as an obstacle to the classroom as a contested space and to the radical consciousness of the body***

According to these quotations, the classroom and the school are not defined by participants as a contested space, in the terms defined by Ludlow (2014). So far, it does not seem necessary to address homophobic violence as a problem in the class or school environment. Individuals who promote homophobic violence are not highlighted as being the problem; rather the fault lies with the gay students and teachers who expose themselves to it. He or she is the only one held accountable. Ensuring their safety becomes an excuse for not working on the transcendence of homophobic violence in schools.

“They show themselves just like they are”; “He should dress as a man”; “He was very degenerate”. Using such phrases, participants indicate that a line should be drawn which gays and lesbians should not cross when at school. Moreover, what is interpreted as overstressing the limits of respect, for some participants, is not the student/teacher’s sexual orientation, but the public expression of his/her gender identity. What troubles these participants is not a non-normative sexuality, but a non-cisnormative gender expression.

This contrasts with the radical consciousness of the body in schools demanded by Scapp and hooks (in hooks, 1994); instead of challenging the traditional limits of gendered bodies in schools, participants seem to be acting as gate keepers of cisnormativity in the name of “respect”. Moreover, troubling queer bodies would need to be disciplined in order to exist in the school. This can be seen in Violeta’s statement. She demands that effeminate men should not enter the school as “whole beings” (as hooks argues) but as machines; male effeminacy should be erased and replaced by a sense-less body, a “machine”.

In this chapter, I have focused on the results that mainly confirm Brown’s argument (2006) regarding tolerance as a discourse of power and depolitization, connecting these results to pedagogical debates. But, as it will be seen in Chapters 7 and 8, other participants’ statements both enrich and challenge Brown’s (2006) perspective.

## **Chapter 7. Pedagogies of Tolerance and Respect from the Borderlands**

*There's a crack, a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in*  
(Extract from Cohen's song "Anthem". Quoted by Anzaldúa 2015:84)

Up to this point, tolerance and respect in participants' accounts seem to corroborate Brown's argument regarding tolerance as a discourse of power and depolitization. However, some participants contest this use of the words tolerance and respect, ascribing other meanings to these terms in their current pedagogical strategies. Based on two cases, I shall show how the understanding of tolerance discourse as proposed by Brown (2006) is being expanded, enriched and questioned, and how participants' interventions concerning tolerance and respect can be linked to the development of a mestiza perspective in Anzaldúa's (2012) terms.

### **7.1. Case 1: To be the Other. Tolerance as entry to link the personal and the political**

#### ***7.1.1. Violeta's account on what happened***

A problematic situation arose in one of Violeta's high school classes. One of her 1<sup>st</sup> grade students, Nicolás<sup>27</sup>, was being constantly bullied by his classmates. Nicolás had a lesbian sister, Mariana, working at the school as part of the cleaning service. Her sexuality was the main reason why Nicolás' peers started bullying him. They would make fun of his sister in the corridors, and would call her and Nicolás names. This upset him, making him very angry with his sister, who he blamed for the bullying. 'When I get home, I want to hit her because I'm so angry, but I don't want to do that' Nicolás told Violeta.

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<sup>27</sup> I am using fictional names for narrating Violeta's story.

Violeta decided to do something about it. She asked the school psychologist to help her, and together they made a plan. Violeta called all the class parents to a meeting, to inform them about the problem and have their approval in dealing with it at class. She told the parents that this would allow them to see: “What level of tolerance and respect we have among us, in the classroom”. Though some parents were hesitating, and others were directly opposed, Violeta managed to gain their consent.

Next, a role-play dynamic was performed<sup>28</sup>. Students would recreate a scene of Nicolás being bullied because of Mariana’s sexuality. Everyone had to play a role different from him/herself. Some students, Violeta remembers, didn’t want to take part in the activity: “No, I don’t want to. Are you crazy? I don’t wanna be the lesbian!” Then Violeta told them that if the role-play dynamic could not be done, everyone would have to write an essay as homework. Then, all students agreed to do the activity.

After the dynamic was over, Violeta asked the students how they had felt, encouraging them to value the experience of being the Other: “Each of you, when you were acting as another person, got a chance to feel what your classmate was feeling. How did you feel?” In the end, Nicolás could release his feelings and came to see that his sister was not ‘the problem’, but the people who insulted her. Violeta remembers him telling his classmates: ‘I felt free when I said all those insults (...) I unleashed my anger, what I had inside. And now I think that when I listen to someone talking about my sister, seeing her or me as different, I should understand that something must be going on with this person, and that’s why he’s saying these insults’.

### ***7.1.2. Linking the personal with the political***

As described in Chapter 3, according to Brown (2006), tolerance as a depolitization discourse not only naturalizes the power relations that produce the difference but

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<sup>28</sup> This dynamic resembles much of the Theatre of the Oppressed method, developed by Boal (2008). However, Violeta did not describe this role-dynamic in these terms.

also substitutes emotional, behavioural and personal vocabularies for political ones when it comes to formulating solutions to political problems. Brown then creates a dichotomy between what can be considered as personal or emotional, and what gets to be considered political. Violeta's case provides evidence as to how these divisions can be questioned, by connecting the two elements of these dichotomies in line with one of the most important feminist claims: the personal is political.

Violeta as a teacher took the decision to not turn a blind eye to Nicolás's situation, but to actively intervene with a pedagogical strategy. She knows she will have to juggle between different demands and reluctances coming from both parents and students. In the case of the parents, she explains her decision to intervene in the classroom by underlining that students need to learn and practice tolerance and respect at school. She chose to use this vocabulary with parents, seeing this as an entry point to working with a more polemical topic (homophobia) while having the parents' approval. This was not an easy task given the polemical context, where some parents had already told Violeta about their aversion to "homosexual" people.

Therefore, one can see how Violeta makes use of the 'behavioural' code-words — tolerance and respect— but does not reproduce or legitimize the homophobic violence against Nicolás or his sister. Instead, she was able to intervene in this by using a role-play dynamic. This allowed students to revise their own standpoints on gays and lesbians<sup>29</sup>, and in this sense it becomes a pedagogical strategy leading to greater conscientization (by bringing greater awareness and engagement), as hooks (1994) argues.

Violeta's choice of this pedagogical strategy is far from being based solely on academic or intellectual knowledge. It is grounded in the students' experience, and more concretely, in Nicolás and Mariana's experiences. Their experiences move from a marginal position of being the target of the bullying, to become the centre

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<sup>29</sup> Elena, Ana and Pedro also mentioned role-play dynamics as a way to help heterosexual students to "put themselves in the place of the other" -as Elena described.

of a collective work of reflection. Space is opened up for both Nicolás and his sister to become recognized in their ‘uniqueness’ and particular needs. Moreover, Nicolás’ and Mariana’s experience is taken out of the semi-private sphere of what happens in corridors or at school-breaks, to occupy a central role in the public sphere: to be addressed seriously as the main topic of a classroom session. In this way, Violeta -without mentioning bell hooks (1994) or any other critical pedagogy scholar, puts into practice an engaged pedagogy.

In addition, the role-play dynamic where each student has to perform and embody someone else’s subjectivity and experience presents a special opportunity to bring what hooks and Scapp (on hooks, 1994) call a radical consciousness of the body. Violeta designed the role-play in such a way that all the persons involved in the story were represented, including Mariana. Therefore, through the role-play dynamic, students not only were made aware of the existence of bodies with gendered identities that might be different than their own, but they also had to actually *be* this body/subject. Someone then had to give his voice to represent Mariana’s, and also his body to represent hers. In this way, a boy not only got to be a girl, but a lesbian girl. Through this, Violeta’s classroom becomes one of the most radical spaces for a pedagogy of freedom, since it transcends the heteronormative boundaries that Violeta herself is herself struggling with. She stated in different points of the interviews how she disapproves “homosexuality” and male effeminacy in particular (See section 6.2.1.). In this sense, Violeta seems sandwiched between two visions regarding gays and lesbians, juggling between two standpoints, which is characteristic of people inhabiting the Borderlands in Anzaldúa (2012) terms.

Violeta’s case therefore challenges Brown’s (2006) argument of tolerance as a strategy to merely cope with individuals we cannot imagine ourselves to be. In Violeta’s story, tolerance is not only employed by individuals to regulate their aversion towards others, but also the entry point to transcending straight/queer borders. Tolerance and respect can therefore allow students to embody what they consider a marginalized, or even an undesirable, subject in terms of sexuality. It

also provides an opportunity for students to see their own sexuality, and heterosexuality in general, as a particular (not universal) one, and for a moment see reality through lesbian eyes. In this way, presumably heterosexual students were given the chance to see how the personal (like sexual orientation) becomes political (as contested). As Anzaldúa (2012) would argue, students get to see reality from two different perspectives —as *mestizas* in *Borderlands*, through serpent and eagle eyes at the same time—.

Finally, the role-play dynamic turned the classroom into a contested space in Ludlow's (2014) terms. Through this exercise, students who attacked Nicolás and his sister become accountable. Their standpoint becomes detached from their selves/bodies; it can be revised and discussed when embodied by others. In this sense, the superiority they felt in terms of being heterosexual loses —at least for a moment— the privilege of being the universal/uncritical identity. And through this process, Nicolás' standpoint also gets to be contested. Maybe Nicolás' relationship with his sister will still have some tensions with respect to her sexuality, but at least for a moment he got the opportunity to see the “problem” from another perspective, one that did not legitimize the violence against her.

## **7.2. Case 2: Tolerance as an entry to resistance**

### ***7.2.1. Pedro's account on what happened***

Pedro is doing an internship teaching Social Science at a high school in Lima. In each class he always tries to make a connection between a current problem of ‘reality’ and the scheduled topic. When teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students and the scheduled topic was Tolerance, he decided to use a pedagogical strategy which included an open discussion of how gays are seen by society. When Pedro taught this class, the political struggle over the inclusion of LGTBQ+ identity in schools had already begun.

To stimulate discussion, Pedro pinned two big images to the board, one next to the other. Both were reproductions of advertisements recently set up along the main avenues in Lima<sup>30</sup>. One image had been produced by Bethel, a TV channel run by a Pentecostal church. This included a biblical message directed at men: “God says, you will not lay down with another man as [you do] with a woman; it’s an abomination”. The other image presented two men dressed in elegant clothes and showing affection for each other. The message here was: ‘#MoreLoveLessHate. Absolutely’; the ad was part of a publicity campaign aimed to support same sex marriage in Lima during 2018.

**Table 2. Images Pedro used at his 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class, on the topic of Tolerance**



Source: 1<sup>st</sup> Image taken from <https://www.conuestroperu.com/actualidad/miscelanea/42493-homosexual-pretende-prohibir-cita-de-la-biblia-contra-la-sodomia-en-panel#!/comment-comment=231742>. Access on October 2019. 2<sup>nd</sup> Image taken from <https://capital.pe/actualidad/fotos-paneles-publicitarios-a-favor-del-matrimonio-igualitario-invaden-las-calles-de-lima-noticia-1160192>. Access on October 2019. Pedro sent me both images through WhatsApp communication.

Pedro’s objective was to stimulate group discussion where students could reflect on tolerance and the right to Freedom of Speech. He wanted his students to critically analyse the conservative interpretations of these images. First, they would reflect on why the picture showing the gay couple had provoked conservative people, who demanded it be taken down on the grounds that it was inappropriate and would corrupt children. The students would then reflect on how the other image had been disseminated, using the arguments of Free Speech and of reproducing a biblical

<sup>30</sup> Pedro also used another image from a fundamentalist church, where a gay man was “transformed” into a heterosexual one as a consequence of the power of God or religion. Pedro, though, couldn’t find this image on Google after the interview -which is why I’m only using these two.



text. The discussion would allow students to question what society tolerates and why.

According to Pedro, the children were eager to discuss this topic and none of them thought of it as inappropriate for their class. However, the person most troubled by Pedro's session was a school teacher. Entering the classroom for the following session, she saw the images. Her response was to take a piece of paper and cover up the faces of the gay couple. Then the children started asking: 'Why are you covering them up?' Pedro said he smiled and told the children that his class was now over. He told his colleague they would talk about this later. "I know why she covered it" he said. Later in the interview he told me that this conflict did not escalate.

According to Pedro's account, he is engaged in a mission: "The children already see homosexual people, they already know about this, and I want them to see [homosexuality] as something normal". The group discussion he facilitated in the class points to this. He also recalled that before starting his class, he had heard the students shouting at each other, and using the term 'fag' as an insult. Pedro told me he also used to do this when he was young. Reflecting on his own experiences, Pedro wants his students to change their view of "homosexuality".

### ***7.2.2. Group discussions in class: connecting tolerance to resistance***

Brown (2006) argues that tolerance discourse can be seen as being integral to governmentality in Foucauldian terms. But it should be remembered that Foucault's theorization of power also includes resistance. As he states, they are both inherent in the other, "where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978:95). From this perspective, Brown (2006) undertakes a remarkable analysis but her work focuses on tolerance as enacted by rather privileged social groups, leaving little room for addressing tolerance as a discourse that provokes resistance or contestation.

Pedro's case illustrates how the liberal discourse of tolerance can be resisted in situations found in countries from the Global South. Pedro's resistance to this discourse can be seen at two levels. First, he contests the homophobic discourses displayed in the public space of the city through advertisements. Second, he contests the school's internal implicit rules that censor the expression of love among gay couples. Pedro positions himself in a different location from other teachers, like the one who covered up one of the images. In this sense, he is using his class to contest a situation of silence about these topics in schools, opening up the space for the classroom to become a learning community (hooks, 1994), where everyone can contribute by expressing their opinions.

Pedro is not talking about tolerance and the different ways it can be critically interpreted at a theoretical level. On the contrary, he takes his material from public space, and in this way, makes a connection between what students learn at school and their daily life experiences outside the classroom. Therefore, he is committed to an engaged pedagogy as described by hooks (1994).

When Pedro puts the two images together, he creates a dialogue between them. With this he demonstrates that it is possible to adopt different standpoints regarding gay people, and not accept a universal one. One image equates gays with being an abomination and constructs a border, as well as a hierarchy, between "heterosexual/homosexual" people. Furthermore, the advertisement re-produces a normalization of male heterosexuality, since its message is directed to an implicit heterosexual man. Heterosexuality then becomes "the universal" subjectivity (which the image talks to), while gays are presented as an object (who men should not lie down with). But this homophobic perspective is no longer an isolated or unquestioned one, since it is put in tension with another one, that is equally important, both in terms of the size of the image and its location on the class' board. Through this pedagogical experience, students are pressed to think critically about themselves (and their identities) in relation to their specific political circumstances (i.e. the hierarchization of heterosexuality over "homosexuality"). In this sense,

Pedro's pedagogical strategy concerning tolerance contests the use of this term as a depoliticization discourse. In particular, he is resisting what Brown (2006) warned concerning the liberal tolerance discourse: the presentation of the ones who tolerate as the universal subjects.

Additionally, the image of the gay couple contests—in Ludlow's (2004) terms—the message given by the first one. It does so, by a questioning and re-arranging the lines between what is considered public and private. According to other participants, such as Antonio, Violeta and Julio, children are not supposed to see gay couples kissing each other, since it could affect and confuse them. Pedro contests this. He takes gay affection and love experience out of the private sphere where conservative discourses of tolerance want to confine it, and re-locates it on a school board, an iconic public place where society displays what children should learn. Pedro thereby contests the erasure of gay bodies in the school, and this can be seen as a pedagogical strategy towards the radical consciousness of the body, in hooks' (1994) terms.

Furthermore, the image of the gay couple opens a way for students (whatever their sexuality) to build a commonality with the people represented there. The image connects gay affection with romance and love, feelings that most students might see themselves as capable of nurturing—at least later, and that are seen as socially positive and desirable feelings. The possibility of building commonalities between people regardless their sexuality during a class dedicated to tolerance, enriches Brown's (2006) perspective on tolerance as a political ethos that forsakes projects of community and connections across differences.

Finally, Pedro's class on tolerance can be seen as an example of an engaged pedagogy in one more respect. It had been inspired by both Pedro's and his students' experience when using sexualised words such as 'fag' to insult another person. As Violeta did in the previous case, Pedro decided not to turn a blind eye to this homophobic violence but to intervene in it through his choice of pedagogical

strategy. As he recounts during the interview, this cannot be detached from his own life experience.

Here it is important to note that Pedro sees himself as someone who has overcome his earlier position of belonging to both “conservative” and “more liberal” (in his words) groups of friends. Previously, he used to see himself as a “hypocrite” because he shared homophobic jokes with his conservative friends but would not do this when he was among his “more liberal” friends at the Institution where he studies, where additionally some of them were gay. Then he decided to stop making these kinds of jokes anywhere. Following Anzaldúa (1985), one can suggest that by belonging to both groups simultaneously, Pedro came to hold a *mestiza* perspective and this allowed him to render both cultures (or social groups in this case) transparent: “Getting to know gay people also has helped me to see how I can have friends who are narrow-minded or conservative, and friends who are a little bit more liberal”. Moreover, this experience that locates Pedro as a *mestiza* inhabiting a *Borderland* —in Anzaldúa (2012) terms— has become fundamental for him when experimenting with an engaged pedagogy.

## Chapter 8. Towards the building a Nos/Otras pedagogy

*This bridge we call home*  
(Title of one of Anzaldúa's book)

Chapter 7 discussed two pedagogical strategies with which participants are contesting the expected use of tolerance and respect in schools (described in Chapter 6). Both cases showed how some participants engage with pedagogies that contribute to a mutual recognition between straight and queer people, opening the door to the transcendence of the binary logic of a heterosexual *us* and a “homosexual” *them*. This chapter discusses further Anzaldúa's notion of Mestiza Consciousness and Nos/otras, by going deeper into other interviews' results where this transcendence can be shown.

### 8.1. A heterosexual *Us* versus a “homosexual” *Them*

During the interviews all participants would elaborate at different moments a discourse that recreates a social division between a heterosexual *us* and a “homosexual” (or LGTBIQ+) *them*<sup>31</sup>. Following Anzaldúa's notion of Nos/otras, the use of the pronouns “us” and “them” can be seen as identity markers that promote a division, a border that is not permeable between straight and queer individuals. Queer people, including gays and lesbians, disturb the frontiers that society builds in relation to sexuality and gender, and are then referred to by participants as *them*, locating these identities outside an imagined heterosexual community (of *us*). Here are some examples. All quotations are responses to the question: “What do you think students should learn about homosexuality at school?”

“[School] should teach the children that they are people, they are human beings, that they must be respected. Just like us, they also have rights” (Elena; my underlines)

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<sup>31</sup> Oscar would use “them” to refer to homosexual people before he would tell me he's gay.

“We could talk [in class] for instance about the couples, about their coital relations, ehmmm, to see that maybe they won’t be able to procreate, right?” (Antonio; my underlines)

“The most important is to explain why it is that they have a different attraction or orientation than someone that we might call ‘normal’ [with gestures of quotation marks]. Why is it that we as men are attracted to women, and why if they are men they are attracted to men?” (Pedro; my underlines).

The systematic use of the pronoun “them” to refer to “homosexual” people engages with something described before. It becomes useful to represent gays and lesbians as the other located outside of the school in space and time. They are defined as being outside the classroom, as Elena’s quote suggest. And being gay or lesbian, they belong among grown up people, since Antonio talks about procreation, an experience that the school expect students to have only after they have finished their basic education.

## **8.2. Glimpses of a Mestiza’s Consciousness that transcend the “heterosexual / homosexual” split**

In the case of Oscar, Pedro, and Elena, they also reproduced the division between straight and queer people through their use of pronouns “us” and “them”, in different parts of their interviews, but they also transcended this dichotomic way of thinking. Based on Anzaldua’s terms, these participants could also build a bridge between the collectivities “us” and “them”, thus making the split between nos/otras porous. This process of acquiring a new perspective can be interpreted as a development of a mestiza’s consciousness (Anzaldúa, 2012) in the participants.

### **8.2.1. Elena’s case**

In the case of Elena, the suicide of her gay school friend became a trigger to transcend the division between straight and queer people. As Anzaldúa states (2012), shocking or dramatic events can help mestizas to transcend ambiguity and

pain by opening up a new perspective: “you change your way of thinking” as Elena affirms. The death of her friend during her high-school years, who was someone she knew for years and would meet quite often, allows Elena to bring down—or at least question—the social frontier between gay and straight people. Especially, because this frontier was the cause of her friend’s death when he was only sixteen years old. Elena tells us: “[T]he kid chose to commit suicide because neither the mom, nor the teachers, nor his class mates would accept him”.

“Your way of thinking changes when you have someone who has suffered this. Because if you wouldn’t have [someone who suffered] or if it doesn’t happen to you, you would keep on thinking that it [homosexuality] is wrong (...) because it doesn’t happen to you. For instance, if you wouldn’t have someone going through this situation. Because if you would, you would change your way of thinking, you wouldn’t like your son or your friend to find closed doors everywhere, and that [they] wouldn’t give him/her<sup>32</sup> the same opportunities that you had” (Elena; my underlines).

Additionally, as the previous quotation suggests, the loss of her friend is not the only life experience present in the formation of Elena’s new perspective or mestiza’s consciousness. Motherhood also plays a role in creating this new way of thinking. Here it is worth stating that shortly before our first meeting, Elena saw her five-year-old daughter kissing another girl, and she expressed her worry about this. During the interview, she reflected on the possibility of having a lesbian daughter, and said: “A mom shouldn’t reject this. I have in mind my friend’s experience, what happened to him, I wouldn’t like my daughter to go through something similar (...) I wouldn’t turn my back on her (...) I would support her”. As in the case of the friend, the connection—the love—Elena feels for her daughter is fundamental in her statement.

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<sup>32</sup> Elena here uses the word “su” which doesn’t have a specific gender.

Elena no longer employs the term “them” to refer to her gay friends and she no longer uses the term “us” to refer to a heterosexual community. She transcends this border by speaking to a hypothetical interlocutor “you”, to actually explain what she feels and her new perspective regarding gay and lesbian people. A new community then is outlined, no longer based on sexuality but based on affection (love for her friend, love for her daughter). This affection or connection between the self (Elena) and the other (her friend, her daughter) is expressed by her use of the pronoun “you” and the verb “have”, as in this sentence: “Your way of thinking changes when you have someone who has suffered this”. Being gay or lesbian is no longer spoken of as something that “happens” to others, but as something that “happens” to “you”, that has an effect on you, regardless of if you identify yourself as a heterosexual person. Moreover, in the last sentence of this quote, Elena does use the pronoun “they” but she does this to refer to heterosexual people who continue seeing gay people as a not accepted identity. In this way, Elena establishes her new *location* regarding gay and lesbian identities.

### **8.2.2. Pedro’s case**

The case of Pedro is different to that of Elena, where transcendence of the dichotomy “us”/ “them” is built on the basis of her previous experience as a school student and as a mother. For him, it is based on his expected role as a teacher. In section 7.2.2. Pedro’s acquisition of a mestiza perspective was described. In addition, his mestiza consciousness can be seen in the fact that he is the only participant who equated being “homosexual” as something “natural”.

Pedro managed to transcend the dichotomy of a heterosexual *us* and “homosexual” *them* when we were talking about the possibility of having a gay student in his class. I asked him if he would seek help from the school psychologist if this were the case. He answered:

“If the psychologist will help him in some way I would agree [for student to consult with this professional] (...) Not to send them because they are sick, no, no. Or because he needs to be treated or healed, no. It’s not for that. It’s more that if the psychologist



can help him to understand the topic. I would have this intention, and I would welcome it if this will help us". (Pedro; my underlines)

For Pedro, being a teacher gives him the possibility of transcending the borders of straight/queer individuals and speak from a position of a new "us". Like in Elena's case, this "us" is no longer constructed on the basis of a perceived common sexuality but on the basis of a commonality resulting from the teacher-student relationship. It is also interesting to note that as the previous quotation suggests Pedro would also use the pronoun "them" to refer to hypothetical gay students, but his location in relation to the student changed to "us" immediately after describing (and distancing himself from) the rather conservative and medicalized view of psychologists "curing" "sick" gay people.

### ***8.2.3. Oscar and Pedro's case***

Oscar and Pedro are the two participants with the most progressive standpoints on gay and lesbian people. Most likely, their standpoints have been influenced by their friendship. Although LGTBIQ+ identities were not part of the official curriculum during their undergraduate education, Oscar and Pedro had conversations that opened the door for a mutual recognition between them, based on mutual trust, expression and listening.

Pedro told me he still felt the question of why human beings have different sexual orientations was unresolved. He recalls once asking Oscar "with respect" during a conversation: "Can you tell me since when are you gay?" And Oscar responded by saying that from what he recalled, he knew he was different from the age of three or four years-old. He told Pedro he was an effeminate boy and as he grew up, he started to feel attracted to boys. Additionally, during the interview, Oscar told me that at university as opposed to the school he felt much more comradeship: "they also asked me, they wanted to know. Pedro is one of them (...) And everyone knows me at the faculty, they know who I am".

hooks (1994) argues that when we hear each other speak and associate the other person's voice to his/her personal experience, the acknowledgement of each other becomes possible. The questions and the narration of experiences that in other contexts might have seemed invasive, were seen by Oscar and Pedro as an opportunity to connect with each other. Oscar shared who he is, and in this way allowed Pedro to listen to his story. Most likely, this nurtured Pedro's standpoint on gay and lesbian people in general. As he stated: "Having gay friends has helped me a lot in changing my perspective".

Therefore, for Oscar and Pedro, university became the place where an engaged pedagogy based on mutual recognition became possible, in spite of their teacher's lack of engagement in these issues during classes. In a similar way, Oscar and Pedro's experience can be seen as belonging to a *nos/otras* pedagogy, where the borders between "heterosexual/homosexual" people were tackled and commonalities could be mapped.

#### ***8.2.4. Glimpses of a Mestiza's Consciousness***

In this and the previous chapter it has been argued that Violeta, Oscar, Elena and Pedro have managed to develop a *mestiza* consciousness, and through that perspective transcend the us-versus-them mentality between straight and queer people. Given that they are teachers embarking on their careers, they hold out the possibility of building a *nos/otras* pedagogy that can transcend binary divisions of gender and sexuality.

However, at the same time, they also expressed opinions that might be interpreted as conservative: Oscar dislikes Pride Parades since he fears that they might work against the gay cause; Pedro says he does not feel fully comfortable with transgender people; Elena and Violeta think male effeminacy shows a lack of respect towards "environments". In this sense, the *mestiza* consciousness seems to be present as glimpses, as still coexisting with sediments of a perspective that would

disregard certain ways of being gay or lesbian, especially when gender borders fixed by cisnormativity are crossed.

This chapter and the previous one show how Violeta, Elena Oscar and Pedro are seeking to welcome gay and lesbian people in the school, yet at the same time they also tend to reproduce a homo-normativity. As Sedgwick (1991) explains, this arises when there is one more accepted way of being homosexual —being an “adult” (not a child) and a “masculine” gay; that is, being one that tends to follow cisnormativity. In this sense, these participants can be seen as *mestizas*, inhabiting *nepantla*, still sandwiched between two standpoints on sexual diversity, a more conservative and less conservative one.

## Chapter 9. Conclusions

Acknowledging the polarized current political context of Peru, where fundamentalist groups and the State have engaged in a political struggle over the inclusion of LGTBIQ+ identities in the school, this study has explored the meanings that students of pedagogy in Lima ascribe to tolerance and respect towards gay and lesbian people, and how these meanings inform their pedagogical practices. The study took a two-stage methodology grounded in standpoint theory, where focus groups and later individual interviews, paid special attention to participants' life experiences and embodied knowledge.

By doing so, this thesis has engaged in a dialogue with Brown's (2006) work on tolerance, where this term is seen as a discourse of power and depoliticization, that aims to regulate aversion towards the Other and forsakes projects of community and connections across differences. In this line, this thesis has argued that the way tolerance and respect are used by future teachers in a developing country like Peru can enrich a theory of tolerance developed within the Global North academy, which aims to explain a global use of tolerance discourse.

On the one hand, some participants' accounts confirm Brown's (2006) theory of tolerance discourse. In these cases, tolerance discourse contributes to the idea that gays and lesbians are outsiders—as located outside the school—, and undesirable identities who are unquestionably the target of homophobic school violence. Simultaneously, heterosexual people are seen as the normal, unaccountable and universal identities.

The analysis found that while tolerance discourse tends to be used under the premise that students are/will be heterosexuals, respect discourse is used when trainee teachers are confronted with the possibility of having gay or lesbian students or colleagues. That is, while tolerance is used to regulate an aversion that locates the Other as outsider, respect is used to regulate the coexistence of gay, lesbian and

heterosexual people in the same environment, like in the classroom or the school. In this context, the meanings ascribed to respect vary deeply according to the sexual orientation of the person. While for presumably heterosexual students this would be understood as ‘not to use violence’ against homosexual people, for gay and lesbian students it would mean ‘conceal your gender identity’, especially when cisgender borders are crossed. In this sense, what mostly troubles participants is not a non-normative sexuality (being homosexual) but a non-cisnormative gender expression (like an effeminate boy or an effeminate male teacher).

On the other hand, other participants’ accounts show that these previous meanings ascribed to tolerance and respect are also being contested. Moreover, this contestation manages to pervade the participants’ pedagogical practices, breaking down the equation between tolerance and aversion in the classroom. Through these pedagogical interventions, some participants are opening the door to allow the transcendence of the binary logic that divides “heterosexual/homosexual” people; and in this sense, they hold out the promise of social transformation that makes the slash that divides *Nos/otras* porous as Anzaldúa (2015) would argue.

In these pedagogical practices, tolerance and respect are used as an entrance or as key words to actually work with an engaged pedagogy, as described by hooks (1994), one that connects what is learnt at school with everyday life experiences, where homophobia can be contested. Through these pedagogical practices, homophobic actions of students or homophobic statements circulating in public space —exemplified by the advertisements in city streets— get to be analysed and worked through, and so become accountable. As a result, heterosexuality is no longer held out to be a universal/normal identity. Gay or lesbian embodied experiences —whether expressing affection/love or suffering homophobic bullying— get taken out of the private sphere where fundamentalist groups would like them to stay, to become an integral part of the public space that is the classroom. These two standpoints may coexist in a single individual. In this sense, participant accounts based on everyday life experience and embodied knowledge —coming for

instance from friendships or parenthood—, show that the meanings ascribed to tolerance and respect to gays and lesbians, are far from being fixed, and can indeed embrace ambiguity and operate in a “pluralistic mode”. In this sense, future teachers can be seen as Mestizas in Anzaldúa (2012) terms, as the ones who inhabit a Borderland (where physical or social borders are built, like the dichotomy of straight/queer), and as the ones who negotiate between two cultures or standpoints concerning gay and lesbian people, from a rather conservative one to a rather progressive one.

This study has also found that what most troubles the participants are identities that defy the rigid masculine/feminine gender binary. However, the study did pay special attention to male homosexuality and male effeminacy. And in this sense, based on Sedgwick (1991), this study suggests the existence of a homonormativity—where one way of being a male homosexual is normalized and more acceptable—that is being an adult and behaving in a masculine way— while other behaviours are marginalized. However, the experience of lesbians and of feminine masculinity became marginalized here, following a tendency that contributes to a historical invisibilization (Gimeno, 2003). In this sense, future research will hopefully contribute to the closure of this gap.

In her ground-breaking essay, *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*, Lorde (1983) invites us to think critically about the tools we use as scholars, and how they might contribute to reproduce patriarchal structures. She argues that “[the master's tools] may allow us to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 2003:27). Following Lorde's line of argument, this thesis has tried to show how some participants are using the master's tools (of tolerance and respect discourse) in order to beat homophobia and the “heterosexual/homosexual” dichotomy at its own game. It is most likely that new concepts and vocabularies (tools that no longer come from “the masters' house) will be needed to dismantle binary gender discourses that divide straight/queer people in educational settings and society. But in the meantime,

future teachers are grappling with their different life experiences and knowledge they possess. In a context where their undergraduate education has by passed the teaching of gender and of LGTBIQ+ identities in the school, trainee teachers seem to be pushing their own limits — “going against my own previous principles” as one said— in order to contest homophobia in their schools. Through this, they commit to an engaged pedagogy that struggles to transgress certain binary gendered social boundaries, and that looks for commonalities that can transcend the binary logic of a heterosexual *us* versus a “homosexual” *them*.

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## **Appendix 1. Interview guide**

*Underlined questions were prioritized, in order to have comparable results.*

### **First section**

1. What are the main reasons why you chose to study pedagogy?

### **Second section**

2. In your opinion, as future teacher, do you think it's pertinent to include the Gender Equality Approach in the schools? Why?
3. In your opinion, as future teacher, what should students learn about homosexuality in the school?
4. And as a future teacher, do you think you could incorporate the topic of homosexuality in your classes? How?
5. Imagine you are a working teacher already. Imagine that a student comes to you and tells you that he's thinking about his/her sexual orientation, that he knows he/she's homosexual. How would you react?  
Do you think he/she should manifest his/her homosexuality in the school?
6. And if a colleague comes to you in the school where you are working tells you that he or she is homosexual. How would you react?  
Do you think he/she should manifest his/her homosexuality in the school?
7. Have you heard the phrase "the gender ideology will homosexualize the students"? What do you think of it? In your opinion, can a student be homosexualized?

### **Third section**

8. It could be said then that you (do not) agree with schools talking about homosexuality. I'd like to talk about how did you come to have this opinion. Could you identify two important moments in your life that might had helped you to come to have that opinion?
9. When you were a school student, do you remember that homosexuality was something that your teachers taught about? (Explore inside and outside the classroom).

10. And here at the [Institute A/B], have you had any class where teachers would address the topic of gender and homosexuality?