A "GENTLE VIOLENCE"? : FORMER STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA IN BRITISH COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

Academics in a variety of disciplines are calling attention to bullying motivated by homophobia in high schools. Building on these efforts, this thesis provides an in-depth analysis of focus groups and interviews with 16 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, or queer (LGBTQQ) young people who recently left a British Columbia high school in which they believe they experienced homophobic or transphobic (HTP) bullying. The participants provide insight about the context of the bullying, the effects of those experiences, and discuss why they think HTP persists in high schools and how it can be addressed. Special attention is given to more positive experiences and outcomes. Drawing on Foucault and Bourdieu, the author argues for greater attention to less obvious, “gentle” forms of violence and suggests that school administrators take a more holistic approach to creating a positive environment for the LGBTQQ youth in their high schools.

Keywords: Homophobia; Transphobia; Bullying; High School

Subject Terms: Homophobia in schools – Canada; Homosexuality and education; Gender identity; Transsexual youth
This thesis is dedicated to the “co-creators” of this study, the participants who were brave enough to share their experiences with me and other queer youth and, through this thesis, with you. What began as my research project truly turned into “ours”. Thank you for sharing your stories and insights.
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Thank you to my “study buddies” (Telle, Meag, Mary, Chris, Shane, & Andrew) who fuelled many days and nights of productivity. To my partner, Joey, thanks for always believing in me and for “keeping me in the realm of sanity”. Also, to my family for loving and supporting me even when I am no longer in that realm.

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Brian, thank you for helping to construct the rose colour (or, as I like to see it, hot pink) frame through which I now view my experiences in graduate school. What could have been seen as a derailment became the scenic route as I was able to use the extra time in the program to work with you on various projects, opportunities most M.A. students don’t have. Your “Relationship George” advice will stick with me always.

Jacqueline, words can’t express the respect I have for you. Thank you for helping me feel in place; I couldn’t have made it through without you. You continue to inspire.
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# GLOSSARY

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<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Refers to an individual who is attracted to both men and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag</td>
<td>Dressing/acting as the other gender for theatrical effect (Stewart, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>A term adopted in the twentieth century by lesbians and gay men to refer to themselves (Stewart, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Variant</td>
<td>A synonym for transgender, used to describe people outside of the male/framework (Serano, 2007, 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderism</td>
<td>“The belief that there are, and should be, only two genders, and that one’s gender, or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to biological sex” (Trans Accessibility Project, n.d., section titled “Genderism”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>Rooted in queer theory, a term meant to disrupt the binary male/female gender framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>Prejudice or bias in favour of heterosexuality as the norm over homosexuality. Usually refers to carelessness or thoughtlessness or automatic assumptions about the heterosexuality of others. Often heterosexism is conceived of as a precondition for homophobia (Stewart, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobia</td>
<td>The fear or hatred of homosexuality, based on assumptions about the naturalness of privileging of heterosexuality. Usually used to describe discriminatory practices of actions against queer people (Stewart, 1995).</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lesbian

Taken from the name of the Island, Lesbos, that was home of the Greek Poet Sappho. Refers to women romantically interested in other women.

Outing

The practice of publicizing people's LGBTQ identity against their will (Stewart, 1995).

Queer

The term 'queer' is used to refer to any sexual or gender expressions or identities that do not conform to the heteronormative and either/or gender frameworks. The term was made popular through Queer theory, a relatively new branch of study emerging from feminist theories, gay and lesbian studies, and the work of constructionists like Judith Butler, Michael Foucault, and Eve Sedgwick (Klages, 1997, ¶ 1). Queer theory helps us to deconstruct and confound normative categories of sexuality and gender by “presenting experiences…that challenge such binaries” (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994, 452). For example, concepts such as homosexuality and heterosexuality are reconstructed as fluctuating performances and categories of knowledge (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994). In this sense, Queer theorists urge us to be open to the meaning and political role of identity categories (Seidman, 1996).

Transgenderism

An umbrella term referring to individuals who identify themselves along the continuum of gender, but not as male or female. Sometimes used specifically to refer to people who do not wish to have sex reassignment surgery (Thompson, 2004).

Transphobia

“[A] reaction of fear, loathing and discriminatory treatment of people whose gender identity or gender presentation (or perceived gender or gender identity) does not match in the socially accepted way, the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgendered people, intersexuels, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are typically the targets of transphobia.” (Trans Accessibility Project, n.d., section titled “Transphobia”)

Transsexual

A medical term used to describe an individual who undergoes hormonal and surgical procedures to appear as the other sex assigned to them at birth. A transsexual male (or FTM) refers to someone who “transitioned” from female to male and a transsexual female (or MTF) to someone who transitioned from male to female (Forde, 2006).

Two-Spirit

A term originally “used by North American Aboriginal societies to describe what Europeans now call Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered and Transsexual people” (Lerat, 2004, 6).
Introduction

By the time children have reached first grade, they have already compiled a significant amount of data about what it mean to be gay in a heterosexist society, even though much of what they have learned may well be incorrect, born of fear and prejudice rather than factual information. Schools are in a unique position to correct much of this misinformation at an early age before it ripens into anti-lesbian and gay prejudice and violence (Birden, 2005, 2).

I entered graduate studies in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University (SFU) to explore oppressive practices and how people respond to them. Specifically, I was interested in how queer1 people -- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or two-spirited (LGBTIQ) -- are seen as deviant by others and sometimes by themselves. I became familiar with the work of my Supervisors, Brian Burtch2 and Jacqueline Faubert3, who were interested in issues of gender and power, and we began to work together in this area of mutual interest. My graduate coursework focused on one way we learn acceptable expressions of sexuality or gender; namely, through our educational experiences. This initial focus was narrowed to bullying motivated by homophobia or transphobia, particularly in high schools, and the difficulties in developing a practical means to address them.

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1 The term 'queer' is used to refer to any sexual or gender expressions or identities that do not conform to the heteronormative and either/or gender frameworks. While this definition extends beyond lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, for the purpose of this paper, ‘queer’ will be used to represent these groups/individuals. The term was made popular through Queer theory, a relatively new branch of study emerging from feminist theories, gay and lesbian studies, and the work of constructionists like Judith Butler, Michael Foucault, and Eve Sedgwick (Klages, 1997, ¶ 1). Queer theory helps us to deconstruct and confound normative categories of sexuality and gender by “presenting experiences...that challenge such binaries” (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994, 452). For example, concepts such as homosexuality and heterosexuality are reconstructed as fluctuating performances and categories of knowledge (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1994). In this sense, Queer theorists urge us to be open to the meaning and political role of identity categories (Seidman, 1996).

2 Dr. Burtch is a Full Professor in the School of Criminology and an Associate Professor in the Women's Studies Department.

3 Dr. Jacqueline Faubert is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Criminology.
Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, theorists whose ideas help to sharpen the findings of this thesis, see schools as sites that produce and reproduce social hierarchies, including those related to sexuality and gender. For example, LGBTIQ identities are often denigrated and students who claim them may be subjected to bullying behaviours that reinforce the "boundaries" of proper gender and sexual identity. From these theorists’ works, it is apparent that educators and students have the potential to create an ethos of respect for queer people and perhaps to adopt a more radical, anti-oppressive approach in schools. El-Bushra (2000, 82) claims that the "...institutions which shape the formulation of destructive identities can also be employed to shape constructive ones".

Enabling students to construct positive sexual and gender identities requires that transphobia and homophobia be addressed in the thick of conflict in high schools. Taking homophobic and transphobic (HTP) bullying seriously involves an appreciation of their various manifestations and effects they have on queer youth as well as acknowledgement of how queer youth can resist these oppressive practices.

In the past decade increased attention has been given to bullying behaviours in schools. One needn’t look any further than the daily news to see reports of student “swarmings” or vicious, online bullying. School administrators and “experts” have devoted resources to enhance safe school policies and programs that have been implemented in the educational system (Walton, 2004). Recently, school administrators, politicians, and the public in Canada have acknowledged that homophobic and, to a lesser extent, transphobic bullying is a concern in schools.

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Sexual identity and sexual orientation are used synonymously to refer to romantic and/or sexual attractions to the same sex.
This thesis takes as its starting point that homophobic and transphobic harassment do happen in schools. In this exploratory study, 16 queer youth share retrospective accounts of experiences with HTP in British Columbia (B.C.) high schools. Their motivations for participating in this study were to increase visibility of queer youth in schools and to raise awareness about how even seemingly innocuous forms of HTP can manifest as a form of "gentle violence".

In keeping with feminist research principles, as espoused by Dorothy Smith (2005, 225), participants in this study are treated as experts of their own lives. As such, this thesis is a venue for their voices to be read and they are included throughout. Although I devised the research questions before convening the interviews and focus groups, the themes that emerged and recommendations made are a product of participants' experiences and the knowledge they shared with me. Of course, treating people as the experts of their own lives leaves open the possibility that they may conceal, distort, forget or dissemble their experiences, but at the very least it gives them a chance to reflect and to share ideas about how they feel HTP can be addressed.

The first Chapter of this thesis provides background information about homophobic and transphobic bullying in Canada. Some legal rights of queer and trans people in Canada are discussed as are some key legal cases pertaining to queer youth in schools. Research on homophobia and transphobia and their effects on students in Canada and the United States are reviewed. Finally, Foucault and Bourdieu's work is introduced to foreground concepts used in Chapter Four, the findings section.

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5 Bourdieu (2001) describes symbolic violence as "a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, mis-recognition), recognition, or even feeling" (1-2).
The methods used to conduct this exploratory research are outlined in Chapter Two. Studying youth and especially youth who identify with a marginalized identity (LGBTQQ) brought up several ethical considerations that helped to shape the study. The decision to use focus groups and consequent use of focus groups and interviews is explained. This Chapter also describes my sample and the difficulties in recruiting participants. The methods used to gather, organize, analyze and present my data are set out. Finally, the limitations section lays out the trials and tribulations of conducting this project so that researchers interested in similar studies can consider some obstacles and how best to deal with them.

Chapter Three presents research findings; the findings are divided into four major sections. First, participants share details about their experiences with HTP, such as what type of bullying they experienced and how frequently. More positive experiences—where the young people believed staff and/or classmates supported them—are highlighted in this section as well. Second, the youth share the short- and long-term effects, both positive and negative, of their experiences. Third, participants hypothesize about why they believe homophobic and transphobic sentiments and behaviours persist in high schools. Finally, they volunteers make recommendations for the reduction of HTP in high schools.

In the Fourth and final Chapter the theoretical work of Bourdieu and Foucault is reintroduced to frame the implications of the findings discussed in Chapter Three. This section emphasizes the importance of consulting youth in educational policies and programs and includes comments about further research in the area. Finally, the importance of addressing HTP in high schools is discussed in relation to the larger field of Criminology. This is small-scale exploratory study provides a glimpse into the experiences of some LGBTQQ youth in Canada. Their insights and recommendations, along with a review of the available literature on bullying and anti-bullying initiatives, can serve as a starting place for
school administrators, advocates and academics who seek to provide youth of all sexual and gender identities with an educational environment in which they can flourish.

A Word on Terminology

Definitions for the “queer vocabulary” used in this thesis are listed in the glossary at the beginning of this thesis. An early understanding of “homophobia” and “transphobia”, however, would be beneficial. According to the Routledge International Encyclopaedia of Queer Culture (Forde, 2006, 277), homophobia is “the fear or hatred of homosexuality” and is “based upon the assumption that homosexuality is unnatural or inferior to heterosexuality”.6 Remarkably, the same Encyclopedia does not include an entry on transphobia or gender bashing; Shelley (2008) notes how unfamiliar this term is in mainstream society. The Human Rights Office at Queen’s University (Trans Accessibility Project..., n.d., n.p.) has an excellent definition of transphobia, which they outline as:

... a reaction of fear, loathing and discriminatory treatment of people whose gender identity or gender presentation (or perceived gender or gender identity) does not match in the socially accepted way, the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgendered people, intersexuals, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are typically the targets of transphobia.

Several scholars (Shelley, 2008; Birden, 2005; Kitzinger, 1996; Redman, 2000; Plummer, 1981) have noted that using the term “phobia” to explain harassment of LGBTTQ people “suggests a causal explanation for the subjugation of trans [and queer] lives, the thesis that transpeople incite – by their very existence and presence – fear” (Shelley, 2008, 32, emphasis in original). The authors argue that this terminology implies that the denigration and harassment of queer people is the result of individual level, psychological

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6 According to Forde (2006, 277), “homophobia” was coined by “American psychotherapists George Weinberg and K.T. Smith” who noted colleagues’ belief that homosexuality could be cured.
impairments and this overlooks societal and institutional roots. Because of the widespread knowledge of the term *homophobia* and its association with harassment of queer people, it is a term I have chosen to use. Transphobia is also a common term used in the trans community and this led me to include it as well.

Distinguishing whether an interaction is evidence of transphobia or homophobia is difficult, especially in a high school environment where queer youth may not be “out”. Even where youth are “out” as LGBTTQ, it can be difficult to assess motivations behind their harassment given the proclivity to associate certain gendered behaviours and appearances with hetero- or homo- sexuality. People often make stereotypical assumptions about one’s sexuality based on gender expression. For example, females who engage in rough-and-tumble sports and who are outspoken are sometimes seen as masculine and perhaps as lesbians. Conversely, soft-spoken or artistically inclined males may be seen as effeminate and thus assumed to be gay. Gender plays a large role in what is often deemed homophobic harassment and these events are not just about sexual orientation; discomfort with gender non-conformity is likely a factor. To emphasize the importance of gender variance in incidents frequently labelled homophobic, the term *transphobia* is adopted in this thesis. “Transphobia” is used broadly and applied to situations where gender variance or gender non-conformity (terms adopted from Wyss, 2004) may have been an impetus for harassment. This was often the case for participants in this thesis.

Finally, I use the terms *bullying* and *harassment* interchangeably in this thesis. This project was not grounded in any preconceived definition of bullying which allowed participants conceptualisations of bullying to be explored in the discussions. As Walton (2006, 11-12) points out, most research on bullying relies on a “generic conceptualisation” that focus on “psychological motivations and the policing of behaviour, and thus do not
address negative perceptions of difference that underlie incidents of bullying”. For example, Olweus (1993a, 9), a scholar often cited in literature on bullying, defines bullying as “repeated negative action towards a student or students”. Negative actions include intentionally inflicting or attempting to inflict harm verbally or physically, or through social exclusion (Olweus, 1993a, 9). Walton (2006, 12), on the other hand, says that “the moments now widely known generically as bullying” reflect social anxieties about difference. Such conceptualisations, Walton (2006) contends, do not go far enough to acknowledge the normalness of bullying nor the normalizing effect bullying has on others. As a form of social control, bullying works not only to devalue certain behaviours or appearances, but specific identities as well.

Whether HTP behaviours are termed bullying or harassment, they are not just sporadic incidents perpetrated by one or two “bad apples”; HTP sentiments and their manifestations are the result of widespread heterosexism7 and rigid gender frameworks (or genderism) in society. Indeed, participants discussed how environments in educational institutions mirror those in larger society and contemplate how and if changes in British Columbia (B.C.) high schools could effect change in the larger environment. The following Chapter provides information maps some current issues and developments related to queer youth in B.C. schools and foregrounds the findings. Theoretical concepts of Bourdieu and Foucault are also outlined to frame the major themes of this exploratory study about experiences with HTP in B.C. high schools.

7 Heterosexism is the commonly held conception that heterosexuality is the only sexual identity that is normal and natural, while others are seen as deviant or perverse (Flowers & Buston, 2001)
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND, PREVIOUS RESEARCH & THEORETICAL GROUNDING

From a substantive point of view, the rights of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and queer people have been increasingly recognized in the past two decades. The same cannot be said, however, for trans-people at this point. Beginning in the 1980s, provinces in Canada began to include, or read, sexual orientation into their Human Rights Codes. In 1998, upholding an appeal in the *Vriend v. Alberta* case, Justice Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that sexual orientation should be read into an Act protecting individuals against discrimination in Alberta. This decision led other jurisdictions to add sexual orientation as a protected category in human rights legislation. More recently, in 2005 Canada became the fourth country to legalize same-sex marriage. Given that same-sex marriage is currently legal in Quebec was the first province to include sexual orientation as a category protected against discrimination in their Human Rights Code in 1977. Other provinces did not follow suit until almost a decade later.

9 *Vriend* was employed at a College in Alberta but his employment was terminated after he identified himself as homosexual. He filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission in Alberta which was rejected because sexual orientation was not a protected category against discrimination in the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act (IRPA). Dissatisfied with the lack of protection for himself and other queer people, he filed a motion in the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench to have sexual orientation included in the IRPA. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court of Canada where the Judge ruled that the omission of sexual orientation in the IRPA violated section 15 of the Charter and sexual orientation should be read in as a category protected against discrimination in several pieces of Alberta legislation. Consequently, sexual orientation was “read into” other Human Rights legislation in Canada where it was not already included as a ground worthy of protection against discrimination (*Vriend v. Alberta*, 1998).
in only six Countries worldwide\textsuperscript{10} and is outlawed in all but one State in the U.S., the move to legalize same-sex marriage in Canada has been heralded as a victory for the queer community. Despite this progressive legislation, a number of queer youth are still unable to safely hold hands with their partners while in or around their high schools. Legalization of same-sex marriage may have granted symbolic legitimacy to same-sex relationships, but it provides little protection for queer youth who enter into them.

Whether queer people, and especially queer youth, have benefited from legislative protections in their day-to-day lives seems not to be considered in discussion on such topics. Yet many of us seem to take the legalization of same-sex marriage, for example, as a sign of how queer people are well-treated in our society. On an exam for one of the Criminology classes I acted as a Teaching Assistant for, students were asked whether they believed heterosexuality is hegemonic\textsuperscript{11} in our society. The question was designed, in part, to determine whether the students had a handle on what the term “hegemony” means, but their answers were telling. Every student who argued that heterosexuality is no longer hegemonic (about 8 of 37) referred to the fact that same-sex marriage is now legal in Canada. That such equations are made is problematic since marriage is but one small segment of life and one that not every queer person desires to be a part of or is eligible for. Many queer people are against same-sex marriage, seeing it as a co-optation into heterosexual culture.

\textsuperscript{10} According to the Canadian website “Equal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples”, only six countries have legalized same-sex marriage in all of their states, territories or provinces. These are the Netherlands (legalized 2001), Belgium (legalized 2003), Spain (legalized 2005), Canada (legalized 2005), South Africa (legalized 2006) and Norway (legal 2009). In the U.S.A., same-sex marriage has been legalized in only Massachusetts (legalized 2004). Same sex marriage has been legalized twice in California but was vetoed by their current Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2005, and then in a public vote in 2008. This list does not include those regions that allow civil unions or Registered Domestic Partnerships, which are similar to marriage but often lack the same rights and benefits (Marriage equality, n.d.).

\textsuperscript{11} Gramsci (1971, 12) sees hegemony as “spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group”. In other words, hegemony helps explain why subordinate groups go along with and even participate in practices that are not in their own best interest and may even be detrimental to them (Artz & Murphy, 2000).
rather than an acceptance of other sexualities (Park, 2007; Rule, 2001). On this topic, Leung (2008, 100) argues:

Following the recent legalization of gay marriage in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Canada, the marriage issue has received intense global attention. The debates have been predominantly framed as either-or positions, assuming an automatic equation between queer interests and support for gay marriage. What has been largely eclipsed in mainstream debates is the complex discussion within queer communities, where objections to marriage are rooted in a critique of its normalizing effect and of its nonrecognition of sexual practices and affective alliances that fall outside of the parameters of monogamous spousal relations.

Aside from concerns about reinforcing hegemonic, monogamous relationships, same-sex marriage has other limitations. Some queer people are not eligible for marriage, even with its extension to same-sex partners. Youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer may not be immediately affected by changes to marriage laws. Legalization of same-sex marriage might secure future plans to marry and provide an opportunity for debate in classrooms, but this does not necessarily lead to equality or protection for queer youth while in schools. In fact, participants in this study indicated that debates about gay marriage took place despite a lack of protection of the rights of queer youth in their schools. Rather than reaffirming the rights and value of queer people, the debates often resulted in un-educated and homophobic comments that went unchallenged, at least on the part of school officials. In sum, even in what may be perceived as a liberal climate, reactions to homosexuality and gender variance in the day-to-day lives of queer people, and especially queer youth, are worth exploring.

Considering the multicultural climate of Canada, it is also wise to consider how LGBTTQ people are viewed around the world. Despite being a distinct nation, Canada does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Canada is home to people of various nationalities and cultures

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12 Jane Rule made similar arguments in a 2001 article titled *The Heterosexual Cage of Coupledom* and in the 2006 movie *Why Thee Wed?* (Garingan & Jacob, 2006).
who hold varied beliefs and values. According to Citizenship and Immigration of Canada (2007), more permanent residents, temporary foreign workers, and foreign students entered Canada in 2007 than ever before. Some immigrants travel to Canada from countries where what are seen as same-sex sexual behaviours (usually anal sex) are against the law. Tin’s introduction to The Dictionary of Homophobia (2008, 11) is quoted at length here to provide an overview of conceptions of homosexuality worldwide:

Truth be told, the twentieth century was, without a doubt, the most violently homophobic period in history: deportation to concentration camps under the Nazi regime, gulags in the Soviet Union, and blackmail and persecution in the United States during the Joseph McCarthy anti-communist era. For some, particularly in the western world, much of this seems very much part of the past. But quite often living conditions for gays, lesbians, and transgenders in today’s world remain very difficult. Homosexuality seems to be discriminated against everywhere: in at least seventy nations, homosexual acts are still illegal (e.g. Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Senegal) and in a good many of these, punishment can last more than ten years (India, Jamaica, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Syria). Sometimes the law dictates life imprisonment (Guyana and Uganda), and, in a dozen or so nations, the death penalty may be applied (Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan).

In a recent article in The Georgia Straight, Bryers (2008) noted that two Iranians were executed in 2007 for homosexuality. Clearly, the conditions Tin speaks of are not merely remnants of unenforced laws that have yet to be repealed.

Given the current climate queer people face throughout the world, I question the extent to which heterosexuality can cease to be hegemonic regardless of which national boundaries we are in. Extraordinary assumptions about the position of queer people in our society cannot be made without exploring the ordinary experiences of our everyday lives. These arguments are even more relevant in regards to the social standing of trans people in Canada.

Many of us assume that rights and protections awarded to LGBQ people are extended to trans people as well. Some trans people identify with a lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer sexuality and are legally protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation;
however, gender identity itself is not included in our National Human Rights legislation. In fact, the North West Territories is the only region in Canada with legislation against discrimination based on gender identity. In some cases, other jurisdictions allow complaints under the general “gender” or “sex” category of Human Rights Codes (Luhtanen, 2005). Legislation does not always translate into safety for people who the laws are designed to protect. The lack of legal protections for trans people, however, coupled with the widespread assumption that GLB rights are extended to transgender individuals may be contributing to the continued harassment trans people face in Canada (Janoff, 2005). Aside from legal protections, schools seem like a logical starting place to educate people about the natural occurrence of homosexuality and gender variance in our society. To date, school administrators and officials seem to balk at such suggestions. Why is this so?

There are various reasons for the lack of initiative to address homophobia and transphobia in schools. First, the biggest impediment may be the problem identification process in the educational system. Problem identification is a socially-constructed process involving various ‘claimsmakers’ who have a stake in the issue (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Identification and definitions of any problem are the result of competition, on behalf of these claimsmakers, for attention and resources that ensues in public and private forums (Dunn, 2004). In other words, as Gusfield (as cited in Dunn, 2004, 459) acknowledges, the recognition of a problem is “not determined by the prevalence, seriousness, or significance of the issue, but by the power and influence of its spokespersons”. In the case of HTP bullying in schools, it is clear that those most affected (LGBTTQ youth) may not hold much clout in public or private venues where these debates take place (although they do hold some sway, as will be discussed later). Consequently, the identification of homophobic and
transphobic bullying as an issue worthy of attention has been dependent on community activists, parents, government officials, and school administrators.

Second, it can be argued that a majority of the stakeholders acting on behalf of students prefer to address bullying in general, rather than to specifically identify and attend to homophobic and transphobic bullying (Walton, 2004). Some educators and parents may see HTP bullying as inappropriate subject matter for the educational system because of the association with homosexuality (and sexuality in general) (Pascoe, 2007). Discussions about homosexuality invoke strong feelings in some and the topic becomes exceptionally contentious in the context of schooling, where discussions of sexuality are often stifled. As Birden (2005, 2) says:

... public education... has been placed in the unenviable position of serving the dichotomous and often mutually exclusive roles of preserving traditional values while promulgating desirable social evolution. ... When issues regarding lesbian and gay people surface in the context of schools, a host of players emerge who attempt to influence school policy by galvanizing public opinion and influencing legislative action. Often, however, sexual diversity issues never get as far as public debate. School-teachers and administrators routinely avoid such conflicts by conflating gay and lesbian identity with 'talk about sex' and labelling both 'age-inappropriate'.

Third, and related to the second point, many people assume that high schools are comprised of student-bodies whose sexualities do not yet exist and whose gender identities are fixed. Combined with the assumption that homophobia only affects those who identify with a homo-sexual orientation, the perceived asexuality of students justifies the decision not to address HTP bullying (Youdell, 2004). Although these assumptions still prevail, they have also been challenged. This trend is pronounced in British Columbia (B.C.), which is important for the context of this study on experiences with HTP in B.C. high schools. Several Human Rights Tribunal decisions have held members of school boards and public
servants in the Ministry of Education responsible for providing an educational environment that reflects and respects the diversity of the Canadian population.

In 1997, the most publicized queer “book banning” in a Canadian school occurred in Surrey, B.C. (Warner, 2002, 339). James Chamberlain, an elementary school teacher, requested permission from the Surrey School District 36 to use three books depicting same-sex families to teach his kindergarten and grade one students about diversity and tolerance. Under pressure from parents and various conservative and religious groups, School Board members refused this request, instigating a lengthy Human Rights complaint that culminated at the Supreme Court of Canada. In finding the “Board’s decision not to approve the proposed books depicting same-sex parented families… unreasonable” (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002, 43), the Right Honourable Beverly McLachlin stated:

Exposure to some cognitive dissonance is arguably necessary if children are to be taught what tolerance itself involves… the demand for tolerance cannot be interpreted as the demand to approve of another person’s beliefs or practices. When we ask people to be tolerant of others, we do not ask them to abandon their personal convictions. We merely ask them to respect the rights, values and ways of being of those who may not share those convictions.... Learning about tolerance is therefore learning that other people’s entitlement to respect from us does not depend on whether their views accord with our own. Children cannot learn this unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36, 2002, ¶66).

In the ruling, in which two Judges dissented, the Judges directed the members of the School Board to reconsider their decision to ban the books, taking into consideration the guiding principles of “tolerance and non-sectarianism underlying the School Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 412” (Pegura et al. v. School District No. 36, 2003, ¶3). That the School Act was referred to, and not the Charter of Freedom and Rights, is remarkable. A reference to the Charter
would likely have had more persuasive power than suggesting that School Board trustees consider guiding principles of tolerance.\textsuperscript{13}

Also in B.C., in 1999, Peter and Murray Corren\textsuperscript{14}, then Peter Cook and Murray Warren, filed a complaint with the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal (BCHRT). In the complaint they accused the Ministry of Education of systemic discrimination against “non-heterosexual students and their parents” for excluding same-sex parents, sexual orientation, and gender identity from the curriculum (\textit{Corren and Corren v. B.C.}, 2005, 2). The Correns argued that the silence surrounding same-sex relationships in the curriculum bred an atmosphere of ignorance and intolerance towards sexual minorities (School system accused of same-sex discrimination, 2005) and that schools were ill-equipped to deal with the homophobic and transphobic bullying that results from such oversights (\textit{Corren and Corren v. B.C.}, 2005, 2).

Before the 2006 trial began the Correns reached an agreement (often referred to as “the Corren agreement”) with the provincial government whereby authorities agreed to review the current curriculum for inclusiveness. The agreement also gave the couple an “unprecedented right to have direct input into the content of the whole of the British Columbia school curriculum so as to make it more inclusive of and responsive to the queer community and its history and culture” (Murray and Peter Corren Foundation, n.d., n.p.). Following up on the agreement, in June 2006 the B.C. Attorney General announced an

\textsuperscript{13} This case was highly controversial and led to a second Human Rights case on behalf of Carol Pegura and Kim Forster, lesbian Mothers who believed they were exposed to a “poisonous environment” during the School Board meetings to debate the banning of the books. An undisclosed settlement was reached before the case went to the Tribunal hearing. The Surrey School Board has since said that they have changed their policies for public forums (\textit{Pegura and Forster v. School District No. 36 (No. 3)}, 2004).

\textsuperscript{14} The preponderance of cases promoting human rights for LGBTQ people in B.C. might be partially due to political activity in Vancouver, which tends to be viewed as a progressive city when it comes to queer rights. It can also be partly attributed to activists like the Correns who have instigated and funded several Human Rights challenges involving adoption, marriage and school curriculum.
elective course for grade 12 students focusing on social justice issues, including sexual orientation. Two years later, controversy about “Social Justice 12” persists as at least one district has opted not to offer the course in their schools. 15

Concerns about homophobic bullying in B.C., and Canadian schools in general, came to the forefront in 2003, when Azmi Jubran placed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission in British Columbia. Jubran was subjected to constant taunting and bullying behaviours throughout his time in a North Vancouver high school. In a decision that eventually went to the Supreme Court of B.C., Judges found that Jubran was discriminated against on the basis of his perceived sexual orientation. In his 2005 ruling, Justice Stewart stated that the homophobic harassment was harmful and violated the Charter because it was directed at someone perceived to be gay (Jubran did not identify as gay)(GALE BC, n.d.). Justice Stewart found that Jubran’s dignity and full participation in school were denied and placed blame on the North Vancouver school board for the discrimination through their failure to provide a harassment-free environment.

This landmark case sent a strong message to educational administrators that merely reprimanding students for discriminatory actions was inadequate. Justice Stewart demanded that the School Board provide a clear statement of conduct regarding homophobic bullying and ensure that it is communicated to all students. He also ruled that school staff should be provided with appropriate training and resources to prevent discrimination and harassment from occurring (The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, 2005). Jubran was awarded $4500 in damages and the School Board was ordered to cover his legal costs (GALE BC, n.d.).

15 An estimated 70 students protested in front of their Abbotsford high school after learning they would not be able to take the Social Justice course (Aldritt, 2008).
These court and tribunal decisions illustrate a growing concern on behalf of LGBTTQ advocates and judiciaries to promote inclusiveness, respect for, and the safety of queer people in schools. They also illustrate the increasing recognition of the legal, and perhaps moral, responsibility of school officials to address homophobic and transphobic harassment in schools. Legal and financial ramifications provide school administrators with an impetus to at least appear as though they are taking action, even if many of their constituents disagree with anti-homophobia and transphobia efforts.\textsuperscript{16} Recently, there have been several initiatives in Canadian educational systems to provide a safer environment for queer youth and many of these have been in B.C.

In 2003, the British Columbia Safe School Task Force released a report regarding bullying, harassment and intimidation in schools. In the report, bullying based on one's sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation) was recognized as a significant problem in British Columbia schools. The Task Force urged School Board officials to adopt policies and programs congruent with “values and categories” detailed in the B.C. Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Gilbert, 2004; Mayencourt, Locke, & McMahon, 2003).

Sexual orientation and gender identity do not explicitly appear in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Nevertheless, in the 1995 case of \textit{Egan} and \textit{Nesbit v Canada}, a judge decided that sexual orientation was an “analogous ground to other characteristics of persons” covered in s. 15 (Grace, 2005, n.p.). In other words, sexual orientation, and arguably, gender identity should be read into the existing legislation. In addition, the B.C. Human Rights Code specifically outlines the rights to protections against discrimination that

\textsuperscript{16} For example, in 2006, citing concern for the well-being of queer youth, Judges in the Supreme Court of B.C. upheld the B.C. Teachers Federation (B.C.T.F.) decision to suspend Chris Kempling’s teaching license for a month after he made anti-gay sentiments in a local paper (\textit{Kempling v. British Columbia College of Teachers}, 2005).
should be afforded to sexual minorities (Human Rights Code, 1996). Since the Safe School report, School Boards in the Southeast Kootenays, Victoria, Vancouver, the Gulf Islands, North Vancouver, Prince Rupert, and Revelstoke have adopted policies that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (GALE BC, n.d.).

With the growing recognition of homophobia in B.C. high schools there has been a surge in literature documenting the experiences of queer youth. Since the inception of this thesis project, several studies have emerged documenting experiences with and discussing homophobia in Canadian high schools; yet, there is a dearth of literature on trans youth. The following section outlines the most current research on youth experiences with homophobic bullying in B.C., Canada, and North America; due to the lack of research on transphobic bullying, however, literature is drawn mostly from a broader North American context.

The literature detailing the effects of such experiences represents domestic and international research. While queer youth are not homogenous, many researchers do not delineate between various identity categories when reporting on the effects of HTP on youth. The literature does not necessarily reflect the intricacies or unique experiences of, for example, trans or bisexual youth have. Still, what is included provides a general overview of the recent findings. Following a review of the existing literature on HTP bullying, this

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17 It is difficult to determine the actual number of queer youth in B.C. Using the 2003 Adolescent Health Survey, Gilbert (2004) cites that 2.5% of grade 7-12 students identified as bisexual or homosexual amounting to 7830 young people province-wide. He states that this figure is probably lower than the actual number of LGBTQ youth due to fear of disclosure.

18 There has been research on homophobia in Australia (Martin, 1996), New Zealand (Nairn & Smith, 2003), the United Kingdom (see, for example Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Warwick, Chase, & Aggleton, 2004; Buston & Hart, 2001), South Africa (Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003) and other regions of the World. Because this study focused on B.C., I chose to limit the literature in this section to a North American context.

19 Elze (2005) notes differences among sexual minority youth; for example, she cites several authors who have found that bisexual youth are at a higher risk of poor school outcomes, some forms of abuse, risky sexual behaviours and criminality.
section provides a brief introduction to Foucault and Bourdieu whose works help to frame the findings of this thesis in Chapter Four.

**Literature on Homophobic Bullying**

Research and literature on homosexuality has burgeoned in the past 50 years, but research documenting the lives of queer youth has only become more common in the past two decades. Savin-Williams (1990, 9) cites the earliest research on gay youth as a study conducted in 1972 by Roesler and Deisher. The study was designed to “assist physicians and counsellors who might want to intervene in the lives of prehomosexual boys”. Indeed, much of the early research on queer individuals was the product of medical fields focussing on the homosexual (and male) body itself. More recently, however, health and social science researchers in Canada have been exploring how others’ opinions and beliefs about homosexuality can affect the queer individual.

In 2008, advocates with Egale Canada, along with Dr. Catherine Taylor at the University of Winnipeg, launched the first National Climate Survey on homophobia in Canadian high schools (see www.climatesurvey.ca for more details). This ongoing study is designed to measure how supportive Canadian students feel their schools are of homosexuality. It is the first to examine homophobia in schools beyond provincial boundaries. The study met with controversy in some areas, with school board officials declining to participate or even promote the survey in their jurisdictions (Catholic Schools Reject, 2008). At best, these refusals underscore continuing anxieties about discussing homosexuality and transgenderism in schools; at worst, they are a testament to the enduring presence of homophobia and transphobia within educational institutions.
With a total sample number of 1200 youth thus far, results from the first phase of the Egale study show that over two-thirds of queer youth feel unsafe in their schools, compared to one in five straight students (Egale Canada, 2008). Almost half of queer youth in that sample reported having been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and about one-third had hurtful rumours spread about them by electronic means. In addition, over one quarter had been physically assaulted (Egale Canada, 2008).

Regionally, a small amount of quantitative data has been generated. Researchers at the University of British Columbia published results from a quantitative study looking at experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (or unsure) youth in 18 B.C. high schools. In that sample, lesbian and gay youth reported significantly higher levels of verbal, physical and social harassment than did their heterosexual peers (Darwich, 2008). The McCreary Centre Society in B.C. has also published several studies on queer, high school aged youth. In the most recent B.C. Adolescent Health Survey, researchers found that over 60 percent of high school aged youth who identified as gay or lesbian and about 50 percent of bisexuals reported verbal harassment from their peers (Saewyc, Poon Wang, Homma, Smith, McCreary Centre Society, 2007). Meanwhile, 29 percent of heterosexual males and 37 percent reported the same. Similarly, in his pioneering exploration of the extent and nature of anti-lesbian/gay violence, in the Greater Vancouver area, Samis found that 61 percent of the 327 queer people who responded to the specific question pertaining to verbal harassment said they had experienced homophobic slurs while at school (Samis, 1995, 80). The youth in the McCreary Centre sample were almost twice as likely as heterosexual peers to experience purposeful exclusion (54% of gay and lesbian youth, 46% bisexual vs. 30% heterosexual) (Saewyc et al., 2007).
Studies like that compare the rates of victimization across sexual orientation are useful for determining whether queer youth are targeted more so than their heterosexual peers. In addition, Darwich (2008) and Saewyc and colleagues (2007) are better able to identify trends related to gender and sexuality. For example, gay males in the McCreary Centre sample were more likely to experience physical violence than lesbians or bisexual females. The disparity between levels of physical violence reported between heterosexual youth and queer youth, however, was largest for lesbians and bisexual females. It may be that males experience more violence in general, but lesbians and bisexual females experience violence based on their sexual orientation. Such hypotheses cannot be made when looking at a sample only comprised of queer youth.

Looking at other regions in Canada, in Saskatchewan, Cochrane and Morrison (2008) found that 52% of the 54 high school aged youth in their sample reported frequently hearing words like “fag”, “dyke”, “homo”, or “lezzie” in their schools. In Ontario-based studies of young gay men (Smith, 1998) and lesbians (Khayatt, 1994), participants reported that homophobic speech was a common occurrence in their high schools. In addition, George Smith (1998, 320) reported that the gay, male youth he spoke to frequently encountered homophobic graffiti such as “kill the faggot”. Farther East Arsenault (2000) reported that the three lesbians she spoke with in Nova Scotia believed they had to make themselves invisible to ensure their safety. In that study, Arsenault (2000) asserted, “silence has surrounded the experiences of lesbians in the public school system. The presence of homophobia and heterosexism in this system has strengthened the silence, rendering lesbians invisible” (1).

In the U.S., the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) produce reports documenting the experiences of queer students from grades Kindergarten to twelve.
In the most recent study, released this year, the researchers with that Network found that 9 out of 10 youth reported hearing “gay” used in a negative context, the majority of whom said that they were bothered by such use (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

As George Smith (1998, 320) asserts, the “logical conclusion” of more subtle forms of antigay abuse is violence, and research indicates that physical forms of homophobic harassment persist. Compared to their heterosexual counterparts, twice as many bisexual male (13% vs 28%) and four times as many bisexual females and lesbians (5% vs 20% and 19% respectively) in the latest McCreary Centre sample said that peers at school had physically assaulted them in the year preceding the survey (Saewyc et al., 2007). Also in Canada, Samis (1995) found that approximately 20 percent of the lesbians and gay men in his sample were physically attacked at school (22.4% of 303 respondents). Unfortunately, these Canadian studies fail to include any definition of what exactly physical harassment includes, an oversight that has been addressed in some literature in the U.S.

Perhaps because of Canada’s reputation for tolerance, or simply a lack of research in the area here, studies conducted in the U.S. indicate that high school bullying motivated by gender or sexual identity is more prevalent than levels reported by Canadian researchers (see, for example, Stepp, 2003; Douglas, Warwick, Kemp, Whitty, & Aggleton, 1999; D’Augelli, 1998). In their nationwide U.S. study for the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2008, 20) found that almost half of the youth in their sample were physically harassed (pushed or shoved) due to their sexual orientation and 22% were punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon. It is no wonder, then, that more than 60% of the youth in their sample felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008, 25).
Research shows that heterosexual students may also be subject to harassment motivated by gender or sexual identity in schools. Authors researching bullying behaviours in schools argue that heterosexual youth who fail to conform to “hegemonic understandings of masculinity and femininity” (Valentine, Butler, & Skelton, 2001, 121) are subject to homo- and trans-phobic harassment (Pascoe, 2007; Blumenfeld, 1993). For example, in the 1993 Adolescent Health Survey, researchers at the McCreary Centre in B.C. found that 4% of male students and 3% of female students (of various sexual identities) believed they were discriminated against or harassed based on their perceived sexual orientation (as cited in Gilbert, 2004). While these statistics illustrate that homophobic harassment can be directed towards any student, they also provide evidence that individuals who identify as LGBTIQ are targeted more often than heterosexual students who are perceived as gay or lesbian.

Despite a growing literature on homophobia in schools, there has been little done to learn more about transphobia. In her work on “gendered harassment”, Meyer (2008, 8) discusses how stereotypes equating homosexuality with gender inversion cause people who fail to conform to traditional gender norms⁰ to be labelled gay or lesbian. She emphasizes the importance of investigating harassment “for behavior that transcends narrow gender norms... separately so as not to further confuse existing misconceptions of gender identity and expression with sexual orientation” (Meyer, 7). Although harassment based on gender identity and harassment based on sexual orientation are related, they are not the same. Reactions termed “homophobic” are often meant as “punishment” (Lombardi, Wilchins, 20).

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⁰ Walton (2006, 127) describes gender norms as the “usual notions about how boys, girls, men, and women should act, think, and appear in dress and manner in accordance with social, cultural, and economic contexts”.

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Priesling, & Malouf, 2001, 91) for behaviours that violate traditional gender norms. Still, there has been little emphasis on gender, and specifically trans-genders, in the literature and discourse surrounding bullying. The following sections outline some research that has been done on this topic in North America.

**Literature on Transphobic Bullying**

The threat of violence toward transgendered persons, particularly transgendered youth who must attend community schools, is made all the more powerful by the fact that they do not have to do anything to receive the violence. *It is their lives alone that precipitate such action.* Therefore, transpersons always have a sense of safety which is fragile and tenuous and they may never feel completely secure. ... for the transgendered person such insecurity is an adaptive strategy for living in a hostile environment (Mallon, 1999a, 11, italics added).

As Mallon (1999a) notes, many trans youth feel unsafe in their schools and other environments. Due to these insecurities, and perhaps because trans people are often perceived as gay or lesbian when young, data about harassment against young trans people are almost non-existent (Elze, 2005). Much of the literature on trans youth is relegated to clinical fields that portray trans people as pathological and in need of treatment, or focuses on sex reassignment (Leung, 2008; Wyss, 2004; Mallon, 1999a, Burgess, 1999). In addition, harassment of youth who fail to conform to gender norms is often attributed to biases against non-heterosexual identities rather than alternative gender expressions per se (Mallon, 1999b). Researchers with Human Rights Watch (Bochenek & Widney, 2001, in section on “Transgender Youth”) point out, “[i]f gay and lesbian people have achieved some modicum

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21 Lombardi et al. (2001, 91) use the term “gender fundamentalism” to refer to the passive, and sometimes overt atmosphere in our society where people feel it is permissible to punish those who are guilty of gender transgressions.
of acceptance in the United States over the past several decades, transgender people remain misunderstood at best and vilified at worst”.

In his essay on internal and external stressors and queer youth, Burgess (1999, 35) concludes that trans youth are “among the most neglected, misunderstood groups in our society today”. He asserts that adolescence may be an especially challenging time for trans people because changes associated with puberty, which often coincide with greater demands for gender conformity, can heighten feelings of confusion and isolation. Sometimes trans youth feel repelled by or ashamed of developing sexual characteristics, which can lead to attempts to remove unwanted sex-organs (cutting or beating oneself) and hormone or steroid abuse (Burgess, 1999, 43).

Youth who identify as transgender and who wish to transition to ‘the other’ gender may be more vulnerable to discipline of their bodies due to their limited resources and inability to afford surgery to transition should that be a desire (Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, 2006). Those who decide to go through the transition process are also subject to a waiting period of one to two years (Shelley, 2008). In the meantime, trans youth often present an identity that is less likely to pass, and consequently are more likely to experience harassment. In addition, many aspects of high school emphasize gender differences (for example, gender-segregated gym classes, school dances) and highlight differences between trans youth and gender conforming peers (Burgess, 1999). Mallon (1999b, 58) says, “schools… are among the least affirming environments of all for gender variant children”.

There are no human rights cases in Canada involving youth who identify as transgender, and little research focussing specifically on the ‘T’ in the LGBT population. Due to this lack of information on Canadian trans- and gender variant youth, it’s difficult to ascertain the levels of harassment against them. In a qualitative study, Shelley (2008) asked
20 trans adults in the Greater Vancouver district of British Columbia (B.C.) about their experiences in educational settings. Some reported dropping out of high school, in part due to the bullying they endured. For example, Jamie-Lee said:

I was teased because I was a very slight, effeminate boy. You know, there was the name calling and that kind of stuff … I dropped out in grade ten [and it was] … definitely due to the gender issues (Shelley, 2008, 88).

Those who stayed in high school reported verbal and physical abuse. Although the interviews were not designed to determine the frequency of transphobia in high schools on a large scale, Shelley’s exploratory study helps to illustrate what some trans people experienced.

The bulk of the research documenting discrimination and violence against trans people in North America has been conducted in the U.S.. For example, researchers at the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) have focussed more on gender identity in recent School Climate Surveys than in the past. In their report on the latest national survey measuring safety levels in high school, the authors found that trans youth “reported higher levels of victimization than all other students” (Kosciw et al., 2008, 59). More than 66% of youth in their sample reported verbal harassment in school related to their gender expression (Kosciw et al, 2008, 30). Negative comments were made by both students and teachers and were most often directed at males who were not “masculine enough” (Kosciw et al., 2008). In addition, almost one-quarter of youth were pushed or shoved and 14% were outright physically assaulted (i.e. punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) due to their gender expression. In total, 38% of the youth in this sample reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender expression.

Other research in the U.S. seems to confirm that trans youth are not only victimized more often, but may experience more severe forms of victimization. In New York,
researchers interviewed and surveyed 8 trans youth who were frequently harassed by classmates and teachers attempting to enforce what they saw as gender-appropriate behaviour. The young people were told to “stop acting like a girl” and even called faggots and sissies by their own teachers (Bochenek & Widney, 2001). In another study, Wyss (2004, 716-717) found that 23 of their 24 young trans and genderqueer participants from throughout the U.S. experienced some degree of victimization in high school, eleven of whom experienced physical violence or sexual assaults. These experiences ranged from being pushed, shoved and smacked to being raped or set on fire (Wyss, 2004). A research team from Philadelphia reported that 83% of the 24 trans youth they spoke with had experienced “physical abuse and torment” at school, including “being followed, pushed, shoved, punched, and beaten; having objects thrown at them, and in some cases, being assaulted with weapons” (Sausa, 2005, 19).

The available literature on violence against trans people in general suggests that harassment meted out in schools continues later on in life. Researchers with the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) have published two important studies documenting experiences of trans people in the U.S. In the first, Lomardi, Wilchins, Priesing, and Malouf (2001, 95) found that nearly 60 percent of the 402 trans people (of any age) in their nationwide sample reported experiencing some form of harassment or violence based on their gender expression and forty-seven percent had been physically assaulted. Most important, the researchers found that younger people in their sample were more likely to experience violence than older people and are often “scorned, attacked and locked or thrown out of their homes” (Lombardri et al., 2001, 98).

In 2006, the GenderPAC released a report called 50 Under 30 documenting the murders of 50 trans people under the age of 30 from 1995-2005. The authors concluded that
if gender identity were included as a hate crime in the U.S., murders based on gender non-conformity would be second only to hate crimes based on race (Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, 2006, 2). The researchers estimate that on average five trans youth were murdered in the U.S. per year from 1995 to 2005 (a total of 50); sixteen of the victims were teenagers; the youngest victim was only 15. Biological males, youth of colour, and those who were in poverty were most likely to be victimized (Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, 2006).

Trans activist and scholar Susan Stryker has drawn attention to the over-representation of biologically male trans victims in crime statistics. At a conference in 1999, she argued that that 2 percent of the violence reported by trans people is aimed at transmen (female to male) while an astonishing 98 percent is reported by transwomen (male to female) (as cited in Denike, Renshaw, & Rowe, 2003). It should be noted, however, that researchers in the United Kingdom found that trans men (female to male) in their sample were more likely to report having experienced transphobic harassment while in high school than trans women (male to female) (Whittle, Turner, & Al-Alami, 2007). The gender of the attacker is also important: all known perpetrators in the GenderPAC study were males who attacked biological males close to their own age (Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, 2006, 5).

Previous research shows, then, as this thesis will also illustrate, that it is important to acknowledge gender non-conformity as a distinct form of harassment, but also to note the gender of those involved when examining and addressing transphobic bullying.

In sum, extant research provides evidence that gender non-conforming youth may experience harassment at higher rates than some of their queer counterparts (Messerschmidt, 2007; Varjas, Mahan, Meyers, Birkbichler, & Dew, 2007; Bochenek & Widney, 2001; Namaste, 1996). Even so, there is little research documenting the effects of HTP on trans youth specifically and even less research documenting positive experiences of these young
people in school. While there have been a number of quantitative studies dedicated to homophobic bullying in schools (Egale Canada, 2008, Kosciw et al., 2008), very little qualitative research has been dedicated to understanding the effects that HTP harassment has on students, especially in a Canadian context. Only recently have protective factors, like adult support (Darwich, 2008), LGBT school support groups (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006), and the general resilience of LGBT youth (Savin-Williams, 2001) been examined. The literature that we have provides a heartbreaking glimpse at the negative outcomes of some youth who fail to pass\textsuperscript{22} (Buston & Hart, 2001; Flowers & Buston, 2001; Plummer, 2001; Wyss, 2004). The following section outlines some of the effects HTP has on queer youth.

**Effects of Homophobia and Transphobia in Schools**

One's reputation, whether false or true, cannot be hammered, hammered, hammered, into one's head without doing something to one's character (Meyer & Dean, 1998, 160).

As Meyer & Dean (1998) note in the above quotation, due to the pervasiveness of homo- and trans-phobias (HTP), many youth internalize negative attitudes towards gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, two-spirit, and transgender individuals before they begin to appreciate their own sexuality. This internalization is detrimental to everyone but for youth who eventually identify as LGBTTQ, it has the potential to gravely affect their self-worth. Flowers and Buston (2001) claim that most adolescents who are minorities (for example, ethnic minorities) can reduce distress through support from their families and peers. The

\textsuperscript{22} *Passing* is a term that can be used to describe members of a group (i.e. sexual or gender identity) who attempt to present themselves as another (Monette, 2004) (originally published in 1992).
minority status of LGBTTQ youth is not so obvious and is often not shared with family or friends. In fact, queer youth who choose to identify themselves as LGBTTQ may be shunned by the people closest to them (Kitts, 2005). Consequently, youth harassed because of their real or perceived sexual or gender identities frequently remain silent, failing to report the harassment they experience and its effects.

Dorias and Lajeunesse (2004, 87) contend that some LGBTTQ youth who have strong social support and who are “inclined to challenge the established social order and related beliefs may find the motivation to fight when faced with discriminations and related injustices”. Bullied youth, however, are more likely to socially withdraw and report feelings of isolation (Shelley, 2008; Bochenek & Widney, 2001). In addition, feeling unsafe in their school environment leads some queer youth to perform poorly academically and sometimes to stop attending school activities altogether (Darwich, 2008; Bochenek & Widney, 2001; D'Augelli, 1998). In 2008 GLSEN reported that more than 30% of the queer youth they surveyed had skipped school in the prior month because they felt unsafe in the school environment compared to only 5% of heterosexual youth (Kosciw et al., 2008, 26). In one study out of Philadelphia, 3 out of 4 trans youth reported dropping out and most attributed this to the harassment they faced (Sausa, 2005, 19). Negative effects, like poor academic performance, can worsen the already stigmatized identities of LGBTTQ youth and increase the likelihood that they will suffer from depression and low self-esteem (Saewyc et al., 2007; Wyss, 2004; Bochenek & Widney, 2001; Burgess, 1999; Radowsky & Siegel, 1997). Goffman uses Sullivan's work to explain how this stigmatization process leads to self-deprecation:

The awareness of inferiority means that one is unable to keep out of consciousness the formulation of some chronic feeling of the worst sort of insecurity... The fear that others can disrespect a person because of something he shows means that he is always insecure in his contact with other people; and this insecurity arises... from something which he knows he cannot fix. Now that represents an almost fatal deficiency of the self-system, since the self is unable to disguise or exclude a definite
formulation that read, ‘I am inferior. Therefore people will dislike me and I cannot be secure with them’ (as cited in Goffman, 1963, 13).

Queer youth adopt various means of dealing with what Sullivan terms insecurities brought on by experiencing HTP. They may engage in a number of harmful and risk-taking behaviours including substance abuse 23 (Buston & Hart, 2001; Henning-Stout, James, & Macintosh, 2000; Pazos 1999; DiPlacido, 1998) and unsafe sexual practices that lead to sexually transmitted infections (STI’s), including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (Healthy People, 2001; Bochenek & Widney, 2001).

For some youth, risky sexual behaviours may be a result of sexual education programs in schools “that do not address the needs... or seem relevant to [the] social contexts” of LGBTTQ youth (Healthy People, 2001, 127). Radkowsky and Siegel (1997, 196) posit that some youth put themselves at risk of contracting STI’s because they “do not care enough about their own well-being to practice safer sex”. Certainly, low self-worth may help explain why queer youth report higher rates of pregnancy (and of getting someone pregnant) than heterosexual people of the same age; queer youth may also engage in unprotected intercourse with the “other” sex as a means of proving one’s hetero-sexuality (Saewyc et al., 2007; Radowsky & Siegel, 1997).

Other queer youth may be at high risk for STI’s because they have been forced out of their homes (Kitts, 2005; Bochenek & Widney, 2001; Burgess, 1999; Klein 1999; D’Augelli, 1998; Radowsky & Siegel, 1997). With few resources, some street-involved youth find themselves trading sex for food, shelter, or money (Trans Youth, 2003; Healthy People,

23 Lampinen, McGhee, and Martin (2006, 25) reported that gay and bisexual youth they surveyed in Vancouver and Victoria were “at a greatly increased risk for reporting use of crystal methamphetamine, ecstasy, and ketamine...”.

31
Researchers at Human Rights Watch (Bochenek & Widney, 2001) report that 6 percent of the youth served by agencies for young people who runaway, are homeless, or who are in other high-risk situations identified as gay or lesbian. Yet, they note that this figure “certainly underestimates the proportion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals in the street youth population” (Bochenek & Widney, 2001, n.p.). In larger U.S. cities, researchers cite numbers as high as 40 percent of young homeless people identifying as LGB (Birden, 2005; Bochenek & Widney, 2001).

In B.C., researchers at the McCreary Centre Society report that one in three females and one in ten of the street-involved youth they surveyed identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (Smith, Saewyc, Albert, MacKay, Northcott, & the McCreary Centre Society, 2007). The researchers note that compared to the distribution of sexual orientation in the youth in their sample, “there are a disproportionate number of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth who become street-involved or in other ways disenfranchised” and the number seems to be increasing (Smith et al., 2007, 15). Other consequences of HTP harassment may include denial of one’s sexual or gender identity, contempt for other minorities (including other LGBTQ individuals) and for oneself.

DiPlacido (1998, 147) says that many queer youth internalise negative messages about queer people and, realizing they differ from social norms, internalise homophobia and transphobia. Internalized homophobia and transphobia, DiPlacido (1998, 147) argues, “can range from self-doubt to overt-self hatred” and can lead to depression, self-mutilation, eating disorders and attempts at taking one’s own life (see Dorais & Lajeunesse, 2004 for a synopsis of existing literature on young gay men and suicide).

Homo- and trans-phobic messages communicated in schools can lead LGBTQ youth to believe that their lives are worthless and expendable. Saewyc and her colleagues
(2007) claim that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in Canada and queer youth are overrepresented among those who attempt to and successfully take their own lives. In a recent province-wide study in B.C., Saewyc et al. (2007, 31) reported that LGB youth in their sample were “significantly more likely to report suicidal thoughts in the past year compared to heterosexual peers”. In addition, queer youth attempted suicide at a rate of up to 5 times as often as heterosexual youth (Saewyc et al., 2007). In an earlier study, researchers at The McCreary Centre Society found that nearly half of the 77 lesbian and gay youth they surveyed in B.C. had attempted suicide, with the average age of attempt being thirteen (The McCreary Centre Society, 1999). Media reports and academic discussions of the suicides of Jamie Lazarre, an 18-year old student from Prince George and Hamed Nastoh, a 14-year old grade-eight student in Surrey, depict homophobic bullying as influential in their decision to end their lives.

As early as 1983, researchers outside of Canada started to notice that young people who were gender variant were at higher risk of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts compared to gender conforming peers (Harry, 1983; McFarland, 1998 offers an overview of research since 1983 that has come to the same conclusion). In his meta-analysis of research on suicide and queer youth, Kitts (2005, 623-624) reports that “[m]ore than 15 different studies conducted within the last 20 years have consistently show[n] significantly higher rates of suicide attempts”, with queer youth attempting suicide at twice the rate of heterosexual peers. Researchers suggest that LGBTTQ individuals constitute approximately one-third of all youth suicides (Buston & Hart, 2001; D’Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 2001; O’Connor, 1995). That figure does not include numerous unsuccessful attempts- by nearly half of all LGBTTQ youth- to end their own lives (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2006; Wyss, 2004; Olweus, 1993a). Remafedi, Farrow, and Deisher (1991) report that gay
and lesbian youth not only attempt to commit suicide more frequently than “straight” adolescents, but that those attempts are more lethal. One U.S. based study postulates that suicide is the leading cause of death among queer youth (Gibson, 1989).

Some researchers have found, however, that youth who have social support are significantly less likely to think about suicide (Rutter, 2007; Saewyc, Wang, Chittenden, Murphy, & The McCreary Centre Society, 2006), echoing an assertion made by Durkheim (1951) more than fifty years ago. In his groundbreaking study on suicide, Durkheim (1951) found that people who were not well integrated in society were at a higher risk of suicide than those who had support and guidance. Thus, as O'Connor declares in regards to queer youth who are not supported:

The voices of [LGBTTQ] adolescents may have been silenced, but these youth are screaming out in other ways to be heard, notably through suicide. It is a situation that cannot be tolerated, and it is time to open the door to the “classroom closet” and begin to debate in earnest (O'Connor, 1995, p. 8).

Current literature documenting harassment in schools motivated by perceived sexual or gender identities should be credited for opening the “classroom closet” by raising awareness about the issue. It is time, however, that researchers expand their focus beyond obtaining statistics and narratives that depict students as helpless victims and, instead, speak with young people and encourage dialogue that provides insight about the antecedents of homophobia and transphobia. This type of research would enable educational administrators to take informed action to reduce harassment motivated by perceived sexual or gender identity and to enhance the quality (and quantity) of the lives of youth in school. It would also allow researchers and other stakeholders to appreciate how individuals come to terms with their own identities, including sexualities, and positive aspects of this coming-of-age process generally.
Theoretical Background: Giving Voice to ‘Silent Violence’

The background knowledge provided by the literature review in this Chapter and a previously conducted pilot study allowed me to devise some working hypotheses, to explore some ‘hunches’ about what I might find and do some early inductive theorizing. For example, in the pilot study with undergraduates, students indicated that subtle forms of homophobia and transphobia were far more prevalent than physical manifestations of bullying in their high schools. The students also indicated that males were more likely to be targets, as well as perpetrators, of HTP bullying. Such information allowed me to start thinking early on about theories and concepts that could help to make sense of the findings from this research.

As the research for this thesis progressed, themes of oppression, normalization and resistance emerged. In reading some of the works of Bourdieu and Foucault, these themes emerged as well. I found Bourdieu and Foucault’s concepts useful for exploring power relations in general, and more specifically, how power serves to regulate and subvert expressions of gender and sexuality. In addition, the theorists’ emphasis on researching power relations from a “bottom-up” perspective (Middleton, 1998) made them especially compatible with the thesis methodology. That they find significance in everyday experiences aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of Smith’s (2005) Institutional Ethnography. Foucault and Bourdieu’s concepts “fit” with the data, but also with the theories informing the data collection process itself.

Normalization is used to refer to encouragement of self-discipline and persuasion to behave in ways aligned with dominant norms.
Bourdieu and Foucault produced complex, demanding bodies of work. I make no claim to include a comprehensive, authoritative outline of the writings of these theorists. Instead, a few of their more developed concepts are presented to complement the empirical work of this thesis and generate discussions about new ways of thinking about HTP bullying and how best to respond to it. This section provides a very brief introduction to Foucault and Bourdieu’s conceptions of power and power relations which will be used to ground the findings later in this thesis.

**Bourdieu and Foucault: A Brief Introduction**

Bourdieu and Foucault were French philosophers whose works have remained influential since they became popular during the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Hoy, 2004). Although neither scholar aligned themselves with any specific theoretical camp, they can be classified as critical theorists and have been labelled as post-structuralist, neostructuralist and post-modern thinkers (Hoy, 2004; Swartz, 1997). Other critical thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Maurice Merleau-Ponty were heavily influential in their thinking (Hoy, 2004). The theorists focus on power, social relations and social structures, including institutions. Yet, their thinking differs in various ways; for example, Bourdieu is more focused on “persistence and continuity...” in power relations and social norms whereas Foucault highlights the “transience and discontinuity...” of the same things (Hoy, 1999, 4). Bourdieu emphasizes the stability of learned behaviours more so than Foucault, who seems to leave more room for agency and change (Hoy, 1999). In other ways, the authors are aligned.

Bourdieu and Foucault encourage us to be aware of social hierarchies that many of us take for granted. They concentrate on how disparate power relations are often accepted
by those who occupy less valued positions in social space. For example, in discussing surveillance techniques implemented in the penal system during the 1800s, Foucault (1977, 303) urges researchers to ask: “how were people made to accept the power to punish, or quite simply, when punished, tolerate doing so?” Bourdieu focuses on “how stratified social systems of hierarchy and domination persist and reproduce intergenerationally without powerful resistance and without the conscious recognition of their members” (Swartz, 1997, 6). He refers to this phenomenon, in which social classifications and hierarchies are so easily reproduced, as the “paradox of doxa” (Bourdieu 2001, 1). A key part of this thesis is to answer similar questions.

Using the works of Foucault and Bourdieu and relying on participants’ conjectures, I hope to contribute to understandings about homophobic and transphobic harassment in high schools. One way to do this is to explore what exactly is happening in terms of types of bullying, but also the power relations at work. This thesis explores the extent to which queer youth and other members of high schools “consciously recognize” the hierarchies that are being enforced. Also noted is whether the form that HTP harassment takes factors into such acknowledgements. Answering these questions necessarily involves an exploration of power relations that work to perpetuate norms and hierarchies through social interactions, including those that are homophobic or transphobic. As such, an understanding of Foucault and Bourdieu’s views on power and socialization is useful from the beginning.

25 In the prelude to Bourdieu’s Masculine Domination (2001, 1), Richard Nice describes doxa as “the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices...”. The term originated in the work of Greek theorists who used it to mean opinion based on quasi-knowledge (Parmenides, Plato) or judgment: “that could be otherwise” (Aristotle) (Peters, 1967, 40).
Foucault and Bourdieu: Power, Discipline and Socialization

Due to their focus on everyday interactions, Bourdieu and Foucault have been described as taking micro approaches to explain power relations. For example, in discussing his conception of power, Foucault (1980, 39) says:

But in thinking of the mechanics of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.

Bourdieu also focuses on where power "inserts itself into" (Foucault, 1980, 39) an individual's actions and attitudes, giving special attention to its effects on our dispositions and beliefs. As the theorists see it, power relations are a part of all social interactions, even though this is not often readily apparent.

According to Foucault and Bourdieu, social interactions inherently involve power relations and teach us dominant norms, or what Bourdieu terms "the cultural arbitrary". Norms govern our behaviour, including those related to sexuality and gender. When internalized, these norms are often perceived as natural inclinations. They are reproduced, however, consciously and unconsciously as we regulate the behaviour of others as well as ourselves. Our tendency to take these norms for granted may well legitimize power relations. Consequently, we sometimes overlook the social and historical conditions that have created them (Editor's Introduction, Bourdieu, 1991, 5).

Applying their theories about power and socialization to this thesis, Bourdieu and Foucault see norms relating to sexuality and gender as social constructs, a product of socialization rather than nature or natural proclivities. Homophobic and transphobic bullying, as forms of power and discipline, function as lessons (often referred to as the
hidden curriculum), teaching us which behaviours and associated identities are valued and which are not. To avoid negative responses (or HTP harassment, the manifestations of which are laid out in Chapter Four), youth learn to enact those behaviours and adopt those identities that are valued. As outlined earlier in this Chapter, however, many queer youth choose silence, inaction or even death over engagement in gendered and sexually normative performances.

Far from being natural, then, our behaviours when it comes to sexuality and gender expression “are caught up in and moulded by the forms of power and inequality which are pervasive features of societies…” (Editor’s Introduction, Bourdieu, 1991, 2). Homophobic and transphobic bullying are not natural reactions to unnatural sexual inclinations or gender expressions. Sexual and gender norms are themselves social constructs that are taught and reinforced throughout the socialization process. As Bourdieu says, “the body is in the social world... but the social world is in the body” (Bourdieu, 2000, 152).

This critical approach contrasts with structural-functionalist theoretical precepts whereby societal norms and values are widely shared among people. Structural functionalists see norms as serving a unifying function for society. In this framework, citizens follow social and legal rules because it helps to reduce conflict and improve the overall efficiency of society. Social conflict is recognized by functionalists, then, but to a lesser extent than with critical theorists. Critical theorists see social norms as the product of an ongoing struggle between various groups to impose and enforce definitions of normalcy. Dominant norms,
reflect the values and definitions of the stakeholders who hold the most power in any given field\textsuperscript{26} (or social context) and are reproduced through socialization.

Bourdieu and Foucault see socialization, or the internalization of norms, as a diffuse process that cannot be attributed to one person or institution\textsuperscript{27} in particular. Both authors, however, identify educational institutions as key sites that impart social norms. Bourdieu and Foucault's conceptions of power, and the role that educational institutions play in producing and perpetuating social norms, inform the rest of this thesis as they are views that I share and that I believe are supported by the findings. After outlining the methods used and findings, Bourdieu and Foucault's ideas will help to frame the implications and overall themes that emerged from this research project on homophobia and transphobia in Canadian high schools.

\textsuperscript{26} Bourdieu describes the social context in which power relations play out as \textit{fields} that limit what one can or cannot do. Fields serve as "sites of struggles" where people can work to preserve or change the status quo (Editor's Introduction, Bourdieu, 1991, 14, emphasis in original).

\textsuperscript{27} Foucault and Bourdieu used the term 'institution' to refer not only to organizations but also to "any relatively durable set of social relations which \textit{endows} individuals with power, status, and resources of various kinds" (Editor's Introduction, Bourdieu, 1991, 8, emphasis in original).
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODS - IF AT FIRST
YOU DON’T SUCCEED...

...research with sexual minorities is particularly sensitive because of the specific laws which frame (or until recently have framed) homosexuality and because of the way in which children are popularly constructed as asexual or innocent (Valentine, Butler, & Skelton, 2001, 119).

As I reflect on the process of developing this exploratory research project, Valentine and her colleagues’ (2001) observation about obstacles for researchers studying queer youth rings true. Academics often face many difficulties when conducting research that combines the public area of schooling with what is often deemed a very private, if not strictly off-limits, subject of young adult sexuality. Using their research with gay and lesbian youth as an example, Valentine et al. (2001, 119) discuss how “common methodological and ethical dilemmas… can become more complex and significant when the research involves work with a vulnerable group”. In my own study, focussed on a combination of groups who are often perceived as vulnerable (young people and LGBTTQ individuals), it was essential that the research design be well thought out to ensure the safety and anonymity of participants.

Ensuring that the research method is appropriate for the desired study requires that the topic, target population, purpose and ethical issues be taken into consideration in each step of the process (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). As budding social scientists, graduate students acquire knowledge about a number of techniques that can be used to examine various research questions; each has its own strengths and weaknesses that the researcher must take into consideration when determining which they should choose. In many situations there is
no right or wrong answer, only a “best fit” for the question they seek to answer.\textsuperscript{28} Using the metaphor of a handy-woman might help make this point more clear.\textsuperscript{29}

A handy-woman approaches every job (research question) with an arsenal of tools (research methods) in her tool belt. While she still has some discretion, the nature of each job helps her determine what kind of tool she should use. For example, to hang a picture she could use a hammer or a screwdriver, but she would not use a wrench. Likewise, in the research world the questions one wishes to address steer the researcher towards certain research methods.

Concerns about the possible sensitive nature of this research topic and the sometimes marginalized population I wished to study guided my decisions about which ‘tools’ I would use for this project. Researchers often find it difficult to gain access to both the venues and the population needed to conduct a study on bullying motivated by gender or sexual identity in educational institutions (Valentine et al., 2001). These concerns and the ethical guidelines laid out in Section 7 of Simon Fraser’s University Ethics policy were important in the design of this minimal-risk research project (Simon Fraser University, 1992). The following section describes some of these ethical considerations as well as comments on sampling difficulties that influenced the research design. These factors affected decisions about the research methods, sampling methods, safeguards for confidentiality along with how the findings are presented.

\textsuperscript{28} Chenail (1997) calls such an alignment “keeping things plumb”. He says researchers need to “plumb up” by having a “basic and simple reason for doing a study; something like a… mission question for the project, by which you can keep track to see if you are beginning to drift from your line of inquiry of if you are staying on course with your research” (Chenail, 1997, p. 9).

\textsuperscript{29} This analogy was provided by Dr. Jacqueline Faubert.
Doing “the Right” Thing: Ethical Considerations in this Research

Statistical research out of the U.S. (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008) and now in Canada (Egale Canada, 2008) offers a glimpse into some of the contextual factors of HTP bullying, including factors like who and how many people are involved, how often harassment takes place, where it is likely to occur, and through which forms it manifests. To date, however, there has been an acute shortage of research exploring the factors that lead to and characterize homophobic and transphobic harassment in Canadian high schools. This study seeks to close the gap in research by starting from the assumption that HTP does happen in high schools and seeks to explore experiences with these forms of harassment. Qualitative studies, which allow for in-depth questioning and probing, are well-suited for exploring social phenomenon. Adopting these methods over quantitative analyses, which provide a less detailed overview of the area of inquiry, was an easy decision. When choosing a specific qualitative method to gather information, however, ethical considerations became very important.

Direct observation in a high school setting would be an effective way to chronicle how heterosexuality and mainstream gender norms are reinforced in schools. This approach could yield important insights about interactions in classrooms and school settings. Nevertheless, this type of research can be problematic. First, when aware of the researchers’ presence, participants may change their behaviours from their normal routine to gain the approval of the observer (Silverman, 2005). On the other hand, covertly observing individuals has the potential to raise a number of ethical issues for the researcher. One could question how ethical it is to deceive research participants as a means of learning about them. It is also likely that most people would feel a need to intervene in scenarios where someone
is being harmed. In fact, researchers are ethically required to report any actions or interactions that are illegal or that threaten the personal safety of any individual. Identifying as a (somewhat) young queer person myself, I doubted my ability to silently stand by and observe while other queer youth were denigrated. Finally, the general “confusion and anxiety about homosexuality” in our culture makes proposing a school-based study regarding homosexuality or transgenderism especially problematic and “raises concerns about accessibility” for researchers (Donelson & Rogers, 2004, 131).

High schools are commonly regarded as public spaces in which discussions of private matters (including sexual or gender identity) should be formally off-limits (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). Elaborating on this public/private distinction, some parents, students and members of the general public may argue against inclusion of queer people and the issues they face in the curriculum claiming that such discussions would undermine the values they teach at home; however, excluding entire segments of the population infringes upon others values and beliefs as well. Thus far, many educational institutions have privileged a value system based on homophobic and transphobic attitudes to avoid conflicts that may ensue by explicitly acknowledging the normalcy, or even, existence of sexual minorities.

Some adults believe that discussing homosexuality in school will encourage children to experiment sexually, and that silence then, will discourage homosexual behaviour (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993). There is no evidence, however, that discussing sexuality and acknowledging various sexual identities encourages youth to ‘change’ their sexual identity (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993). Any perceived increase in the number of youth who identify themselves as queer is a result of feeling comfortable enough to assert their identity. Similarly, when homosexuality and transgenderism are shrouded in secrecy there
may appear to be fewer young people who are LGBTQ, but this perception is a consequence of an environment where youth feel unsafe to outwardly identify as queer. The ongoing debate over sex education classes underscores how many parents object to classroom instruction about mainstream sexuality and reproduction, let alone more open discussion of queer sexual and gender identities (Allen, 2005; Atkinson, 2002; Hatchell, 2002; McKay, 1999).

For residents of British Columbia, debates over the public/private distinction were central to a recent Surrey School board decision to ban three books depicting families with same-sex parents in their schools (Collins, 2006) (see Chapter One for more detail). The controversy surrounding this case is a testament to how divided and yet vested interests are when it comes to public education. Knowing that ethical clearance may be a problem due to the debates outlined above, and to address other ethical dilemmas, I chose to speak with queer youth who had recently left high school about their retrospective experiences with harassment based on sexual or gender identity in the school setting.

Recruiting participants who were former high school students helped reduce some of the negative impacts associated with discussing ongoing harassment with students currently enrolled in school. For example, students who are currently experiencing serious bullying may disclose information about ongoing harms or, in some cases, criminal offenses affecting themselves or others. In such instances, as would be the case with observation (discussed earlier), ethics would obligate me to violate any confidentiality agreement by reporting the information to appropriate authorities. I also hoped that retrospective accounts would minimize the amount of psychological distress caused to participants.

Regardless of the time that has passed since the harassment, recounting those experiences may be distressing for research participants. I believed that encouraging young
adults who were no longer in high school to talk about past experiences would be less traumatic than asking individuals who were still in the thick of things to share their stories of continuing harassment. To minimize the memory decay that is part of retrospective accounts, I recruited volunteers who had been out of high school for less than 5 years. Olweus (1992b) found that retrospective accounts of bullying were accurate in participants up to seven years after the events. It is hoped, then, that recruiting participants who had been out of high school for 5 years would result in the same accuracy. In fact, most participants in this study had been out of high school for less than five years.

Finally, all participants selected for the focus group discussions were 19 years of age or older. Younger people who would require parental consent to participate were not included due to concerns that only youth who were “out” to their parents (and perhaps others) would volunteer (Varjas et al., 2007). Conversely, it would be inappropriate to require young people who were not “out” to their parents to ask them for permission to participate in a study on HTP bullying. This age stipulation was listed as a criterion for participation in advertisements for the study and on consent forms. Participants were asked to confirm their age during the recruitment process and at the commencement of each interview or focus group by “checking off” all of the eligibility requirements they met from a list. If volunteers did not meet all of these requirements, they were not invited to participate. No one who showed up to a focus group was ineligible.

As noted earlier, direct observation is one method I considered to gather information for this study. The ethical ramifications and possible difficulties conducting such a study, however, were far too overwhelming. Aware of these potential difficulties, another option was to facilitate private, one-on-one interviews with former students who were bullied because of their sexual or gender identity. After deliberating on various approaches, I
was drawn to the idea of group discussions for the opportunity to compare and contrast experiences with HTP while still gaining meaningful information that could be gleaned from one-to-one interviews.

Group interactions allow participants to compare their experiences with others, highlighting similarities and differences. In this study, participants' reflections on these points of intersection and divergence encouraged a more thoughtful dialogue than may have been offered in an interview setting. The group setting played an important role in participants' definitions of HTP bullying and in identification of which forms did or did not warrant attention (discussed in Chapter Three). Despite their varying experiences and definitions, participants seemed to develop a connection with others in the group through their mere identification as a LGBTTQ person who had been bullied in high school.30 Overall, the focus groups proved extremely valuable for conducting research with a small number of people and talking about what can be a sensitive issue.

Finally, although this also related to the research procedure, ethical considerations factored into the location and setting of the focus group discussions. Qualitative interviews are usually carried out at a place of convenience for participants. Conducting interviews in the homes of participants can be convenient or even essential for certain volunteers, but in the current study I believed that this might not be the case. Valentine, Butler, & Skelton (2001, 122) explain that “[w]hile the home is usually reified as a private space, in practice it is a space where young people are under the constant surveillance of other family members...”. For participants who were not ‘out’ to family members or others they lived

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30 In the first full group discussion, the participants stayed long after having completed the questionnaire, wanting to talk and spend time with each other. Even as everyone sat in silence and I packed up my materials, the group members lingered. Only after my repeated reassurance that they would be seeing the results once the study was complete, and thus they would still be a part of the project, did they move on.
with this “constant surveillance” would not be conducive to an open discussion about experiences with homophobia or transphobia. Following the recommendations of Valentine et al. (2001, 122), I looked for community centres that were public enough to provide some anonymity and booked rooms that were secluded enough to provide privacy for the discussions. A local library, community centre, and a University Campus housed in a busy business and shopping Centre served as anonymous and private locations. I was confident that holding discussions in “venues within the lesbian and gay scene” would be inappropriate considering some of the participants may not be comfortable entering such a publicly queer space (Valentine et al., 122). Along with the desire to find a private space to carry out my research, I was also very concerned with protecting the confidentiality of volunteers. The next section on ethics procedures outlines the steps I took to address these concerns.

**High School Confidential**: Ethics Procedures

Palys and Lowman (2000, 41) maintain, “researchers have a special ethical obligation to protect the privacy of research participants”. This obligation is paramount when undertaking a study about topics such as sexual or gender identity (or any facet of identity for that matter) and harassment. Before commencing this study, the Board of Ethics at Simon Fraser University approved my research and deemed it to be “minimal risk” (see Ethics page at beginning of this thesis). The nature of focus groups makes it difficult to guarantee anonymity; however, stringent steps were taken to assure the confidentiality of all participants. For example, at the beginning of each discussion group, participants were asked

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31 “High School Confidential” has served as the title of various movies, television programs, books and songs. Notably, *Queer as Folk*, a television program on Showcase Network that focuses on the lives of five gay men in Pittsburgh, included a song with the aforementioned title. The song lyrics, written by Carol Pope, are about a schoolboy crush on another boy.
to respect the privacy of others by agreeing to not disclose any one else's identities or information they shared. In addition, participants were reminded that they did not have to divulge any information (including their names) they were not comfortable with. Finally, any information that could identify the participant has either been left out of the thesis or altered. The following Chapter provides a more detailed description of the research procedures used to conduct this study.

Who needs Yoga? Flexibility & Research Procedures

Design in qualitative research is not... a discrete stage which is concluded early in the life of a study: it is a continuing process which calls for constant review of decisions and approaches (Lewis, 2003, 47).

When it came to actually recruiting volunteers for the study and facilitating small discussion groups, Lewis' (2003) words of warning about the unpredictable nature of qualitative research should have been my new mantra. Like many graduate students preparing for a research project, I soon learned that the seemingly well thought out plan for timely completion of the study would not be tenable. Aside from the Pride Society grant, funding was out of pocket; inexpensive, suitable venues were challenging to find and, when located, scheduling conflicts often ensued. Apart from that, life sometimes throws unexpected challenges into one's path that make “staying on track” a somewhat appropriate but difficult idiom to adhere to. Reminding me of the jazz standard title “I guess I’ll have to change my plan”, my senior supervisor assisted me in problem solving and in formulating new timelines while still encouraging me to get “to it and at it”.32 Some of the unforeseen changes in the research methodology are provided below to highlight considerations others

32 Another song reference, this one to a Stompin' Tom Connors title.
researchers may wish to keep in mind when formulating their own research into HTP bullying in high school. The following section details the original vision of how the project would unfold and includes a narrative with adjustments made in the face of some of the challenges that arose during the process of the study.

**Sampling**

To gain a contextualized understanding of students’ experiences with HTP bullying, I planned to facilitate 4 semi-structured focus groups comprised of five to seven LGBTTQ individuals who had been out of a high school in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (B.C.) for no longer than 5 years. This sampling frame would allow for a sample number of 20 to 28 participants. I expected that the total would be less due to attrition rates generally experienced in research projects involving volunteers. Although the findings are not generalizable to the experiences of all LGBTTQ high school students, the smaller sample provided space for meaningful discussion and in-depth analysis. I learned early on that I would need to be flexible in my research design to meet the quota for volunteers. This realization happened when I began recruiting participants.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit and select participants. This is a method in which researchers choose individuals “because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes… the researcher wishes to study” (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, 78). As the purpose of this study

33 Although the number of participants in a focus group is usually 6-8, Finch and Lewis (2003, 193) contend that sensitive and complex issues and topics that require in-depth discussion may be best suited to smaller groups.

34 The Lower Mainland of B.C. refers to the region surrounding Vancouver, “extending from Horseshoe Bay south to the U.S. boundary and east to Hope at the eastern end of the Fraser Valley” (Lower Mainland, 2007, ¶ 2).
was to gain a deeper understanding of former high school students' experiences with homophbic and transphobic bullying, I began by recruiting individuals who experienced harassment due to their sexual or gender identity in a high school in the Lower Mainland of B.C.

Advertisements recruiting gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited or queer participants were posted in spaces established for queer individuals in the Greater Vancouver Area. Locations included; the Centre (www.lgtbvancouver.com), Little Sister's Bookstore and Emporium, queer spaces on University/College campuses (i.e. Out on Campus at SFU), and areas with gay/lesbian friendly businesses (i.e. Davie Street and Commercial Drive). Additionally, information about the study was sent to drop-in centres and residential centres to gain access to populations who may be street involved. To reach a greater number of people and in recognition of the hesitancy some people have to respond to advertisements posted in public spaces, the call for participants was also posted on several Internet sites or blogs (i.e. superdyke.com, livejournal.com, gay.com and Facebook) that attract individuals from the Lower Mainland of B.C. New postings were continuously posted on the Internet and on “real life” sites. Additionally, handbills were handed out at the 2007 Vancouver Pride Festival. Appendix A provides a text-only version of what appeared on the advertisements.

Lacking the resources to travel to outlying areas, I restricted my original call for participants to LGBTTQ youth who had attended a high school in Vancouver or the surrounding area. I soon realized that I had overlooked one of the advantages to conducting research based out of a large city – many people, including LGBTTQ youth, move into Vancouver after leaving smaller cities or towns where they attended high school. Although

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35 My decision to recruit beyond the University setting is based on prior research indicating that those who experience harassment in high school may not graduate or, if they do, may not achieve the academic success necessary for admission to postsecondary studies (See, for example, Douglas et al., 1999).
Woog (2005, 261) writes in an American context, his sentiments can easily be applied to the situation of queer youth in rural Canada:

[Lesbian and gay adolescents growing up in rural America ... that means vast stretches of mountains, desert and farmland... in microscopic towns and crossroads villages with names like Soap Lake, Dusty, and Rufus – often have no where to turn. To come out to anyone in their tiny, often conservative schools is to commit social suicide; even to hunt down resources in the local library is to invite suspicion and rumours that may never die.

Queer young people who had immigrated to Vancouver from rural areas in B.C. or from other parts of Canada, sent e-mails inquiring about the project and requesting that they be involved. Many thought their experiences in high school differed markedly from those of youth who attended public schools in Vancouver due to the Conservative viewpoints and religious beliefs that dominated their towns. Along with these requests, I was facing a shortage of LGBTTQ volunteers in the Lower Mainland who had left or graduated high school within the five-year time period required. Expanding the eligibility criteria was pragmatic, it broadened the population I could draw from, but was also important on principle; I wanted the study to be as inclusive as possible. I gained approval from the Ethics Committee to amend my study so that youth who attended any high school in Canada could participate. Although I was still limited to volunteers who currently resided in the Greater Vancouver area, the change allowed young adults who had attended high school in various places in Canada (mostly B.C.) to be involved.

All individuals who showed an interest in participating were contacted so I could explain more about the study and ask a series of “pre-screening” questions to establish rapport or “a good working relationship” (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003, 143). Respondents who met the inclusion criteria were given information about their rights and responsibilities and those of the researcher (see Appendix B). They were then invited to
participate in one of the focus groups. About ten people who contacted me interested in taking part were ineligible to participate because they had been out of high school for more than five years or were under 19 years of age (two of the inclusion criteria outlined earlier). Attrition was also a problem. The number of people who agreed to participate in the focus groups was invariably smaller than the number who actually showed up.

Experiencing difficulties in recruiting participants, I believed it wise not to restrict the population from which I could draw from any further by imposing any kind of quotas related to sexual or gender identities. The pilot study was influential in this decision as well. In that study, some participants expressed the opinion that males were most likely to be targeted for HTP bullying. In fact, many said that lesbians and bisexual females were not paid much attention during their high school years. Samis’ (1995) findings during his study on the extent of anti-lesbian-gay harassment in the Greater Vancouver area supports the assertion that the frequency of HTP may vary with gender. He found that 25.5% of male of the 220 respondents and 13.4% of the 82 female respondents who answered questions about harassment in school reported being “bashed” (physically assaulted) while in an educational setting (Samis, 1995, 83). I believed imposing a strict quota in relation to gender could skew my findings and possibly suppress important information about who is likely to experience HTP in high schools.

From the inception of this project I was enthusiastic about including trans youth in the study. Finding young people who were willing to share their experiences as “gender outlaws” (Bornstein, 1994), or as people who transgress traditional gender norms, was another matter. The difficulties in recruiting trans participants are laid out in the ‘Limitations’ section further on in this Chapter.
The Sample: Crossing the Ts\textsuperscript{36}

In total, I spoke with 16 LGBTIQ youth about their experiences with transphobia and homophobia in high schools. Because one participant did not discuss experiences in school, they are not included in the analysis, bringing the total to 15 (although all 16 are listed in the table). Using data collected from follow-up questionnaires, I constructed a table (see Table 1.0) to display the gender identity and sexual orientation of each participant. To ensure anonymity, no other demographics are included in the table.

Table 1.0: Demographics of Participants (N=16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>Queer or Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Queer or Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(Left blank)</td>
<td>Queer or Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lesbian/Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td>Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(Left blank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay/homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{36} "Crossing the Ts" refers to the lack of trans and two spirit participants in the sample. Difficulties encountered in recruiting these participants are outlined in the Limitations section of this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>(Left blank)</td>
<td>(left blank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender Identity:** When asked to describe their gender identity, eight participants classified themselves as male and three as female. The other participants identified their gender as gay, queer, and androgynous, respectively, although the latter participant noted that most people would see them as “woman”. Because “gay” is typically associated with a male sexual identity category, I use male pronouns for this participant. In addition, one of the self-identified males recognized “a female part to his personality” which was exemplified during his drag performances. Two participant left this question blank.

**Sexual Orientation:** All but three of the participants (13) identified with a queer, lesbian, gay, or bisexual orientation. Seven of the male-identified participants were comfortable calling themselves gay, although one also used the term homosexual. The eighth identified his sexual orientation as bisexual. The gay-gendered participant also identified with a gay sexual orientation. Of the three self-identified females, one classified her sexual orientation as lesbian or queer, another as pansexual, emphasizing the importance of factors aside from gender when selecting a partner. The final self-identified female did not answer this question. The participants who identified their gender as queer and androgynous identified, respectively as queer or gay and queer. One participant who did not answer the gender
question identified as queer or gay. One participant did not answer the question on gender or sexual identity.

Race or ethnicity: Not all participants answered a question about their race or ethnicity (two left it blank). Eight people identified as Caucasian. One person said they were Caucasian and Native. Three identified as Chinese, Asian or Chinese Canadian. One participant identified his race as “mixed” and another listed a number of visible minority groups they identified with.

Employment Status: Two participants had recently completed their post secondary education and were either working or looking for work. Five were currently working, two of whom were considering enrolling in college or university. Six were currently enrolled in post secondary educational institutions and one was beginning school in fall. One participant did not identify their level of education but said they were looking for work. Finally, one participant, so alienated by his high school environment that he dropped out, was completing his grade twelve credits and planned to attend college following that achievement.

Age & Time out of High School: The average age of my sample was 20.2 years and ranged from nineteen to twenty-three. Participants had been out of high school for an average of 2.6 years, ranging from one year to just under five. One participant had not finished high school and was currently enrolled in a continuing education program to earn their grade twelve credits.

Talking it Out: The Discussion Groups & Interviews

In preparing for the group discussions, I developed open-ended questions and supplementary probes to explore contextual factors of homophobic and transphobic
bullying (i.e. types of bullying, frequency, who is involved, location), and effects the
harassment had on the participants (See Appendix C). Participants were also asked to
hypothesize about possible causes of HTP bullying and to suggest ways to prevent incidents
motivated by these phobias from happening in high school. The semi-structured format
allowed issues to be explored in detail as they came up. As suggested by my Supervisors, I
asked volunteers to also share positive experiences. The weight of the available literature rests
on an assumption of bullying as a “social problem”; my study left room for more positive
aspects linked with bullying. For instance, participants shared experiences in which they
believed school staff or classmates were accepting and supportive of their sexual or gender
identities (through, for example, anti-bullying initiatives). In addition, participants were asked
to reflect on how their experiences with bullying motivated by gender or sexual identity may
have had positive outcomes. As Foucault (1990) notes, power serves not only to suppress
but can be productive as well; oppressive power can be channelled into positive. Positive
experiences were elicited through the recruitment flyer and by directly encouraging
participants to consider if the bullying had positively affected their lives. 37

With the consent of all participants, focus groups were audio-taped. Following each
session I transcribed the tapes verbatim; this close attention to detail allowed me to become
even more familiar with the material generated through the focus groups. I made detailed
field notes during and after the group discussions to capture the non-verbal language and
record thoughts or insights that were triggered. Although the issue did not arise, I was

37 Social Anthropologist Kate Fox (2004, 5) underscores the tendency for social scientists to fix on problematic
issues: “With a few notable exceptions, social scientists tend to be obsessed with the dysfunctional, rather
than the desirable, devoting all their energies to researching the causes of behaviours our society wishes to
prevent, rather than those we might wish to encourage. [We] had become equally disillusioned and frustrated
by the problem-oriented nature of social science, and we resolved to concentrate as much as possible on
studying positive aspects of human interaction”. 57
willing to rely on my notes to record and recall information in the event that one or more of the participants were not comfortable with being taped.

Mindful of the potential for group settings to inhibit disclosure of sensitive information, participants were given the opportunity to do so privately, through follow-up questionnaires distributed at the conclusion of each session (See Appendix D). This allowed volunteers to articulate thoughts not shared in the discussion group due to time constraints or reluctance to speak in front of others. It was also hoped that the follow-up questionnaires would provide participants with a sense of closure at the conclusion of the discussion (Hurst, 2003).

The unpredictability of qualitative research was evident again when only one of the four volunteers showed for the first and second group discussions. Rather than viewing the sessions as missed focus groups opportunities, I took the opportunity to interview each participant one-on-one about their experiences with HTP in high school. Not only was this information useful for the study itself, but I was able to recall experiences from the interviews to jumpstart dialogue in quieter group discussions.

**Taking a Second Look: Data Analysis & Interpretation**

To make sense of what Smith (2005, 137) terms “primary dialogue”, the researcher must engage in a secondary dialogue that entails “rediscovering what was said or observed”. This secondary dialogue reveals information about the experience of participants, and is also

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38 Smith’s (2005) concepts of primary and secondary dialogue are based on Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of speech genres. In the case of interviews, she sees data as the product of a collaborative dialogue between the informant and researcher. She calls this interaction “primary dialogue” (Smith, 136). While reading the field notes and transcripts that result, the researcher becomes aware of information they may have been too busy to notice during the interview. This new reading of the primary dialogue constitutes what Smith terms a “secondary dialogue” with the data (Smith, 137).
saturated with cues about the social organization present in every day exchange of language. After transcription, Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor's (2003) analytical hierarchy was used to make meaning of the dialogue during data analysis. Following the guidelines of Spencer et al. (2003), I first became familiar with the data by organizing it. Sub-categories were created to sort the information according to each of the broader research questions (actual experiences, the effects, hypothesized reasons HTP harassment happens and recommendations). The data were then coded and recoded to refine the categories and to detect (and develop) patterns and typologies. To make this process more manageable, data were grouped under the predetermined categories and emergent themes using Microsoft Excel. Data excerpts or exemplars are used in this thesis to highlight the themes and illustrate unique experiences. The next section includes discussion of other considerations in the presentation of these research findings on HTP experiences in B.C. high schools.

**Epistemological Issues: A Word on Wording**

Like many graduate students, I struggled with how to convey my findings and use the chosen theoretical concepts without ‘jargonizing’ my thesis and thereby limiting the potential readership. Writing in a clear manner was important for this thesis. To borrow Howard Becker's terms, this goal was achieved by writing "semantically" rather than "ceremonially" (see Howard Becker’s 2007 Chapter on “Persona and Authority”). Becker (2007, 34) says that the desire to be seen as elegant, smart and classy frequently compels social scientists to adopt a writing persona that involves the use of “... fancy language, big words for little ones, and elaborate sentences...”. Scholars, and especially graduate students, Becker (2007) argues, may use long, obtuse phrases where simpler wording could convey the
message more clearly. These observations have been made of several post-modern and post-structuralist writers, including Bourdieu and Foucault.

With the advent of post-modern and post-structuralist critical theories and their considerable popularity in many disciplines, there has been ongoing critique about limitations of these perspectives, including their lack of practicality (for example, Leavitt, 1999 in the context of Criminology; Woolgar & Pawluch, 1985 on social problems theorizing; Sokal, 2008 in the Natural Sciences; and Norris, 1990 & 1992 in Literary Studies). These critiques are levelled most frequently at “skeptical” post-modernists, who have been described as “pessimistic, negative, [and] gloomy...” (Rosenau, 1992, 15). Some critics find it easy to discount skeptical postmodernists, who they see as cynical, even captious, and often lacking any constructive solutions. Other critiques of postmodernist and poststructuralist writings are associated with the vague or virtually impenetrable, abstruse writing styles that characterize some postmodern projects. Post-modern writers in Criminology are certainly not immune to such criticisms.

Leavitt (1999, 390) says that many criminological theories are “conceptually rich but flabby arguments filled with provocative but fuzzy ideas”. He compares criminological theorizing to art, open to interpretation, and at times lacking empirical rigour (Leavitt, 1999). Consequently, Leavitt (1999, 397) urges researchers to heed appeals from outside of academia for research and writing that is relative to our communities.

Dr. Burtch points out the relevancy of George Orwell’s The Politics of the English Language (1946) to Leavitt’s and Becker’s arguments. Quoted here at length, Orwell (1946, n.p.) compares a biblical passage with what he sees as modern jargon, saying:

Now that I have made this catalogue of swindles and perversions, let me give another example of the kind of writing that they lead to. This time it must of its
nature be an imaginary one. I am going to translate a passage of good English into modern English of the worst sort. Here is a well-known verse from *Ecclesiastes*:

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Here it is in modern English:

Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

This is a parody, but not a very gross one. ... The whole tendency of modern prose is away from concreteness. Now analyze these two sentences a little more closely. The first contains forty-nine words but only sixty syllables, and all its words are those of everyday life. The second contains thirty-eight words of ninety syllables: eighteen of those words are from Latin roots, and one from Greek. The first sentence contains six vivid images, and only one phrase ("time and chance") that could be called vague. The second contains not a single fresh, arresting phrase, and in spite of its ninety syllables it gives only a shortened version of the meaning contained in the first. Yet without a doubt it is the second kind of sentence that is gaining ground in modern English. I do not want to exaggerate. This kind of writing is not yet universal, and outcrops of simplicity will occur here and there in the worst-written page. Still, if you or I were told to write a few lines on the uncertainty of human fortunes, we should probably come much nearer to my imaginary sentence than to the one from *Ecclesiastes*.

Working through post-modern writings can be gratifying, but this thesis is not meant to be overly laborious. If this study, and social science research more generally, is to have any impact on policy and programs, clarity is essential. My intentions are to relay the findings of this study to educational administrators and communicate them clearly.

This study highlights areas where intervention is most needed. In Vancouver, especially, several school districts have attempted to address homophobia and transphobia in schools (see Chapter 1 for more on this). A systematic study exploring the context and details of homophobic and transphobic harassment in schools could help to inform and improve existing approaches to combating these phobias. These goals can only be achieved, however, if the findings are communicated in a way that makes them accessible and relevant.
to policy makers, educators and activists. Lucid and accessible writing became more pressing as the research process for this study unfolded and as queer people and their allies showed interest and support for the project.

Conducting research on homophobic and transphobic bullying provided an opportunity to meet educators, current and former students, activists, and scholars, many of whom are passionate about raising awareness about HTP bullying in high schools. Such meetings helped to round out my initial background knowledge and to refine ways in which a researcher might best approach people as part of this exploratory study. The Internet was a useful resource for recruiting volunteers for the study, but also for networking. I received e-mails and phone calls from people across Canada and as far away as Europe, all of whom shared their own experiences and, where applicable, their own research. Their stories and work continue to inspire and several of the people, some involved with the study and others who are not, have requested that the results be forward on to them. Consequently, the importance of writing something accessible and practical leavened the imperative of exploring theoretical concepts for their own sake. Still, theory remains a significant part of this thesis. As Pfohl (1985, 9) notes, "[t]heoretical perspectives provide us with an image of what something is and how we might act toward it". This thesis is an attempt to balance practicality with useful theoretical insights. A single study will not dramatically change homophobic and transphobic elements of educational institutions, but a thesis that is informed by theory and accessible to various people (e.g., educators, students, administrators, politicians, activists, researchers) will hopefully have more impact than one that is limited to abstract theorizing.

I hope to have made my thesis stronger by consciously clarifying sometimes murky concepts and terminology and writing legibly for the sake of those who do not have a
background in Criminological and Queer theories. Despite my best efforts, there are some limitations to this research and they are considered below.

Consider This: Limitations of This Study

There are several limitations that should be acknowledged before reading the findings of this exploratory study. First, the literature I relied upon in preparing for this research project is limited to the English-language, meaning that any experiences or research relating to HTP bullying in other languages have been overlooked. Second, some of the literature was weighted toward studies conducted in the U.S. due to the lack of research on homophobic, and especially transphobic, bullying in Canada. There have been efforts to examine homophobia in a Canadian context recently, but the stigma associated with queer identities can stymie the process. The threat of a tarnished identity prevents students from reporting harassment, compels school staff to avoid discussing homophobia and transphobia with their peers and students, and dissuades researchers from exploring harassment motivated by the phobias. The stigma associated with queer and trans identities, along with the young age group I focused on, may help to explain the difficulty I had in recruiting volunteers, and particularly, trans and two-spirit participants, which is the third limitation of this study.\(^\text{39}\)

Despite indications that many feel at odds with their sex and assigned gender during childhood or adolescence (Gagné, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997), most do not adopt a transgender or transsexual identity until their twenties or even thirties. Children learn early

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\(^{39}\) This section is taken from a conference paper co-authored with Dr. Brian Burtch for the Canadian Sociological Association’s Annual Meeting at Congress 2008. The paper includes a more nuanced discussion of transphobic bullying as it relates to queer youth. (Haskell & Burtch, 2008)
on that violating gender norms can result in stigmatization, hostility, and isolation (Gagné & Tewksbury, 1998). The socialization process is difficult to undo and, as a result, many trans people suppress their “authentic selves” for as long as possible (Gagné & Tewksbury, 1998, 87). This suppression may be one reason why I had difficulty recruiting young trans participants.

Participants in the study were at an age when identifying as transgender or transsexual would be especially difficult; youth are dependent on others for moral and economic support and jeopardizing close relationships by outing themselves could quite literally threaten their existence. Focussing on an older trans population may have garnered more volunteers. In fact, those trans- individuals who contacted me wanting to be involved with the study had been out of high school longer than 5 years and thus were ineligible to participate. Attrition also contributed to the lack of trans people in this study. There were several (4 or 5) trans youth who expressed interest in participating but who did not attend their scheduled focus groups. One participant contacted me the day of their scheduled group discussion so shaken up from harassment they encountered on public transit that day they opted not to attend. In this case, as in many, the harassment is ongoing and the effects still too real for this person to discuss.

Two participants identified their gender outside the traditional male/female categories; one acknowledged they were seen as female by most people but identified as androgynous. Another identified their gender as queer. In addition, one male credited a

40 In the introduction to Genderqueer: Voices From Beyond the Sexual Binary, Riki Wilchins argues that such youth are rebelling against “a world where every one of 6 billion human beings must fit themselves into one of only two genders”. These youth identify their gender and sexuality in new genderqueer ways that transcend either/or categories. She describes gender as “the new frontier”, where genderqueer people can “create new individuality and uniqueness… [and] defy old, tired, outdated social norms” (Nestle, Howell, & Wilchins, 13).
feminine persona that was especially apparent in his drag performances, but identified his gender as male. Despite the lack of youth identifying outside the male/female gender framework, gender non-conformity was a frequent topic in the group discussions, a finding that will be discussed in Chapter Three.

I experienced a similar lack of participants from the two-spirit community. No one who contacted me identified as two-spirit, at least not in the course of our communications. According to (Lerat, 2004, 6) the term “two-spirit” was originally “used by North American Aboriginal societies to describe what Europeans now call Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered and Transsexual people”. Two-spirit was useful for representing those male-bodied Aboriginal people who had female intuitions and women who had physical characteristics of males but still possessed female intuition. Those who were identified as two-spirited frequently held special status in their communities as spiritual advisors and mediators (Lerat, 2004, 6).

Despite holding such coveted statuses in traditional Aboriginal societies, colonization has resulted in the denigration of two-spirit people. Aboriginal people have historically been (and continue to be) met with racism; the Residential School programs in Canada are evidence of this and continue to impact two-spirit and other Aboriginal people. Lerat (2004, 6) notes, “[a]s a direct result of the residential school experience, homophobia is now rampant in most Aboriginal communities, even more so than in mainstream society”. Consequently, two-spirit people are often marginalized in mainstream and Aboriginal communities due to their multiple stigmatized identities. As a result of the multiple forms of oppression they face, two-spirit youth may have unique experiences in the education system. It would be valuable and beneficial to dedicate a study to two-spirit youth alone.
Despite the lack of trans and two-spirit participants, I continue to include the terms and the "T" acronyms in the findings section. I believe that some of the issues that affect LGBQ people will also affect trans and two-spirit folks who are sometimes assumed to have a homo-sexual orientation. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain motivations for harassment. Gender often plays a significant role though; to acknowledge this and that trans people are also victims of what is often deemed "homophobia", the phrase transphobia is used in this thesis. I do not claim to represent the realities of two-spirit or trans- people, yet I think some of the issues that the participants in this study discuss are relevant for these communities. To avoid contributing to their marginalization, references are made to trans and two-spirit communities in hopes that they will be considered in any policy or program initiatives to address homophobic or transphobic harassment in schools.

The fourth limitation of this study is that no heterosexual participants are represented in the study. I initially hoped to include both heterosexual and queer participants in attempt to acknowledge that all students are subject to homo- and trans- phobic harassment. For various reasons, however, I eventually decided that this would not be feasible. First, recruiting heterosexual participants could be difficult due to the failure of these individuals to label behaviours targeted towards them as homo- or trans- phobic because they do not identify as trans, two-spirit or LGBQ. Second, heterosexuals may be reluctant to volunteer for the study due to the stigma associated with queer identities. That is, individuals may be tentative to 'admit' that they have been perceived as LGBTTQ. Third, including both heterosexual and queer individuals in the groups could potentially put participants in an environment that makes them uncomfortable. Finally, I decided it was best to focus on a very specific population so that my aspirations (to learn more about
homophobic and transphobic bullying) could be incorporated into a manageable M.A. project.

Fifth, although the call for participants was expanded so that LGBTIQ youth who had attended any high school in Canada could participate, all but one of the volunteers included in the study attended high schools in British Columbia. It may be that youth aged 18-22 are more likely to move to a larger city within their home province than to move across the country. My inability to travel to other parts of Canada meant that other youth outside of B.C. were not included.

Finally, this study did not explore cyber-bullying, an increasing phenomenon given the technological advances made in recent years. Harassment can happen through texting with cellphones and through almost any networking site on the Internet and these are areas increasingly being studied. In their 2008 study, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that more than half of the students in their sample experienced some form of cyber-bullying in the year leading up to the survey (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008). In Canada, several organizations and websites have been created to address cyber bullying and promote safe use of the net (for example, cyberbullying.ca, safecanada.ca, and PREVNet which deals with several forms of bullying on and off-line). This is an area that is ripe for study but that was beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion

Queer youths’ retrospective accounts of their experiences with homophobia and transphobia in this study help to shed light on what can be a very sensitive topic. All efforts were made to minimize the psychological impact of recalling these experiences and to ensure confidentiality of the participants. For transparency, the reasons behind decisions guiding the
research methods of this study were outlined in this chapter. The benefits and weaknesses of those decisions were also made clear so that other researchers can anticipate and address issues that arose during the course of this project. Along with the findings then, the methods section hopefully provides useful insights and guidance for future research on homophobia and transphobia in schools.

The following section outlines the major findings from discussions with 15 young LGBTTQ people who experienced homophobia or transphobia while in high school. As discussed above, it is hoped that this Chapter is presented in a way that makes the initial findings and the subsequent implications clear. It is also my intention to colour the findings with some degree of positivity. Optimism about our ability to affect change in society (a characteristic of “affirmative postmodernism”) is an important part of this project (Rosenau, 1992, 15). Where oppressive experiences are relayed, I’ve tried to give voice to the agency and techniques of resistance engaged in by participants. Additionally, participants’ experiences with supportive teachers or students and positive effects of their experiences with homophobia and transphobia are presented. Homophobic and transphobic bullying can be heavy topics; I have tried to include examples that provided me with hope and a sense of optimism about the potential for safe and supportive school environments as well as the resiliency of queer youth. It is my hope that at the end of the findings section you will have a clearer picture of how homophobia and transphobia are manifested in Canadian schools. Just as important though, is that you feel hopeful about the possibility for improvement when finished reading this thesis.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH FINDINGS - EXPERIENCES OF HTP IN HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

The findings of this thesis are organized according to the major research questions. Excerpts from participants' dialogue help to highlight key themes. The first section (From a Roar to a Whisper...) addresses the manifestations of and contexts surrounding HTP harassment as well as participants' positive high school experiences where they stood up for themselves or where others supported their sexual or gender identity. In the second section (From a Whisper to Silence...), volunteers share the effects, short- and long-term, of their experiences with HTP harassment, including outcomes that are positive. Finally, the third section (Explaining HTP ...) outlines participants' beliefs pertaining to why HTP harassment takes place in high schools. Participants' strategies for resistance and change are outlined in each of these sections as well.

From a Roar to a Whisper: New Forms of HTP Harassment

As mentioned in Chapter One, bullying in schools has truly become a "hot topic" in the media and academia. Representations of bullying by the media and academics, however,
do not always reflect students' everyday experiences. In their attempt to provide sensational accounts of the events they cover, media representatives rarely address underlying motives for bullying behaviours. In addition, media outlets, academics, schools administrators and educators focus on more obvious, physical forms of harassment even though, as Meyer (2006, 43) argues, “verbal harassment is more prevalent and... equally damaging to students” and certainly there is more awareness of online bullying such as postings on Facebook and other websites (Shariff, 2008; Szklarski, 2008; Li, 2006).

Walton (2006, 17) likens discourse around bullying, including media reports, to the “society of the spectacle” in which sensational and violent incidents appear normative. While this may be true of the discourse, it is not the case for the bullying behaviours themselves. For study members, physical violence was one of the least frequent forms of homophobic or transphobic harassment they encountered. Homophobic or transphobic name-calling, avoidance, exclusion, and heterosexist or gender-limiting environments were more common than physical forms of harassment.

In the following section, similar to Foucault’s (1977) account of the justice system in the 18th and 19th centuries, I argue that the regulation of gender and sexuality in schools has shifted somewhat from physical forms to much more subtle techniques of discipline.42

**Physical Harassment**

Snow days were the worst though, because I’d have to walk home, and on a snow day, everyone decides to throw snowballs, and, oh, choose the one wearing the pink t-shirt! ... get that freak! (P8, gay, male)

42 My second supervisor notes the relevance here of the saying “from iron fist to velvet glove” to describe this shift.
Academic literature on homophobic bullying often includes moving narratives by sexual minorities who are scarred from physically violent run-ins with homophobia inside the school system (O'Connor, 1995; Olweus, 1993a). These accounts illuminate the brutal realities of some students’ educational experiences and may help to create a sense of empathy in the reader. Such experiences, however, are not congruent with most of the participants with whom I spoke during the course of this thesis study. Yet, according to some participants, physical harassment persists.

Three of the 16 volunteers mentioned personal encounters with physical forms of HTP harassment and four (two of whom had experienced violence themselves) recounted seeing others physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The number of young people who reported experiencing physical violence in this study (about 1/4) is in line with what other researchers have found (Egale Canada, 2008; Saewyc et al., 2007; Kosciw and Diaz, 2006; Samis, 1995). Physical harassment ranged from being snowballed (a story P8 shared in the opening quotation) to being beat unconscious. At least three participants feared physical reprisals if perceived as queer. One expressed fear of other males in high school, confiding:

... it was easier for me to be around girls. I guess I could be a little more... gay or whatever... and there was less of that fear of, I don't know, punishment or something because, right, it's sexist, but a guy would be able to injure me more than a girl, right? (P5, gay, male)

In sum, the majority of participants did not experience physical violence; however, three were concerned that they may be assaulted and another three reported that they had been.

Physical Harassment & Context: A New Take on Physical Education

According to my participants and researchers (Smith, 1998), Physical Education (P.E.) classes are one locus of HTP bullying. In this sense, “physical education” takes on
new meaning as physical forms of violence teach students about the importance of adhering to mainstream gender norms. Interviewees also experienced physical violence in change rooms before or after P.E. classes and off school property. These are environments where there are usually no teachers to intervene or where physical aggression can be passed off as legitimate. Discussing P.E. classes, participants relayed their experiences with violence:

... a couple of friends of mine had to be removed from PE for their safety... at the time PE was compulsory up until grade ten... And, well there were a couple of guys who I guess were especially flamey. Like my friend... he was just um.... on fire. [laughs] And he and this other guy [name], in the same year, two separate incidents um, the boys PE class just attacked them. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

...there was a kid that I knew in a younger grade and I was in math class, and he was in gym class, and he came and talked to me, because he said that they were playing ultimate, like a Frisbee game, outside on the field and that they were purposely throwing the Frisbee over his head to tackle him and to beat him up. (P9, *, female)44

Sykes (2004) and Messerschmidt (2000) note the penchant for people to associate athleticism with masculine heterosexuality. The “jock” culture was associated with homophobic and transphobic behaviour by at least two people in this study. Speaking about a classmate who often called him a “faggot”, P12 said:

It was kind of OK because he wasn’t like a hardcore jock or anything [laughs]. Even the jocks didn’t really like him [laughs]... so I was just kind of like, whatever, I don’t care about you. (P12, gay, male)

Participant 7 believed that males, and especially “jocks”, were responsible for most of the physical aggression:

... with physical or aggressive situations it was always males. And it always seemed like the kind of guys who had something to prove. Either they were tough guys or bullies or jocks... they weren’t really the quiet academic-y type of guys, they were always kind of the more aggressive sorts to begin with. But they were always male, in my experience. (P7, androgynous, queer)

Here P7 makes reference to gender, a theme that surfaced throughout the focus groups and interviews. All but one of the former students targeted physically were male and

43 For an analytical discussion of the subversive effect of queer people's participation in sport, see Eng, 2008.
44 Asterisks (*) are used to indicate that the field was left blank by the participant.
almost all of the aggressors were male. Other researchers have made similar assertions about the gender of the target and physical harasser in their studies on HTP (Pascoe, 2007; Meyer, 2006; Smith, 1998; Nayak and Kehily, 1996). The only exception to both trends in this study came from Participant 6 who, speaking of her experience with physical HTP harassment, said:

P6: ... guys, girls, everything, it was all vicious. If it was coming at us, it was vicious. 
BH: And it was guys and girls?
P6: Oh yeah. ....
BH: Hmm. And, would the girls be violent as well, or..
P6: Oh yeah. Yep! (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Even so, some of the girls who P6 said engaged in physical harassment were related to the jock culture. Asked to describe girls who she had run-ins with, P6 replied:

Usually, if it was girls, it wasn't preppy girls. It was either pucks ... [BH: (looking confused) The what?] The pucks. The... hockey... teams... girls. They go around everyone on the team! [snickers] Or the girls that just happened to be the overweight and insecure about themselves. It was, it was never just the regular girls. They were always fine. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

According to her, even 'straight' students were not spared from the jocks' homophobic and transphobic physical abuse.

My friend [name]. He and his girlfriend were going together for a long time... the hockey guys took him from behind... called him gay, called him a fag... and they said 'if you want it that way, we'll give it that way' and started beating on him. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Linking athleticism and heterosexuality means that males who lack athletic prowess and females who excel at aggressive sports were frequently perceived as gay or lesbian. For instance, when I asked P1 who was most likely to experience HTP harassment, they said, “boys, effeminate boys especially [were] targeted a lot, especially in gym class...” (P1, queer/gay, queer). Although males and females experience harassment related to gender variance, participants thought that males in their high schools were most likely to garner

45 A puck bunny is “a young female hockey fan, one motivated more by a desire to watch, meet, or become sexually involved with the players than an interest in the sport itself” (Puck bunny, 2002, 826).
negative reactions for behaving in ways that were not congruent with hegemonic masculinity. Yet, as Walton (2006) notes, it may be that females experience more subtle forms of HTP harassment which are less noticeable and often not acknowledged (a topic that will be explored in more detail further on in this thesis).

In short, some queer youth (and especially males) dread P.E. class because they find themselves perpetual targets of insults and physical harassment. Queer youth may be just as vulnerable to HTP harassment in change rooms before and after P.E. classes. Speaking of harassment that took place in these environments, participants said:

... in the change rooms, that was probably the most... 'Cause I’d get a lot of, like [said in mean tone] ‘What the fuck are you looking at? Faggot!’, that kind of stuff. And I had a couple people try to throw me into the locker, but I fought. (P16, gay, male)

... it was mostly in gym class, and the locker room was kind of awkward. (P12, gay, male)

When I was on the football team, it gets kind of awkward in the football change room. (P14, gay, male)

Following these comments by P4 and P6, others in that group added:

P11: That’s usually why I changed in the bathroom. (bisexual, male)
P10: Me too! I was just using the one stall that we had. Every time, that’s where I was. (gay/homosexual, male)
P12: Yep, me too. (gay, male)
P11: It was just easier to just not have to deal with it.

Participants identified change rooms as venues where many queer students felt unsafe, or at least uncomfortable. Certainly, change rooms are sites where bodies are bare, unprotected and open to scrutiny. Gender-segregated spaces increase demands for adherence to gender norms and require one to prove they belong there. Several studies and auto-biographies frame change rooms and lavatories, another gender-segregated environment, as sites of tensions for people who do not easily fit the either/or male/female

46 Walton shares his own experiences with homophobia in Physical Education class in his 2006 dissertation.
gender categories these spaces enforce (Shelley, 2008; Sausa, 2005; Pazos, 1999; Scholinski, 1997). In this study, P1 referred to the importance of gender norms in change rooms, saying:

  I avoided joining the basketball team in high school even though I likely would have made the team because many of the “popular” girls tried out for the team and I wanted to avoid the highly gendered environment of a change room policed by the “popular” girls. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

In addition to gender norms, persistent and negative stereotypes about the sexual veracity of LGBTQ people may lead students to be wary of others they “suspect” of being queer in change rooms. Stereotypes equating sexual predation and homosexuality cause people to fear victimization unnecessarily and to “police” spaces where they perceive themselves to be vulnerable. A lack of adult presence may also play a role in increased feelings of vulnerability.

Aggressive students may feel they can get away with harassing behaviour in change rooms because there is generally an absence of teachers to intervene. For their part, students who are harassed or who see others bullied in change rooms may fail to report those instances to teachers. When they do, however, teachers might also be hesitant to intervene. Educators may avoid entering change rooms with their students for fear of raising questions about their own sexuality or sexual misconduct. This logic might seem preposterous but the reality is that accusations of sexual misconduct are a reality, or at least a possibility, for teachers.

Lindsay Willow, a teacher (and lesbian) in Nova Scotia, was criminally investigated for the alleged sexual abuse of a female student in 2006 after they left a change room together. The false accusation was instigated by a co-worker and investigated despite the student involved denying any foul play. Although she kept her job, Willows employers banned her from any extra-curricular activities that involved time alone with students. Fearing that the failure of administrators to clear her name would undermine her career,
Willow brought a complaint to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Tribunal. The Tribunal members eventually found that Ms. Willow's sexual orientation was a significant factor in the false accusations. She received an apology and retraction of all accusations from School Board officials and was awarded an unprecedented $27,375 in damages (Lindsay Jane Willow v. Halifax Regional School Board, 2006). While the Tribunal identified homophobia as an underlying motivation for the accusations, surely cases like this must make even straight teachers reluctant to enter change rooms where students are present.

Not all volunteers in this study described their experiences in change rooms as negative; P8 offered his opinion on the topic, exclaiming:

I didn't find it awkward! [said as though he thoroughly enjoyed his experiences in the change room][all uproariously laugh] I have no complaints in that Department! (P8, gay male)

I find if you show confidence in who you are and what you were doing, I found the attacks, if there were any, to be non-existent ... I'm gay, so what, I'm going to change with all you other guys. Too bad if you don't like it, go somewhere else. This is my space too. (P8, gay, male)

P8 shared positive experiences and examples of resistance to encounters with homophobia and transphobia. He attributed these experiences to his self-confidence, popularity, and school involvement. P8 said that having an older, overprotective brother at his high school probably helped as well. Still, he knew that other queer students at his school were not as “lucky”, saying some were “made fun of... constantly” (P8, gay, male). He believed queer youth were most likely harassed off school property during lunch breaks or on their way to and from school. P8 was frequently targeted with snowballs on his walks home. The following quotations illustrate his and others' experiences:

... [I]t's terrible because as soon as you walk off the school grounds... we have a grocery store, we have a gas station, we have everything, and it all happens right in that area. ... you have to go through this area, there's no other really... escape [laughs]... teachers have no jurisdiction... in a Tim Horton's to say, 'oh quit calling Johnny Sue gay', or transgender if he's Johnny Sue [laughs], but um [others laugh] you run into that problem there (P8, gay, male)
…we were walking home one day [inaudible] and they started screaming things, drove around the block and came back, beat him up, I was like ‘what the fuck?’ So I had to call an ambulance… (P5, queer/gay, *)

… I was walking home and someone threw an orange at me. [others laugh] So I picked up the orange, ‘cause it landed on my back pack, and I chunked it back at them. [laughs] And, I don’t think it hit them [others laugh] and then once I got snowballed [see quotation at beginning of this section]. So those were like the two, worst violent acts that ever happened to me, so, you know, not so bad. (P8, gay, male)

The young people I spoke with often attempted to infuse humour into their recollections. After relaying the story about their friend being beat unconscious, P5 smirked and assured me, “he fought well though!” Participant 8 also used humour in his stories; in the example above, he saw the orange throwing as comical. Similarly, P8 recalled being snowballed, relayed in the quotation at the beginning of this section on physical violence, with sarcasm and humour. He acknowledged that the encounters were homophobic or transphobic but did not feel that he let them affect him in a negative way.

Participants might see these situations as comical or could be using humour as a defence mechanism against the homophobic and transphobic realities they face. Another way of framing their colourful commentaries is to see them as a form of resistance whereby young people use humour in the face of physical threats to hamper perpetrators’ efforts to position LGBTTQ as denigrated identities.

**Pushing Back: Resistance & Physical Violence**

Bourdieu and Foucault see power as omnipresent and Foucault especially argues that power relations are never just top-down; even the most marginalized and oppressed find ways to push back against their oppressors. Participants in this study engaged in various methods of resistance (or reverse discourse, a term discussed in detail in the next Chapter), one of which was humour. The most visible use of humour as resistance was by Participant
Participants 6, a lesbian or queer female used humour to deflect others attempts to belittle her as well. She laughed as she said:

"... one kid was getting threatened and punched... they were pushing him and punching him ... and calling him fag, and gay, and everything, and I stepped in between and pushed him out and said, 'you're gonna call someone gay? Call me, I am! You gonna hit me? Do it now!' [pause] And he hit me. [BH: Did he?] [snickers] Yeah [snickers] I kind of deserved it... I told him that he shouldn't get mad that I did his girlfriend last night. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

There were several other examples in which P6 used witty comebacks when she felt denigrated because of her sexual orientation. When a teacher informed her that her queer or lesbian identities would ultimately lead her “to burn in Hell”, P6 replied “that’s OK, I started Fed Ex’ing my stuff [to Hell] years ago” (P6, lesbian/queer, female). The same teacher refused to help P6 on an exam until “she learned to love Jesus”. Participant 6, who was deeply involved with the Christian community at the time, told the teacher that she was indeed “tight” with Jesus and that he did not approve of the teachers’ reproaches (in her words, “He says you suck”).

P14 used physical violence to push back against homophobia or transphobia. Describing this experience, he said:

"There was this one guy that I really didn’t like during football. He was pretty much the worst when it came to all the guys. He was always making homo comments... that gets pretty much any gay guy pretty steamed when their football team-mates are friggin talking about something that is important to their personal life, right? So, friggin, I was on [the] defensive line... and [the] guy... was on the offence and I... went right for him and put him right on the ground as hard as I fucking could. [laughs]... I put my shoulder pads right into his gut, and that’s part of you that’s not padded. [P10 looks critically at P14] [to P10] What?
P14: I just don’t think you should use violence as a solution!
P10: Well I know it’s not a solution, but it sure made me feel better! [laughs] The guy could hardly breathe for the rest of practice. [some laughing] (P14, gay, male)

Earlier, P14 mentioned that he did not like to engage in direct retorts to HTP harassment. Here, however, he seizes the opportunity to legitimately engage in physical violence in reaction to a teammate’s homophobic comments. Other youth used physical violence to resist homophobia and transphobia as well.
Frustration with HTP harassment can lead queer youth to respond physically. Some participants recalled reacting violently to non-violent HTP harassment by peers and even teachers. One person said that he would often respond physically to HTP harassment because he had "a violent temper" (P16, gay male). P6 explained how she reacted to ongoing homophobic comments made by one of her instructors:

P6: I fought... I got angry and I yelled at her. I threw a chair at her once. [laughs]
(P6, lesbian/queer, female)

By far, Participant 6 recounted the most instances of violence (instigated by others and herself) and outright homophobic or transphobic confrontations. Most of these occurred on school premises, often in front of school staff. According to her, HTP attitudes on the part of teachers at her high school meant that even physical manifestations of HTP were not a top priority for intervention. For most, however, teachers did respond to physical violence making this form of HTP relatively rare.

That almost one-quarter of the sample experienced physical violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in school is unacceptable; still, they reported other forms of HTP with greater frequency. Physical assaults may be relatively infrequent in this sample due to the impetus they create for intervention on behalf of teaching staff. Most school districts have well communicated policies requiring that staff take action when students physically harm others. The visibility of physical fights and existence of school policies against such harassment makes it difficult for teachers to turn a blind eye and students are aware of this. Despite the frequency with which school staff intervene when physical forms of HTP harassment occur, the youth said that school staff rarely addressed the underlying homophobia and transphobia in physical harassment.

I was told that teachers usually react to physical assaults they witness; however, there is a tendency to treat the incidents as general bullying. In other words, while staff members
challenge physical behaviour, they fail to address the homophobia or transphobia that underpins it, sending the message that the attitude (HTP) is acceptable but that the manifestation (physical violence) is not. Failing to address homophobic and transphobic sentiments may help explain why other, more subtle manifestations persist. These forms are addressed in the next section.

**Subtle Forms of Harassment**

Given the tendency of school administrators, academics and the media to focus on spectacular forms of bullying at the expense of other more subtle forms, there is a danger that we may assume that homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools is a non-issue. According to participants in this study, HTP harassment persists in much more subtle yet effective ways. The often hidden forms of harassment experienced in the day-to-day lives of the young people I spoke with are outlined in this section.

Dominant definitions and assumptions fuel students' perceptions of what constitutes bullying and can cause youth to downplay non-violent forms of harassment. For example, most volunteers immediately downplayed their experiences or questioned whether they could be classified as "bullying". Asked what types of homophobic or transphobic incidents came to mind when reflecting on their high school years, several of them qualified their experiences, saying that they didn’t suffer physical violence and that their experiences were not ‘that bad’:

Well, I guess I should start off by saying that... high school for me wasn’t really typified by bullying really. I mean although I was bullied on some occasions because people perceived that I was queer it wasn’t like really severe, you know, beatings or like that kind of thing. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

...I didn’t really have any bad experiences come to mind...but now that I think about it... (P3, gay, gay)
My experience wasn't that drastic but... there was those two extremes... there was people who were really supportive... And then a lot of people didn't really care, and then there was the other end of the spectrum, which was the people who would call you faggot, or dyke, or whatever. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Foucault and Bourdieu might argue that the dialogues above are evidence of the internalisation of and acquiescence to forms of discipline that work to oppress queer youth. Discussing HTP harassment in a group format, however, participants adjusted their concepts of bullying in relation to others experiences. Talking about HTP bullying may have lead participants to view non-violent experiences with homophobia and transphobia as serious bullying in some cases and to downplay them in others depending on others experiences with and definitions of bullying.

Those who had mostly encountered very subtle heterosexist or gender limiting environments expressed the belief that their experiences with HTP were less severe when they were in a group with others who relayed direct forms of HTP harassment. After hearing P6 recount a teacher telling her she was going to “burn in Hell”, P7 expressed disbelief about the level of HTP harassment that went on in that high school:

I just personally have such a hard time visualizing that, like I don’t want to invalidate your experience at all [P6: oh! (motions that she’s not offended)] ’cause I’m sure it totally was that way, but in my mind, the idea of a teacher telling me that I would burn in Hell would be the kind of thing I could get them fired for! (P7, queer, androgynous)

The focus group environments also encouraged participants to reframe their high school experiences and to identify some as homophobic or transphobic when they might not have otherwise. For example, after hearing about subtle forms of HTP from other people in the group, P3 said:

Now that I think about it... I just think there were small little things, like we tried to set up a GSA [Gay Straight Alliance] and we put posters around, and like a week later people had tore them down and we had to put them back up. Or like writing over what we wrote and then we had to take them down and put up new ones. (P3, gay, gay)
In general, the youth were eventually able to express how non-physically violent forms of harassment affected them; however, their narratives illustrate that students and teachers may tacitly accept these forms because of perceptions that subtle forms of HTP are "not that bad". In the group discussions, all expressed feelings that they had attended high school in a homophobic or transphobic atmosphere, that their schools were not entirely queer friendly, and that bodies were not always the direct targets.

The potential for costly legal battles (such as the Jubran case outlined in Chapter One) along with pressure from child advocates and queer activists, has created an impetus to curb physical abuse in schools. School board officials have developed policies and teachers have begun to intervene in situations where physical harm is a possibility. Sufficed to say, students most often choose disciplinarian tactics or engage in forms of HTP harassment that are least likely to draw the ire of school administrators. Accordingly, participants stated that homophobia and transphobia are most often manifested through verbal abuse and through indirect acts that, whether intentional or not, make queer youth feel unwelcome in their own schools. Subtle manifestations of HTP harassment are less noticeable; consequently, these forms may be more effective techniques of normalization because students and staff rarely recognize let alone intervene when they happen. The following section of this thesis outlines the subtle forms of HTP harassment that participants say often went unaddressed in their high schools. These manifestations are grouped into three major categories - verbal harassment, exclusion or avoidance, and everyday experiences with heterosexism and genderism.47

47 Genderism can be defined as "[t]he belief that there are, and should be, only two genders, and that one's gender, or most aspect of it, are inevitable tied to biological sex" (Trans Accessibility Project, n.d., section titled "genderism").
In this thesis, I use verbal abuse to refer to ‘teasing’, insulting, name-calling, or negative statements about LGBTTQ people whether directly or indirectly. In the young peoples’ accounts, verbal HTP harassment was manifested in various ways. First, it could be direct, when they or someone else perceived to be LGBTTQ was called a derogatory name or when they were ‘outed’ when asked or accused, for lack of a better term, of being LGBTTQ by classmates. Second, participants spoke about the use of insults to denigrate people or objects not actually perceived as LGBTTQ. For example, young people sometimes use the phrase “that’s so gay” to refer to something they are not fond of. In other instances, young people (usually men) call friends “faggot” as a joking put down though they do not perceive them to be gay. The indirect nature of this type of language led participants to disagree about how seriously such comments should be treated and those discussions are outlined below. Third, although not necessarily verbal, the young people I spoke with encountered HTP sentiments written on walls and other kinds of school property. Finally, volunteers said that indirect homophobic and transphobic comments were made during class time and in other contexts. Beginning with direct/overt verbal harassment, experiences with each of these forms of verbal HTP is outlined below.

Direct physical violence may not have been common in participants’ experiences but direct forms of verbal harassment were. Ten of the 16 participants recalled incidents where they or someone else they knew who was LGBTTQ experienced direct forms of verbal harassment.

48 “Words that wound” is borrowed from the title of Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw’s (1993), Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment.

49 Outing is the term used to describe when someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity is made public without their consent.
...there was one guy ... I guess I dressed kind of differently .... and in my wisdom I decided that it would be really cool to buy a plaid shirt. Like a plaid flannel shirt. And of course I didn't know at the time that that’s... total 80s lesbian garb or whatever. But... he knew. I don’t know how he knew but he’s like ‘oh my god you’re such a dyke!’ (P1, queer/gay, queer)

People, usually people who had pretty low self-confidence themselves, I thought, would try and, I guess ‘out’ me or stuff like that or just like name calling and that kind of thing. And then in senior high... my best friend kind of turned on me I guess... it was almost daily name-calling or just putting me down or whatever (P2, gay, male).

P8: ... there was still the random homophobic slurs that I endured... [P9: Did anyone directly call you queer?] P8: Well, a few, but like, I’d be walking in the hall and I’d hear ‘faggot’ or ‘homo’... (P8, gay, male)

There was this one kid... he was constantly coming up to me in the hallways [said in harsh tone] ‘Are you gay? ’I know you’re gay!’ ‘Are you gay?’... he just kept attacking me about it... later on when I finally did come out... I kind of looked back at that and was like, well I guess I always was, but why couldn’t he just walk away? Why did he always have to ask? (P10, gay/homosexual male)

There was one guy who always called me a faggot and stuff. I didn’t really think much of it, because he wasn’t really that hard core mean about it, he would just be like, you know, ‘hey faggot’, or whatever, or like ‘oh, you’re gay aren’t you?’ and I’d just kind of ignore it. (P12, gay, male)

Although some interviewees said that they were not affected much by HTP comments, often these experiences were the first examples of HTP that they recalled. At the least, then, verbal harassment leaves a lasting impression. Even those who said they were not deeply affected by such comments felt that verbal harassment has some negative impact. Certainly, there was consensus that these experiences constituted a form of homophobia or transphobia. Participants were not able to come to such a consensus in regards to less direct uses of terms associated with queer identities.

Terms like “gay”, “queer”, or “fag” are used as a general putdown regardless of one’s perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Frequently, youth learn and use these terms before knowing what they actually mean (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993). Labels associated with queer identities are used to belittle people, but also to describe anything that is perceived as undesirable (i.e. “that’s so gay”). When used in this manner, these terms may be seen as indirect forms of verbal HTP, which participants identified as rampant. Even when
interviewees did not share their own experiences hearing homophobic and transphobic pejoratives, they nodded in agreement with what others said.

Actually it happened all the time. I don’t know… it’s just the (inaudible) words friends use sometimes, you know like ‘don’t be a fag’ or ‘that was faggy’ or whatever [laughs]. But uhhh yeah it was everywhere. (P4, gay, male)

I think the whole, ‘that’s gay’ was still common and still went on in the classroom and the teachers still didn’t do anything about it. (P3, gay, gay)

Although there is a movement to ‘reclaim’ words like *fag, queer, dyke*, and *homo*, they still hold negative connotations and constitute insults because of their use as HTP pejoratives. Yet, the use of labels associated with queer and trans identities may not be perceived as harmful in this context. In his study of college-aged heterosexual youth who called friends names like “fag”, Burn (2000) found that half of the participants used such terms to gain social acceptance and did not see them as homophobic putdowns. In the current study, the dialogue concerning discourse or language in school revealed the apparent dis-association between phrases like “that’s so gay” and homosexual or trans-gender identities. For example, in contrast to another group member’s experiences with direct HTP name-calling, P7 said:

people who got called faggot weren’t actually perceived as being gay, it was just the insult word. … they don’t actually think you’re gay, they just don’t… really know what the word fag means… (P7, queer, androgynous)

Due to this apparent dis-association, participants disagreed with how seriously the use of HTP pejoratives was and whether they should intervene when such comments were heard. Some participants thought phrases like “that’s so gay” were harmful to queer people,

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50 Everyday interactions provide evidence of the persistence of negative connotations of labels associated with LGBTIQ identities. For example, some friends are clearly uncomfortable when I use the term “queer” to describe my own sexuality and/or the community to which I belong. Some even question whether “queer” is an appropriate term saying they have only heard it used as an insult. Certainly most of my heterosexual friends are not comfortable using the term themselves. As a result, friends sometimes avoid discussion of issues affecting queer people because they are unsure of what terminology to use. Such discomfort may be one reason why teachers are hesitant to broach topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the classroom.
especially when they went unchallenged. One person believed that straight youth may not be aware of the language they use, but for some queer youth the same words can have grave effects. Referring to a former girlfriend who committed suicide because of homophobia, P5 said:

... they don’t really pay attention whenever they hear about someone... or when they hear someone say ‘oh that’s just so gay’ or whatever, and for them it just goes totally out of their mind but for me it’s like ‘well that’s the same words that killed my girlfriend’ kind of thing so, you never know. (P5, *, queer/gay)

P1 lamented that teachers “would rarely admonish people for calling others fag” and was especially bothered by one experience:

...there was this kid who was saying ‘don’t’ call me gay’, ‘I’m not gay’ and then [inaudible – other kids] are like ‘yeah you’re gay, you’re gay’. And I’m just like Ok, that’s not a cool thing... In this school we don’t insult people based on their sexual orientation... And then the teacher actually intervened at that point, he was like ‘just let it go’. In front of the students like ‘just don’t blow this out of proportion’, you know, ‘boys will be boys’. So I was like, what the hell? That sort of flies in the face of... the School standards or whatever. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Some of these same people believed phrases like “that’s so gay” were used so frequently that it would be impossible to intervene all of the time.

Others saw HTP pejoratives as innocuous and thought we should focus on more serious forms of harassment. What some perceived as HTP pejoratives were obviously not seen that way by others who themselves used the term “gay” as a synonym for undesirable things. The excerpts below are from three different discussion groups in which people said they use phrases like “that’s so gay”:

P12: I thought it was funny that there was one of my friends who was... hardcore like ‘no, you can’t say that’s gay!’ and all this stuff. ...I don’t really care if someone says that. Because I know they’re not directing it anybody.
P13: I say it all the time. [all laugh]
P12: Yeah, you say it a lot. I’m OK with that, I don’t think that’s such a bad thing, because I know it’s just a stupid comment. ...it’s not really pointing out anybody ... it’s not like the ‘throw them in a bag and throw them off a truck’ or something. [all laugh] That’s a little more intense, but I don’t mind that one so much...I know it’s still bad, because it’s like a stereotype, or a derogatory term, but I don’t think that’s as bad as the others that are there. I could deal with that if that’s all I heard in high school, is ‘that’s so gay!’ (P12, gay, male)(P13, pansexual female)
Like, you know they don’t mean it [meaning sayings aren’t intended to be homophobic]. But I don’t know. … I sometimes say that’s gay [all laugh] (P4, gay, male)

See I started using that word a lot in high school. ... If you’re going to do that to me, it doesn’t bother me so much, I know what I am! [P5 laughs] Let’s give it to you and see how you like it. [P5 laughs] So my friends started calling me straight and I’m like [sighs] I hate you all! [P5 laughs] (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

This use of ‘gay’ and other terms might be a result of mainstream influences, but could also be a way to reclaim the terms. For example, because P6 openly (and proudly) identified as a lesbian or queer, she said she was not bothered much by peoples’ intended insults. In other words, she was likely bothered more by the fact that someone was trying to insult her than by the actual term used in the attempt. Knowing that levels of HTP were high in her school, she found using homophobic pejoratives herself to be an effective way to aggravate her classmates. In fact, P6 stated that she was more upset when her friends called her ‘straight’ than when others would call her gay. Although one could argue that participants’ use of the term ‘gay’ is not completely transformative, it may be one way the attempt to remove the stigma or reframe LGBTIQ identities (similar to Foucault’s reverse discourse, discussed in the next Chapter).

Young people heard outright HTP comments in their own classrooms but also read them on their high schools’ walls. Although graffiti is not a direct form of verbal harassment, many of the same phrases hurled at queer youth are etched on bathroom walls and other school property.

The Writing on the Wall: Graffiti & Property Destruction

Other researchers have noted that HTP graffiti is used in schools to identify LGB students; for example, when fag is written on someone’s locker. Graffiti can also send a general message that queer people are not welcome (Smith, 1998). In the thesis study, three participants noted that promotional materials for the Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) at their
high schools were vandalized with HTP writing. Earlier in this Chapter P3 (gay, gay) discussed how his GSA posters were tore down or written on. P8 said that HTP remarks were written on his student election posters. P16 mentioned graffiti in the change room.

... there would be stuff written about me in the change room... It was mainly written on the bathroom walls. And occasionally I had stuff written on my locker in the change room. (P16, gay, male)

Teachers may not see graffiti, and when they do, they may treat it as a case of vandalism rather than recognizing it as a form of homophobia or transphobia. Queer youth, however, get the message loud and clear. As Smith (1998, 320) says, graffiti is “a form of public speech but with a permanence lacking in speech”. Another form of verbal harassment often downplayed is gossip.

“He said, She Said”: Gossip as Regulation of Gender

Surprisingly, participants spent little time talking about gossip as a form of harassment they faced, although some of the exclusionary tactics discussed later may have been coupled with gossip. In other studies, researchers have noted that upwards of 87% of students reported hearing negative rumours about them at school (Kosciw et al., 2008). In this study P1 shared their experiences with gossip:

... my best friend... some girl started a rumour that she and I were dating ... she was dating somebody that that girl wanted to date ...so she started this rumour that she went out with [boyfriend’s name] because she was insecure about her sexuality and was trying to throw them off. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Although P1 later said that a refusal to tell classmates who they were dating fuelled the rumour, they identified other underlying motivations for the harassment as well. It is difficult to tell, then, whether the rumours were intended primarily as HTP harassment.

The most obvious explanation for the few experiences with gossip is that we tend to focus on physical or spectacular forms of harassment at the expense of subtle manifestations. Perhaps participants did not remember or, even know of, rumours spread
about them; we are not meant to hear the things others say behind our backs. Gender differences in both methods of bullying and proclivities towards HTP harassment could play a role as well.

As Walton (2006) points out, several researchers argue that bullying methods vary by gender, with males choosing more direct and physical techniques and females more subtle and indirect forms. Some participants seemed to confirm these assertions. Asked who was most likely to physically assault a queer person, P7 answered:

Guys. Guys. Males. I found that any homophobic comments I heard from females were, kind of, it was more like gossip. It wasn’t ... vicious, not in the same way ... They wouldn’t attack you directly, they might talk about you behind your back and it would be kind of quiet [B: Yeah] but with like physical or aggressive situations it was always males. (P7, queer, androgynous)

In addition to their proclivity towards more direct forms of harassment, the youth said males were generally more likely to engage in HTP bullying in the first place. Perhaps they reported few experiences with gossip because females, who are more prone to gossiping, are less likely to engage in HTP behaviour at all. For example, one person said females in high school did not intend to be homophobic or transphobic:

I don’t wanna really say that it was homophobic. Some girls would be like ‘oh’, you know, ‘Jason’s feminine’ or something like that, so ... I don’t know if it was really hurtful, but... it did effect me at the time. (P2, gay, male)

Another disagreed with the assertion that females’ intentions were benign:

... I was bullied really badly in elementary school ... I went to high school and wanted sort of a fresh start. And in the first week I was sitting in the cafeteria with some of my friends, and just to give you an idea at this point I was pretty chunky and I was, well, masculine. And so we were just ... sitting at the lunch table and there was some grade tens ... one of them dared the other one to hit on me I guess. ... it was, so clear that it wasn’t like ‘ooo’ [a real attraction] right? (P1, queer/gay, queer)

51 Criminologists have come to similar conclusions testing the usefulness of general strain theory for males and females. For example, Broidy and Agnew (1997) contend there is a gender gap between male and female rates of offending that is largest for violent crimes. Males may experience different types of strain than females, interpret strain differently than females, and may be more prone to react to strain with criminal behaviour (Broidy & Agnew, 295).
Tentatively, this research shows some evidence that males are more likely to engage in HTP bullying and in more physical forms; nevertheless, I heed Walton’s (2006, 48) cautions that “not even researchers on bullying are immune from seeing and interpreting human behaviour through” mainstream gendered lenses. Our tendency to see males as aggressive and females as passive may cause us to miss situations where males are responsible for gossip. If females do gossip more than males, due to our tendency to focus on physical forms of harassment, it is possible that we downplay females’ involvement in HTP bullying. Any conclusions about gender, then, must be made with caution.

Keeping these gendered themes in mind, other instances where indirect homophobic and transphobic comments were made (that is, HTP comments not directed at someone perceived as being LGBTTQ) involved the expression of personal viewpoints on homosexuality while in a school setting.

Free Speech in the Classroom: HTP as Personal Opinion

Five participants mentioned instances where classmates and even teachers made outright, often religious-based, homophobic or transphobic comments under the guise of expressing a personal viewpoint.52 As is discussed later in this Chapter, several people mentioned the role of social conservatism and religion when asked to name factors that contributed to HTP in their high schools. Participant 6 recalled at least two incidents where teachers condemned her sexuality using religious arguments. The first, in which she was told she was going to “burn in Hell” because of her sexuality, was mentioned earlier. Describing another example, she said:

52 The movie For the Bible Tells Me So (2007) illustrates how some Catholic and Christian people may resolve tensions between their religious beliefs and commitment to their families when a member of their family comes out.
we had an English sub [substitute teacher] come in, like, high prissy, Church going Roman Catholic. ... I was doing a project on gay and straight differences at the time, for Comparative Civilizations, ... and she reads it and she takes it away. And I’m like ‘I need my homework back please.’ And she’s like, ‘no, God doesn’t respect what you’re doing.’ (P6, female, lesbian/queer)

Such overt HTP statements made by teachers were rare; however, classmates sometimes made similar comments in front of instructors.

... Just like, more of a general statement would be made. [laughs] I remember one kid... somehow we got on the topic of gays and he said, ‘oh all of them should be put in a bag and thrown off the back of a truck’. [shocked reactions from participants] It wasn’t [laughing] talking about me, but he was just talking about gays in general. So, you know, it bothered me, but it wasn’t like, hey, [his name], you should be... put in a bag and thrown off the back of a truck. (P8, gay, male)

... we got off topic about abortion, and also gay marriage and all that kind of stuff. And it basically boiled down to me and this dude friend of mine, and then these prep girls... it just became an ongoing battle. And the thing that pissed me off the most is that, they say they’re Christian girls, yet they’re wearing the short shorts or whatever and they’re saying that gay people don’t deserve to have the sanction of marriage. (P9, *, female)

... something about gay men came up and one student was like ‘I hate all gay people. I wish they would all die’. And the teacher... basically just ignored it.... She said... with a smile on her face... ‘well we shouldn’t really say things like that in class.’ But she was smiling the whole time. So, she really didn’t help at all. (P2, gay, male)

Homophobic and transphobic sentiments expressed under the guise of presenting one’s views on homosexuality or transgenderism may seem innocuous to many people but can be especially harmful to the queer youth who are present.

Speaking about anti-queer hate propaganda, Faulkner (2007, 65) details the tensions between “those who argue for the right to freedom of hate speech and expression and those who argue for the rights of groups to be protected from speech that promotes hatred”. Perhaps these tensions play into teachers’ tolerance of HTP language espoused in classrooms. Allowing one person to express their negative views, though, may make it difficult for others to express their sexuality and gender or at least to do so safely (Faulkner, 2007). Teachers’ decisions not to intervene may also be based on an assumed absence of queer people in schools.
Students and teachers likely express negative opinions about homosexuality and transgenderism under an assumed absence of queer people. Such comments make it difficult for queer youth to come out and reinforce assumptions about the heterosexuality and gender conformity of students. It is not surprising, then, that the former students rarely made any rejoinder to those who were making the comments. Feeling extremely awkward, unwelcome, and upset by statements like those above were some of the reasons given for their inaction. Conversely, some said such comments did not affect them much because they were not directed at them personally (for example, see P8's statement above).

In any case, participants identified assumptions about students' sexualities and gender identities as a significant problem in high schools that lead to both direct and indirect verbal forms of HTP. In some cases queer identities were recognized in schools, and this recognition obviously made other people uncomfortable. Discomfort with queer youth sometimes resulted in avoidance, exclusion or other interpersonal forms of harassment. Experiences with these subtle forms of harassment are discussed in the following section.

"We're cooking the food, not having sex with it!": Exclusion & Avoidance

Interpersonal forms of HTP like exclusion and gossip were one way that students and teachers responded to LGBTTQ youth in high schools. Often these experiences seemed to involve classmates or teachers who were uncomfortable with the idea of queer people in their midst. For instance, P13, a pansexual female, discussed two instances where others in her high school avoided or outright segregated queer youth:

We had a cooking club, and it was basically all of my friends who were all gay, obviously, or bi, and it was our turn to do cafeteria lunch, and normally, cafeteria lunches are everyone's lined up forever for most of lunch just to get the food, and it was a really slow lunch. And I overheard people in the hallways afterwards being like, 'oh we're going to get AIDS 'cause they're all gay' [everyone in group looks shocked] and all this stuff. And I was just like 'woah! ... we're cooking the food,
we’re not having sex with it!’ [others laugh] .... that really bothered me, because, you know, we worked so hard, and just because we were not straight, most of the school didn’t want to come eat and even the teachers! It was that bad! (P13, panssexual, female)

We did a fast at the school, like a famine, and... [the teachers] were like dividing the kids to go into the separate gyms to sleep, because we spent the night in the school and the teachers like ‘OK, you, you, you, this one, you, you, this one and [the queer youth] all got like singled out. [laughs] And got stuck on the end by ourselves... This was the teacher! Right? So, it’s like, I don’t know, like between the students and the teachers at my school... it sucked. It did suck really bad. (P13, panssexual, female)

In P13’s experience, students made explicit links between homosexuality and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (A.I.D.S), and teachers made veiled references to contagiousness and sexual aggressiveness. Angelides (2005, 275) sees the classification of homosexuality itself and the various negative assumptions that have come along with that classification as the product of “…the broader process of medicalization of sexual deviance, which began from the nineteenth century to catalogue the various departures from procreative sexuality according to distinct types, species, or psychic identities of sexuality”.

Aside from being seen as diseased, students and teachers in P13 and others’ experiences portrayed queer people as sexual predators. Dr. Faubert and I (Faubert & Haskell, 2006) have noted the frequent conflation of sexual offending, specifically pedophilia, with homosexuality by the criminal justice system and larger society. This phenomenon was especially apparent in sex crime panics involving children in Canada during the 1930s, 1950s and again in the 1990s. In the 1990s, the media publicized several stories about sexual abuse of children in Ontario, including the London Ontario “kiddie porn ring” and the Maple Leaf Gardens scandal (Maynard, 2001). Maynard (2001, 84) claims that media coverage of these events “transform men who break the law (“sexual offenders”) into men with distinct types of sexual identities (“predatory homosexuals” and “pedophiles”). Freedman (1987, 103) has noted that media representatives and academics have historically used the terms “sex criminal, pervert, psychopath, and, homosexual”
interchangeably. More recent research by Faulkner (2007) on homophobic themes in media confirms those assertions.

Drawing on a report by Hess (as cited in Faulker, 2007, 70-71), Faulkner details several harmful misconceptions about homosexuality promoted through North American media, including:

- views about the depravity of homosexuals; the belief that gays spread disease and sickness and the promotion of AIDS as a homosexual disease; the view that queers are dangerous and pose a security risk; the view that gay and lesbian persons are highly sexed and sexually deviant; and finally, the suggestion is made that gay and lesbian persons conspire to destroy social institutions such as the family and thus destroy society as a whole.

Such mis-information in media and academia influence perceptions of homosexuality and frame LGBTIQ people as having uncontrollable sexual urges that would lead them to hit on anyone of the same-sex regardless of their sexual orientation or age. Ideas about sexual voraciousness and contagiousness may lead students to avoid those perceived as LGBTIQ. According to one participant (as well as P13 above), some students did just that.

For me, it tended to be the girls. I would hang out with the guys and I'd be just one of the guys and the girls would be like 'ew I don't want to be near you, you might want to get in bed with me, oh no!' You know? (P5, queer/gay, *)

Not only did classmates avoid being in proximity to queer youth, they also avoided talking openly about them in a supportive context.

The student council was... supposed to announce everything, like what's going on in school today, you know? And I guess you could tell that maybe they weren't so comfortable saying, 'oh there's a Gay-Straight Alliance today'... (FG1-1, gay, male)

There are several reasons that students and teachers may be uncomfortable speaking about queer people and issues that affect them. First, they may be unsure of the correct terminology to use and consequently worry about offending others. Second, terms associated with queer identities are often only heard in negative contexts in schools (as was discussed in the section on verbal harassment) and this may lead people to feel like they are saying 'bad'
words by using labels associated with queer identities. Still others may be uncomfortable showing support for LGBTIQ people for fear of being perceived as queer themselves (Edwards, 2006). Whatever the reason, the former students believed that “discomfort” with queer people needed to be dealt with before outright homophobic and transphobic behaviours could be addressed. This point will be elaborated on in the section exploring why HTP harassment happens.

Many of the young people I spoke with were not as outright excluded as P13 was in her school. Yet all relayed the feeling that they were in an environment where they were not included or were not represented. In their day-to-day experiences, students did not see queer people or issues affecting them reflected in their school environment. This final theme in relation to manifestations of HTP in school is discussed in the next section.

**Everyday Experiences: Heterosexism & Gender Limiting in B.C. High Schools**

In their day-to-day experiences, the young people felt that their high schools were not completely supportive of LGBTIQ people. Similarly, Nayak and Kehily (1996) speak of the “everydayness” of homophobia in North American schools. They, as did participants in this study, draw attention to the lack of LGBTIQ people in school curriculum. Marinoble (1998, ¶3) refers to this absence as “the blind spot in the school mirror”. Describing this analogy, Marinoble (1998, ¶3) explains “[w]hen driving an automobile, a blind spot can be very dangerous. When looking at oneself, a blind spot can have serious consequences”. In this study, participants identified silence about queer people on the part of school staff and in the curriculum as a significant factor that produced the HTP they experienced.

Not only did the youth feel there was a lack of discussion about queer people in their high schools, but some were actually silenced by administrators when they attempted to
break that silence. For example, two people, both who were from rural, conservative towns, had attempts to form a GSA thwarted by school administrators. P5 did not go into detail about why, but P6 did:

I started up a GSA at my school, couldn't get a teacher to help. ‘Hadda black mail my principal to do it. .... I got [a School Board Official]'s number ... I went in there and said if you don’t do it I’ll phone her up. .... I had the .... Counsellor's help. But, that’s about it ... no teacher would lend a room. ... they wouldn’t be around it. They wouldn’t help because it would cause too much issues. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Like other subtle forms of HTP, silence about, and silencing of, queer youth creates heterosexist and gender-limiting high school environments where sexualities and gender identities outside of the mainstream are overlooked (Pascoe, 2007; Meyer, 2006; Burn, 2000). These environments encourage young people to conceive of LGBTTQ people as unfamiliar, if not unnatural, and lead to more overt forms of homophobia and transphobia. As stated earlier, subtle forms of HTP, including silence about LGBTTQ people, often go unrecognized and when recognized are frequently not addressed by school staff or students. The contexts in which more subtle forms of HTP harassment play out are discussed below.

**Context of Subtle Harassment: Right Under Our Noses**

Unlike physically violent forms of HTP harassment, subtle forms, whether direct or indirect, often happened on school premises and sometimes in front of teachers. Due to school administrators’ emphasis on physical harassment, subtle forms are usually treated less seriously and ‘ignored’ by students, educators, and administrators. Frequent non-reactions by

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53 Jeremy Dias, a former high school student in Ontario, met similar resistance. Despite collecting over 600 signatures from people supporting his initiatives to raise awareness about homophobia in his Sault Ste Marie high school, Dias felt that he continually met resistance on the part of his administrators. In 2002, after graduating from the school, Dias filed a human rights complaint against the Algoma District School Board asking only that members of the School Board apologize and allow one gay-friendly poster to be erected in the halls of his former high school. The School Board refused and settled out of court in 2005. Dias used the settlement money to establish a Foundation providing scholarships for LGBTTQ youth (Moran, 2005).
school staff are important because they signal which behaviours are and are not acceptable. By condoning, for example, the use of words like gay in a negative context, educators bolster negative attitudes towards LGBTTTQ people.

School staff may not engage in corporal punishment, but participants noted that they sometimes engaged in subtle forms of homophobia and transphobia. Although subtle, these actions teach students that homosexuality and gender variance are unnatural, in one participant's words, "wrong". Students may engage in HTP behaviours as a way to enforce boundaries between what they learn is "right" (heterosexuality and gender conformity) and "wrong" (homosexuality and gender variance) and to punish wrongdoers. Yet, as the next section shows, some participants thought they were able to challenge the heterosexist and gender limiting nature of their high school environments and, in turn, to affect levels of subtle and overt HTP harassment.

"I was really lucky...": Positive High School Experiences

Despite feeling as though their schools were generally heterosexist or gender limiting, three young people described their high school experiences as positive and felt supported by at least some school staff and friends. For example, one participant (P3) told group members that he was comfortable enough among his peer group to come out in grade nine; a grade others thought was especially early compared to their own experiences. Asked to discuss positive aspects of high school, this participant said:

The only experiences in high school that made me... who I am today is just my friends being there when I came out to them or whatever. And also, I don't want to... say this, but... I guess possibly being Asian, like word doesn't get around as much, I guess? ... it sort of just stayed in our own (inaudible - group?). .... And I guess that's why not everyone knew. But I didn't really care who knew anyway. I was fine with everyone knowing, or not knowing. (P3, gay, gay)
In this case, P3 attributed his positive experience, in part, to the race or ethnicity of his peer group. Interesting enough, this was the only time participants mentioned race as a factor in HTP bullying, aside from comparisons of how students and staff react to and address racism and HTP differently in schools. The second participant who said their high school experiences were positive attributed this to a supportive staff member and geographical location of the school.

P7 said they thought their time in high school was unique because it was “fairly positive overall” (P7, queer, androgynous).

For me, the first thing I thought of was a teacher that I had... he was openly gay. ... It was his idea to found our school's G.S.A. .... He was so supportive, he was always there to listen, he was always there to back me up on anything, so I just thought of him... (P7, queer, androgynous)

Explaining why they thought staff members in that high school were so supportive of LGBTTQ students, P7 said:

I think that it helped a lot to have teachers who came from that... urban background. And had been dealing with, I mean, gay issues in the newspaper or around in the community... And ... having an instructor at my school in kind of his own way, kind of a gay activist I think that that would have helped at any school, just to have that kind of instructor there. (P7, queer, androgynous)

This participant believed supportive teachers played a significant role in queer students’ ability to thrive in their high school:

... when I became more active, I was more out... we suddenly got a new principal transferred and this was a guy who was just like, so smart, and so on it, and such an activist in his own thinking and just such a great guy. A guy who I really liked and respected... If I'd had the previous principal to deal with, the guy who was there in my younger years, it probably would have gone a bit differently. But this guy was just, an amazing progressive guy. And between him and the [other] teachers it was like, game on!, I'm so... protected. It was so good. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Certainly, supportive adults play a significant role in preventing HTP bullying and in moderating its effects. Espelage, Aragon, Birkett and Koenig (2008) found that queer students who had supportive teachers and parents reported less depression, suicidal ideation
and substance abuse than those who did not. Darwich (2008) has linked supportive adults to reduced levels of school truancy and alcohol abuse.

The third participant who said his high school experiences were generally positive described himself as “lucky” for not having experienced too much HTP bullying. Yet, he clearly described homophobic and transphobic behaviours in his high school, some directed at him. Compared to other queer youth, he thought that his experiences were not serious. He attributed his positive experiences to his social position as well as his own efforts to create a safe place for LGBTTQ youth in his high school. When asked why he thought he was not picked on as much as other queer youth, he explained:

I was really lucky in my high school because I have an older brother, a protective older brother... But, I was lucky because I was popular, not to gloat, but I was well known, and everyone knew who I was. You know, ‘oh that’s the gay kid’, maybe I was known for the wrong reasons [others laugh], but I was known. [laughing] .... I was very involved, so that really helped a lot .... But, in the midst of all that, there was still like, the random homophobia slurs that I endured. But it wasn’t bad, ... like from his experience [in relation to P16], ... my life was easy, you know. (P8, gay, male)

Here, again, you can see the role that discussion groups play in encouraging comparisons and re-definitions of bullying based on others experiences in the group. Participant 8 believed, however, that he was not just “lucky” and that he had played an active role in creating a safe environment for himself. For instance, he had no qualms about reporting students who had picked on him. He also provided his counsellors with resources for queer youth.

When asked, other participants were able to recall positive experiences but did not feel that they could characterize their time in high school as positive. Frequently, the youth talked about finding a group of supportive friends later on in high school. Asked why the bullying he experienced ended, P2 said:

I think just not being around that friend anymore. And finding friends that... didn’t care, just saw me for who I was ...I just had a really good, supportive group of
friends. I was a lot more involved ... in school and... It just wasn't as much of an issue I think. I think it was more to do with me than it was with anyone else though. Like I had made the changes to surround myself with certain people. (P2, gay, male)

In a separate group discussion, P10 expressed surprise at how well others reacted to his coming out after he realized he was gay:

It's funny, because when I finally did come out... almost everyone in my high school was like, 'oh, we already knew and we never cared.' He [one person who bullied him] was the only one that ever had an issue with it. Like the only time that I really experienced homophobia in my high school was from him, one time. And that was it. And almost everyone I told about it was like that's really stupid. .... I guess I really liked my high school. (P10, gay/homosexual, male)

Overall, when asked to come up with positive experiences related to their sexual orientation or gender identity in high school, only one participant could not. Asked if they could think of any positive experiences, P5 said:

Not really, no. We tried to form a GSA but we got kicked down before it started by our Principal. ... I'm from a very Conservative town... (P5, queer/gay, *)

These findings are consistent with recent research focussing on the positive experiences of queer youth in school (Darwich, 2008; Varjas et al., 2007). Through such research it is clear that not all queer youth have completely negative experiences; some have rather positive experiences in high school even when out. It is impossible to know whether participants would have classified their experiences as positive during their high school years. With the lapse of time, they may have reframed experiences they once saw as negative. The young peoples' current perceptions of their high school experiences were important though as they shaped beliefs about how they were affected. In the following section, participants share how their high schools experiences affected them both for better and for worse.

From a Whisper to Silence: Effects of HTP Harassment

In the last section, subtle forms of HTP were identified as the most common experiences in the high schools. Though, some young people asserted that physical forms of
HTP persist. As discussed in Chapter One, HTP harassment, no matter what the form, can have various effects on queer youth. Many youth in this study discussed the lasting impacts HTP in high school had on them. Still, some have found ways to “rise above” (according to P8) the harassment they faced and to find positive outcomes from their experiences. Certainly, youth who felt supported in their high school considered themselves better people for their experiences, but other participants did as well.

This section focuses on how participants in this study thought their high school experiences with HTP, whether subtle or more overt, affected them. Participants were asked to reflect on how they were affected while in high school and in the long-term. In addition, the young people considered ways their high school experiences, positive or negative, helped them in some way or had a positive outcome. In some cases, such discussions helped the young people to reflect on their experiences in ways they might not have before. It also set an affirmative tone for the discussions and this thesis exploring, what can be, serious subject matter. Immediate and long-term effects of HTP are discussed below.

**Self-Surveillance: Immediate Effects of HTP Bullying in High School**

Contributors in this study relayed the feeling that HTP bullying created a need for self-censorship and was stifling in various ways. This manifested in the avoidance of gender non-conformity (or gender variance), which participants thought often resulted in homophobic and transphobic accusations and accosting. Participants in others’ studies reported similar effects (Mahan et al., 2006; Smith, 1998; Nayak and Kehily, 1996; Lehne 1992). In my thesis study, participants believed that even subtle forms of HTP induce young people to regulate their gender expressions so they will not be perceived as queer and consequently “picked on” (a term most participants used). For example, P1 believed that
what some saw as a too-"masculine" appearance triggered insults like "lezbo", and was "freaked out" that others read them as queer at a point when they were unsure of their sexual orientation and gender identity themselves. To avoid HTP harassment, P1 said they were self-conscious of their appearance and the signals they gave off:

...it was terrible because ... whenever I saw something I wanted to wear I had to interrogate myself and I'd be like 'why do you want to wear this?' You know? Or like 'what will people think if you wear this?' I remember buying a pair of shoes, and we got them home and I had to take them back because I was like, 'oh my god!' you know, this is like...[signal of sexuality/gender identity] and they were just, they were shoes right? And they weren't like big... dykey motorcycle boots [laughs] or anything.

BH: ... you changed the way you dressed so that people wouldn't ...
P1: To an extent. ... I guess I sort of started dressing like a slob, you know? .... just sort of neutral. .... just like if you saw that person you wouldn't be like 'oh, well they're a gender terrorist' [both giggle] You'd be like, 'oh well they just are... a slob' you know like, they don't care. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

P1 was limited the activities they engaged in. P1 avoided physical activities that could be labelled as masculine, a decision which had very real consequences on their physical and mental health:

Though I really wanted to sign up for the rugby team in high school I didn't because I thought that people would think that was too masculine and call me a lesbian. .... The paranoia about how I thought people would react to my appearance and activities with which I occupied my time I believe caused me to neglect my body, and to gain a lot of weight, which doubtlessly led to more body dysphoria. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

P2, on the other hand, said he had to be careful about how he spoke because of the tendency for people to associate soft or higher-pitched voices with effeminacy and, consequently, homosexuality. Speaking of how this affected him, he said candidly:

... that was really tough for me. And overcoming that was tough because it's almost like it was silencing 'cause I didn't want to say anything. 'Cause people would try and identify [his sexuality] just the way I spoke. So ... it's taken me a long time, even public speaking or anything like that just from that, from those incidents, so... That sucked. (P2, gay, male)

Later P2 credited a teacher who encouraged him to join and do well on the debate team for helping him to overcome his fear of public speaking. In other discussion groups, P12, P13
and P4 also expressed feelings that HTP bullying in high school was “silencing”. Speaking of the immediate effects of their high school experiences they said:

[speaking to others in group] Most of you people know me and know my personality and how crazy I can tend to be, but I wasn't that person in high school.... (P13, pansexual, female)

[Responding to P13’s comment above] I guess I was kind of the same way because I was really shy in high school. I was so quiet I was like the random kid in the back of class [P13 laughs] and people probably didn't even know my name for half the year. ... I didn't care though, I was just there to go to school and I preferred people to leave me alone, I liked being kind of invisible, kind of. Like I mean, if I had friends in the class I was OK, but if I didn't know anyone then I just kind of stuck to myself. (P12, gay, male)

... it was pretty easy to, to get through high school, but, when you just say nothing, people will just think you’re shy or whatever. (P4, gay, male)

Participant 6 may not have been silenced entirely but she described “hiding” to avoid encounters with HTP harassment:

By the end [of high school] I just kind of hid. I was just like ‘I don’t want to deal with it’. So I just stayed in my drama room. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Another person noted how awkward it was to have to hide his sexual orientation from his closest friends for fear of reprisals:

... most of my friends from high school were actually really really homophobic, and I actually never really told any of my friends that I am, you know, bi or anything, and none of them even really know to this day. ... they've had discussion about how homophobia [sic - meant homosexuality] is wrong, and I'll just kind of sit there and be like... [awkward look], ‘I’m not going to say anything’.... (P11, bisexual, male)

Participant 5, whose story was especially moving, expressed how queer youth may be doubly silenced by HTP bullying. To avoid being identified as LGBTTQ and subjected to HTP harassment, queer high school students may become introverted, silent, and uninvolved in their schools. Silenced, or “closeted”, often these queer youth are unable to confide in others about the negative effects of HTP. P5, whose high school girlfriend committed suicide, was unable to turn to others for support because they were “in the closet” at that time. When asked what experiences came to mind after reading an advertisement for the study, P5 remembered:
One of them was the experiences my ex-girlfriend had and that's still kind of touchy because she committed suicide. And so like that comes to mind initially and that (inaudible) could be an end result, and then ... I remember being in high school and not being able to tell anyone because no one there knew and even now I'm not sure if anyone knows... (P5, queer/gay, *)

Rather than avoiding certain activities that may lead others to perceive them as LGBTQ, however, P5 actively engaged in those that could cause others to assume they were heterosexual. Below, P5 discussed how they attempted to prove their heterosexuality to themselves and others:

... because of all of it, I started trying to convince everyone else I was straight. And so I slept around a lot. ... and I wasn't sleeping around with girls, I was sleeping around with guys. ... to try to convince people that I was straight and that I liked it and stuff like that. ... (inaudible – I spent a lot of time) trying to get that into my brain like 'I do like guys, I do like guys'. This is how I'm supposed to feel. (P5, queer/gay, *)

Researchers have actually found that lesbian and gay youth sometimes report higher rates of pregnancy (and of getting someone pregnant) than heterosexual people of the same age. The higher pregnancy rates can be explained, in part, by young queer people who engage in unprotected intercourse with the “other” sex as a means of proving one’s heterosexuality (Radowsky & Siegel, 1997).

Not surprisingly, P5 and others noted how HTP had detrimental effects on their mental health. Participants said stigmatization of queer identities damaged their self-concepts and confidence. Speaking of the effects, P5 and P2 said:

I went back in the closet for three years. .... So needless to say [laughs] that didn't do so well for my mental health. (P5, queer/gay, *)

I think it was just my self-confidence in general, went down. And just like, the feeling of being on the outside all the time ... (P2, gay, male)

A few participants were enraged by their experiences and discussed how this affected them emotionally and physically. P16 said his experiences with HTP may have affected him “even worse ... because [he's] been known to have a violent temper” (P16, gay, male). P6 said that when she experienced HTP in high school, she would “get mad and have
tantrums... Flip out” (P6, lesbian/queer, female). In fact, P6 said she became known as a bully in high school because she was in so many fights. She saw her role in the altercations as defensive and described herself as being in an “us or them” situation. Participant 14 also used physical means to express his frustration, exemplified in an earlier quotation in which he talked about pile-driving a football team mate. Illustrating again that he sometimes responded to HTP with physical violence, P14 said, “The last time I saw something written on a locker I caved the locker in with my foot” (P14, gay, male).

Some queer youth may choose just not to deal with the HTP they experience anymore. Although P6 said she eventually “hid” in her drama room, two other queer people in her school dropped out because of the HTP they experienced. Another way to numb the emotions HTP evokes is with drugs and alcohol. Queer youth may use (and abuse) alcohol and drugs as a way to cope with anger, frustration, and other negative feelings stemming from experiences with homophobia and transphobia. None of the participants reported substance abuse themselves; however, three participants wondered whether HTP harassment was a factor that led other queer classmates to drugs and alcohol. P2 wondered to what extent HTP lead the only other queer person he knew in high school to dabble in the rave/drug culture. P1 described one other queer person in their high school who spiralled into problems:

... [she] dropped out of my high school which was pretty much unheard of. By this time she was addicted to crystal meth and dealing ecstasy. It was not until a year later when she hit her rock bottom that she quit drugs entirely. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

In general, participants expressed the feeling that HTP tainted their high school experiences, creating an environment where they could not be themselves or be involved as much as they would have liked to. One participant noted how HTP, or fear of HTP, may have affected his relationships with others in high school, exclaiming:
I hated high school, because for me, it was easier to be around girls I guess I could be a little more... gay or whatever. And there was less of that fear of, I don't know, punishment or something... (P4, gay, male)

In Smith's (1998) study with gay male youth in Ontario, several people mentioned feeling safer around females, who they tended to spend more time with, than with males. Observations about negative impacts on relationships came up more often in discussions of long-term effects of HTP bullying in high school. These effects are detailed in the following section.

**Lasting Impressions: Long-Term Effects of HTP Bullying in High School**

Several participants believed experiences with homophobia and transphobia in high school impeded their abilities to form new relationships. The young people feared that others would react negatively to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

There's also the trust issue. .... The combination of paranoia over negative reactions of people and feedback from my peers ... made it so that I didn't trust many people to react kindly or even indifferently to my sexual orientation let alone to understand it. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Even at [name of post secondary school] where it's so positive and embracing or whatever, still ...hard for me. ... seeing a crowd in front of me I still assume that there's people [who are] like who I went to high school with. In that crowd. (P2, gay, male)

Another volunteer, who described his high school friends as “really homophobic”, said he could no longer spend time with them:

I guess it kind of pushed me away from my friends a little bit. You know, the fact that my friends were rather homophobic and stuff. ... If I do see them when I'm in public, especially if I'm with my boyfriend or whatever, it's pretty awkward! [laughs] Very awkward. But I haven't really let any of them know and, you know, I kind of feel fine keeping it that way just because of the way they are.... all my friends are really good friends, but they're just really close-minded people. (P11, bisexual, male)

In addition to their own difficulties building relationships, participant 5 was able to see the effects that HTP had on others. P5 experienced difficulties establishing a group for queer youth in a post secondary educational institution. They noted how the stigmatization
of LGTBTTQ people in high school influenced some young peoples’ willingness to be involved:

... even now, I’m trying to start up a Pride at [postsecondary institution name] and just seeing the amount of people that are interested in joining but don’t want to have anything that could potentially connect them, like anything from walking to a place where there’s a meeting and they don’t want to be seen there ... They’re scared of that. And they’re even scared to e-mail me just in case I might be able figure out who they are. And so that whole, just continuous shame coming back all over again, that can lead to so many different directions ... (P5, queer/gay, *)

In general, participants described the short and long-term effects of experiencing HTP harassment in high school as involving a somewhat permanent, heightened air of caution and censorship of signals that could be associated with queer identities. Yet, they discussed various ways their experiences with HTP in high schools had positive outcomes as well; these are covered in the following section.

“If it doesn’t kill you, it’s only going to make you stronger”54: Positive Outcomes

In addition to focussing mostly on physical forms of harassment, Varjas et al. (2007) and Savin-Williams (2005) criticize academics for over-emphasizing the negative effects of HTP bullying at the expense of positive outcomes. In my study, most queer youth believed that their experiences helped them and others from their high school to grow. When asked about their experiences with HTP bullying, most immediately discussed negative effects; P6 however relayed positive outcomes first. This is especially interesting because she reported the most overt and severe HTP harassment of all participants. Speaking about the effects the bullying she experienced had on her and a teacher in her high school, P6 said:

Made me stronger. ... Anyone can say anything to me now and I can be like ‘oh whatever’. ... I’m just like, ‘I—don’t care, you’re not worth my time.’ ... Just shrug

54 A quote from P8. The original is a Nietzsche quotation in which he says, “that which does not kill us makes us stronger”.

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them off. It's not my fault they're scared, and I'm better looking. [all laugh] (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

... I still go there [to her high school] ... I go back, and I see my old teachers and one of my teachers ... got me a Pride sticker ... at this teacher conference ... And she's got a 'No Homophobia' sign posted up in her room now because of me. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Most participants did not relay such affirmative assessments unless they were asked to think about how experiences with HTP had brought about positive outcomes. Not surprisingly, the participants who described their high school experiences as generally positive were most likely to recall affirmative outcomes whether through prompting or not.

For example, P3, who came out to his peers in grade nine, said:

The only experiences in high school that made me ... who I am today it's just my friends being there when I came out to them or whatever. .... I remember being so scared just to tell them. But ... from that point on I guess it became easier... (P3, gay, gay)

Participant 7, whose experience in high school were “generally very positive”, was also able to identify positive outcomes from the support of teachers and peers.

I'd say it was a very positive effect! .... knowing ... if there was any kind of gay bashing ... that I had resources to turn to. I always felt like I had support, like I would have legal support, like I would have emotional support... it's helped me... accept myself really well. I think if I had a really, really negative experience [motioning to other participant who had a negative experience] I would have turned out... not as positive a person as I did... I think it's helped me to realize also that I can help others too. .... seeing an instructor and administration and my friends support me then... when I was learning about myself and just kind of coming out and all that stuff ... has helped me to support others in progression.... (P7, queer, androgynous)

Several participants became motivated to help other queer youth as a product of their experiences with HTP in high school. Some identified such a desire as one motivation for taking part in the study. Certainly, one inherent limitation in this type of study is that those unable to reframe their experiences or who were completely disenfranchised are usually not
motivated to contribute to the research project.\textsuperscript{55} The young people in this study must have felt something positive could come of their experiences since they volunteered to participate.

The final person who described his time in high school as generally positive spoke about the active role he took in framing his experiences that way and how that has helped him to become a better person:

You know, I really believe in that phrase ‘if it doesn’t kill you, it’s only going to make you stronger.’ ... I kind of see myself as the phoenix and [said in a more dramatic/playful voice] and I \textit{smirks} [everyone laughs] No, but I came above it. You know? I went above it and ... that’s what I feel you have to do. You can’t let it get the best of you, or else you’re just going to be down in the dumps and you’re always going to be sad or upset about it. (P8, gay, male)

When asked, participants who did not feel their experiences were as positive as those mentioned above were still able to express how their experiences with HTP in high school had, in some way, benefited them. For most young people in the study, this usually involved feeling they had somehow grown or become a better person for what they had gone through.

It ... caused me to examine myself, my values, my motivations for acting, and other people’s actions a lot so I feel that I know myself a lot better than a lot of people my age. I think my experiences have also made me be able to be more empathetic towards people. I also feel like I have something to prove to people that I am not inferior which I think motivates me to do well in school. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

P2: I wouldn’t have traded the experiences I had even if they were bad because I think I really grew from them anyway. But, I mean, I think it would still be better if I didn’t have to go through it at all. [laughs] But I think I’m a lot stronger because of it and just for me to be able to share my experiences now and like maybe help someone ... I think that may be worth it.

BH: ... you said it helped you grow because of it, how do you think that is?
P2: ... just learning how to deal with problems and how \textit{not} to deal with problems, especially. Because I realized that just being quiet and trying to ignore it didn’t work. But then at the same time doing it that way also I realized how to be really independent and be able to deal with things ... on my own. So, it’s made me independent but then also realizing that there is a need to reach out to other people and that it is helpful to reach out. (P2, gay, male)

\textsuperscript{55} There are other venues that people can express how violence has impacted them. For example, Leave Out Violence (LOVE) is an organization that published a newspaper and books where young people can express the realities they face (see leavoutviolence.com for more information).
...you take people as they come. You learn, when you go to places... people are going to be different. I've been to other small communities and they're fabulous. They're so nice, they don't care. [that she's a lesbian]... and you gotta take everyone for who they are, it doesn't matter. You gotta be positive about the world or else... no one will be. .... I think, as horrible as my experiences are, they are positive. You know? I like the way I turned out, and I wouldn't of done it without 'em. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

... I guess I figured by grade ten I didn't have to be afraid anymore, you know? Like it was as bad as it was gonna get, and I was just like screw it, I'm going to be open no matter where I am. People generally have more respect for me now. Because I'm open, rather than trying to act straight, saying [said in a sarcastic tone] 'oh I had a girlfriend' when I really didn't. People never bought that. [laughs] (P16, gay, male)

P1 noted that, although they had trouble trusting people they did not know well, existing friendships had become even stronger. On this topic, P1 said:

The positive effects of bullying I guess were that because I didn't trust a lot of people, the people I surround myself with now I feel that I can trust a lot. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Rivers (2004) also found that HTP bullying had positive outcomes for some of the 119 queer participants they interviewed. In Rivers’ (2004) sample, those who experienced severe harassment in school were more likely to come to terms with their sexuality at an earlier age. In this thesis, most participants were able to channel the oppressive power directed at them into more positive outcomes than what was likely intended by their harassers. While not unscathed, they did indeed rise, as P8 put it, above their sometimes blistering experiences and emerged feeling more resilient and stronger for what they had gone through.

**Explaining HTP in B.C. High Schools: Gender, Silence & Growing Pains**

Although the topic often came up as a natural part of the discussions, participants were asked to think about why homophobia and transphobia exist and are manifested in high schools. They came up with various ideas, some of which have been touched on in the previous sections, but all of which guide recommendations made in the next section. Each
speculation should be of interest to activists, academics and administrators hoping to address HTP harassment in schools. The three major themes participants identified as contributing to HTP in their high schools were the regulation of gender norms, lack of exposure to queer people and issues affecting them, and the natural maturation process. As each of these factors is discussed, participants’ ideas for how to make positive changes are outlined as well.

"...the one in the pink t-shirt... get that freak!": Regulating of Gender Roles

Though gay men and lesbians are no more likely to transgress traditional gender roles than heterosexuals, there is a widely held stereotype that leads people to assume that gay men are ‘effeminate’ and that lesbians are ‘masculine’ (Meyer, 2007a; Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993). Often heterosexuality is associated with adherence to traditional gender roles. It is no surprise then, that young trans and gender variant people are often perceived as queer and harassed (Messerschmidt, 2007; Varjas et. al, 2007; Bochenek & Widney, 2001; Namaste 1996). Historically gay men and lesbians have been stereotyped as “gender inverts”. Consequently, youth who do not conform to expected gender norms are vulnerable to harassment based on this gender dissonance and their perceived sexual orientation. The findings of this thesis support such an argument, especially for males.

56 A quotation from P8.
57 Dr. Burtch and I explore the role of gender in HTP bullying in a 2007 paper presented at the Canadian Women's Studies Association Annual Meeting (Haskell & Burtch, 2007a) and in an article based on that paper in the Winter 2007 Academic Exchange Quarterly (Haskell & Burtch, 2007b).
58 Blumenfeld and Raymond (1993) posit that this stereotype may have developed from the early Gay and Lesbian Movement when couples mimicked heterosexual relationships because they had no other affectual arrangements to model.
59 Sexologist Dr. Havelock Ellis popularized this term in the late 19th century. He believed that homosexuality was an inborn, yet harmless condition in which males had a preponderance of female hormones, or females a preponderance of male hormones. He termed homosexuality inversion, meaning that homosexuals took on characteristics of the “other” gender (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993, 128).
In the first part of this finding section (*From a Roar to a Whisper...*) excerpts illustrate male participants' who experienced HTP bullying for lacking athletic prowess, wearing pink and dancing. Females, or those perceived as female, were picked on for wearing “masculine” clothing like plaid shirts and for aggressiveness or fighting. In fact, when asked who was most often the target of homophobic or transphobic bullying, P4 responded, people who were stereotypically gay or lesbian, “Like really butch or really femme or whatever” (P4, gay, male). From these participants’ perspectives, many queer youth who are bullied dress, act, or appear in ways that disrupt the sex/gender association. Other researchers have come to similar conclusions (Meyer, 2007a; Walton, 2006; Bochenek & Brown, 2001).

Walton (2006, i) identifies bullying as a technique of discipline, and of normalization, that reinforces “normative gender expectations”. Likewise, Meyer (2007a, 2) links HTP bullying to “the public performance and norm-setting of heterosexual gender roles”. She cites researchers with the *Human Rights Watch* who argue that HTP harassment is often a result of demands for staunch adherence to conduct norms linked to one’s sex (Bochenek & Widney, 2001).

Traditionally, harassment for gender non-conformity has been classified as homophobia. Given the importance of gender expression in these incidents, however, I believe (as Walton, 2006; Meyer 2006; Renold, 2002 and; Smith, 1998 have asserted) that we should be focussing not only on sexual orientation, but on gender variance as well. The findings from this research indicate that gender expression may play an even more important role than one’s sexual orientation in gauging vulnerability to HTP harassment. For example, as the following excerpt shows, even people who do not identify as LGBTTTQ can be bullied if their behaviour violates mainstream gender norms:
...a friend of mine who is not gay, but I guess is really assertive, and athletic... some
girl started a rumour that she and I were dating. (P1, queer/gay, queer)
The same participant recalled a girl who *did* openly identify as queer but who adhered to
some of the characteristics typically associated with femininity. This person, apparently, was
*nat* picked on:

I was actually speaking to a friend of mine, who I knew to be queer at the time... 
but she was never really open about it and nobody ever really cared, because she’s
shy and not ... out there. (P1, queer/gay. queer)

In some cases, HTP harassment is incited by and directed at gender expression and
perhaps not so much about scaring someone straight (Nayak & Kehily, 1996). Consequently,
queer youth may receive opposite reactions to similar patterns of behaviour depending on
their perceived gender. Earlier, P6 recalled an incident in which she stood up to a student
threatening a classmate. She asserted herself, and her sexuality, saying “You gonna call
someone gay? Call me, I am! You gonna hit me? Do it now!” (P6, lesbian/queer, female).
Apparently, her offer was accepted and the male did punch her. Yet, as we also saw earlier,
P8 (gay, male) found that standing up to others actually minimized the bullying he
encountered. He said that showing self-confidence and standing his ground had led to a
decrease in the amount of HTP bullying he experienced.

While speculative, one could argue that males who ‘fight back’ may be less vulnerable
to HTP harassment than females who do so because such actions are congruent with the
dominant form of masculinity. Females who stand up for themselves, on the other hand,
may be *more* vulnerable to HTP harassment than males who do the same because
assertiveness is not often associated with traditional notions of femininity. These hypotheses
suggest that understandings of homophobic bullying cannot be limited to discussions of
sexual identity. Gender expressions, or “gender performativity”\(^{60}\), should be acknowledged as significant factors in both homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Another interesting finding of this research was the “double standard” when it came to expressions of homosexuality based on gender. For the most part, social scientists tend to accept that female sexuality is given more attention and regulated more than males. Yet, some participants said this was not the case for gay or bisexual males. For instance, P7 explained:

I did know a couple of guys in high school that were dating at the time when I was there and I definitely learned that... in a way there's kind of a double standard between females and males when it comes to... acceptance of gay relationships. Like I found that I was fairly well accepted across to board, but I found that, in discussion with other people about these guys, that it was not as positive as mine. It wasn't hugely negative, but... there was definitely a difference. ... gay men seem to threaten people more for some reason. I think that that's still true, like I think that a lesbian couple walking down the street would be less likely to be harassed than a gay male couple walking down the street holding hands. Like, my perception of it anyways. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Such observations resonate with those of Varjas et al. (2007) who reported that several participants in their study thought high school aged males received more of a reaction for engaging in same-sex relationships than did females. In addition, researchers with GLSEN have found that students are more likely to hear remarks about not being “masculine” enough than not acting “feminine” enough (Kosciw et al., 2008, 16). Perhaps masculinity is presupposed on heterosexuality (Pascoe, 2007) in our culture more so than is femininity (Meyer, 2007b). Whatever the case, it is clear that gender and gender expression of the person targeted (as well as the harasser) figures into decisions to engage in HTP bullying and should be considered in research on the topic. The second main theme in

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\(^{60}\) In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Judith Butler uses this term to position gender as a performance of identity in which we learn and express cues that signify our gender and re-enact them in our daily lives.
participants’ discussions of HTP in schools relates to a lack of information about queer people and issues affecting them.

**Lack of Information about Queer People**

Participants believed that silence about queer people and the issues that affect them in various contexts led to homophobia and transphobia, which in turn silences queer youth. The young people I spoke with discussed the role of curriculum, a lack of role models, failure to intervene in HTP bullying, teacher training, religiosity and social conservatism, as well as larger social structures in creating an environment ripe for HTP harassment. Below these contexts are outlined and participants’ suggestions for improvement are reviewed.

"There's a complete absence of queer people...": Lack of Queer People in the Curriculum

Researchers as far away as India have noted the "silencing and invisibilisation of sexuality" in educational institutions (Tarun, 2007, 128). Participants in this study believed that educators, especially in rural and socially conservative schools, were hesitant to discuss issues affecting queer people.

...there's a complete absence of queer people in social studies. ...That would be a start. Like even saying that you guys are a part of history too, right? (P4, gay, male)

To raise visibility of queer people and awareness about issues that affect them, participants suggested changes to the curriculum. For example, P2 talked about the potential positive impact of the Corren Agreement, which has lead to the creation of a Grade Twelve class on social justice issues, including homophobia (see Chapter One):

I also think the Corren agreement... it would be really great if that went through. ... just to have that in the class, in the schools and then just to know those ideas are there, whether you take them or not, it's a pretty powerful force I think... to counter
that kind of homophobia. ... And to be honest, I don’t actually ever see [queer issues] being integrated into the ... required curriculum ... But if there was an optional course, like the Corren agreement, that would really help. That is one way to get it in there. Because they can’t say they’re going to outlaw it if it’s an optional course, right? (P2, gay, male)

Some participants even shared experiences where teachers had included queer people in their lessons and described those in a positive light:

... [one teacher] just happened to mention that a guy in there was queer, like one of the guys who had made something (inaudible) I don’t remember which one it was, but it was just kind of random, came out of nowhere, but then she just kept going, and... it made it so natural. (P5, queer/gay, *)

P7: I was in sex ed class ... we got a sheet and the sheet had definitions of different words. ... I still remember them, they were homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered... And they had definitions and they talked about them with us... And it was not an atmosphere where you were supposed to be making fun of it, or cracking jokes, it was like you’re learning something, just like you would learn anything else in this class. And that was also a really positive experience. I remember that. I remember seeing that list and it was like a light bulb over my head. It was like, ‘ding!’ [makes hand motion of light turning on over head] I fit somewhere! Right on that sheet! [laughs]

BH: That’s good then! So, inclusion in the curriculum I guess, especially during sex ed?

P7: Yeah, I think that’s key. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Participants cautioned, though, that piecemeal efforts to raise awareness about HTP in schools were ineffective (if not insincere) and advocated a more comprehensive approach to representing and supporting queer people in high school. When asked how they thought schools could be better for queer youth, participants in one group said:

P9: ... they’re just trying to do like the usual slap on the wrist or get the guest speaker, what not, and just hopefully that gets through their head, you know. Same thing with drunk driving, or drug abuse or whatever.
P12: The token guest speaker that everyone’s going to laugh about the s-COND they walk out of the assembly. (P12, gay male)
P9: Yeah. So I just think that they just need to figure out a new approach for how to handle it. Because I know like in CAP, or whatever they call it now, they did like a section of like safe sex, drug abuse ... all that kind of crap. And then they did like a thing on homosexuality, but it was like, you know, one class. [slams arms down for emphasis] You know, and you get to watch some movie from 1987 talking about, you know, ‘Are you gay?’ [all laugh] (P9, *, female)

In addition to a curriculum that represents queer people, participants thought it would be beneficial to have queer teachers who acted as role models in their schools.
Making Connections: Lack of Role Models

Many of the young people in this study mentioned they were aware of a staff member who was lesbian, gay or bisexual but who was not open about it. Although they acknowledged that sexual orientation and gender identity might be private matters, participants said it was especially unlikely that a student could be ‘out’ as LGBTTQ in an environment where teachers were not. When asked what they thought would help make schools safer for queer youth, participants answered:

I think that it would be beneficial to have more queer and queer ally role models (teachers, support staff, youth workers, students). I think this would help normalize “queer” by showing people that, “No, this is not a perversion. There are some very cool and even more boring people who are queer and trans.” (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Not being afraid to talk about it ... I had this one teacher, I knew she was gay, I knew that for a fact, and I tried bringing it up, like around the corner kind of thing and I know that it’s their own privacy and stuff like that, and I totally respect her for not saying anything, but you still just want to tell someone, hey, I have something in common with you. And, just to make that connection, you know, and have them not be afraid of that... (P5, queer/gay, *)

Researchers have found that knowing a queer individual can foster positive attitudes about LGBTTQ people. Providing a space where potential role models feel safe to be “out” could reduce stigma and negative stereotypes about queer people and increase sense of belonging in LGBTTQ youth (Darwich, 2008; Burn, 2000). Regardless of their sexual orientation of gender identity, school staff can help queer youth in their high schools by intervening when HTP incidents occur.

The Bullying that is Acceptable: Lack of Intervention in HTP & Support for Queer Youth

According to participants, recognition of the potential negative repercussions homophobic and transphobic pejoratives can have on youth was rare for teachers. This sentiment is not isolated to B.C.; 52% of students in one Saskatchewan sample said that
teachers rarely address HTP language (Cochrane and Morrison, 2008). In the most recent GLSEN survey documenting experiences of queer student in the U.S., only one-fifth of the young people who participated said that teachers frequently intervened upon hearing HTP remarks (Kosciw et al., 2008). Participants in this study echo these feelings below:

[T]hey'd say 'oh I'm going to do something about it’, ... occasionally they'd even just tells us to tell them to... fuck off or whatever, but, that's not going to help. That's just going to make it worse. [laughs] (P16, gay, male)

And that was I think the clearest and easiest way to get at someone was to call someone a fag or something like that. Because it was almost accepted. Teachers wouldn't do anything about it. It was the bullying that was acceptable ... that you could get away with. (P2, gay male)

Sadly, 20 years ago a task force investigating bias-related violence in New York State schools made the same observation. In that study, students actually “added gratuitous vicious comment about gay people [to the survey], and appeared to perceive them as legitimate targets of hatred who can be openly attacked” (Radowsky and Siegel, 1997 speaking of the State of New York Governor’s Task Force on Bias-Related Violence, 1988).

For the most part, participants did not feel teachers were choosing not to intervene out of malice towards queer youth. Many of their school staff were unaware of how harmful HTP can be or were unsure of how to deal with it when it when it happened. Other researchers identify “teacher’s lack of knowledge and... feelings of ineffectiveness when addressing... highly charged issues” as factors limiting intervention (Birden, 2005, 3). In this study, P7 first condemned some of the educators for “turning a blind eye”:

... they choose to turn a blind eye to it basically, which just encourages the same behaviour to happen again and again. ... I don’t know I just think it’s so funny ... if one kid called another kid nigger in school, you can pretty much be guaranteed that that kid would be in trouble. .... They’re choosing not to see it or they’re choosing not to deal with it. Like, ‘whatever! I’m going to go hang out in my teachers’ lounge and drink my coffee and hide in here.’ (P7, queer, androgynous)

But soon after, P7 surmised that teachers may not understand the impact HTP language has on queer youth:
I think they're aware of it, but they just don't understand the weight behind it. I think they don't understand how much it can negatively impact someone's life in the long term... especially if they're not gay. Then they don't get it. (P7, queer, androgynous)

At least two participants said when teachers intervene they need to do so in specific ways. For example, one participant thought reactions should be quick and consistent:

But I find it's better, when they tend to act out and right away someone says that's wrong. Like the teachers that stand up... they know that they can't tolerate it in the class so nobody's going to say anything because they don't want to get kicked out for something stupid, right? Or they'll still get kicked out anyways, they just don't care. But at least they're gone. (P12, gay, male)

Another argued that teachers need to address the language being used. Failing to do so, P1 believed, contributes to the perception that terms like 'gay' and 'queer' are "bad" words.

The administration and teachers would rarely admonish people for calling others fag or whatever, and if they did they would react the same way as if one was calling someone an asshole the implication was that these were bad words. Fag, gay, homo, lesbian, transsexual, etc... do not have to be bad words. It would be nice if teachers and students, when intervening in homophobic and/or transphobic bullying, could essentially get across "your comments were obviously mean-spirited and when your words have harmful motives they are unacceptable" instead of "don't say fag. It is a bad word." (P1, queer/gay, queer)

When speaking of intervening, P6 said teachers ought to be cognizant of the power relations they are involved in themselves before attending to those involving only youth. Elaborating on these thoughts, P6 said:

Kids won't respect. Because teachers will never respect them. ... pretty much every teacher talks down to every student. Kids aren't going to listen to that. They're going to rebel! ... It's the whole adult-child syndrome. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Alice Miller's (1990) work supports P6's arguments; she describes the one-sided power relationship of teachers over students as 'poisonous pedagogies', which breed a culture of violence. To cease bullying among students, then, P6 suggests, teachers' bullying of students must stop first.
Some participants gratefully acknowledged teachers who *did* intervene when students used HTP language. In one discussion group, participants who attended the same high school praised a supportive teacher, saying:

P8: ... my [History] teacher, she was amazing! ... she had big posters on the front of her door that were like, ‘that’s so gay’ with a big X through it [others laugh] And she was like, you don’t call anyone, ‘faggot’ or anything in this classroom or you get out. (P8, gay, male)
P11: So many people got out of her classroom for that. (P11, bisexual, male)
P8: She was the best for that kind of stuff...
P11: She would send you home! Just be like leave!
P9: zero tolerance. Zero tolerance. (P9, *, female)
P11: There was zero tolerance for that kind of stuff.

Other participants found instances where teachers intervened especially memorable and shared them when asked to think of positive experiences in high schools. Participants describe these experiences below:

... there was one, I don’t know if he was out ... But, he was... a dancer and he danced quite a bit at shows and stuff and people would actually boo him while he was on stage. ... And one teacher was really supportive of him... he tried to stop it. ... he’d get right into the seats and shush people and just be like ‘be quiet’ and ‘don’t do that’. (P2, gay, male)

I think at my schools teachers were really good about it. My ... teacher, I’m not sure what [the students] comment was, something about gay lifestyle (inaudible) and then [the teacher] said well, would you choose to be persecuted? Or ... why would you choose a harder life? I thought that was pretty good. (P4, gay, male)

...we were learning parts of the volcano and the teacher was explaining all the parts and... one part of it was a dyke. [P5 giggles] Yeah that’s what it was like [people started laughing]... and my teacher [said] “I don’t want to hear anything from you guys if you have problems with it, I don’t want to hear it!” There was just like silence through the whole classroom. [all laugh] (P3, gay, gay)

Students happily recounted these experiences and were clearly appreciative of teacher interventions. Unfortunately, because efforts to address homophobic and transphobic language were not school wide, participants thought that the use persisted, although usually out of the ear shot of those teachers who were known to intervene. Asked where such language was likely to be heard, participants responded:

... it was kind of during breaks, after school. [pause] Or in class time if it was... time where the teacher gives you time to do work or whatever and then leaves the
room. And then it kind of gets a little bit rowdy... whenever there wasn’t really supervision around... (P7, queer, androgynous)

Not directly in the classroom, but I think in the hallways or like around people but not where the teachers could hear (P5, queer/gay, *)

Participants believed that intervention efforts would need to be widespread. They appreciated the efforts of one or two supportive teachers who created a safe classroom but felt that the school climate could not change without the involvement of more staff. Yet, some participants questioned whether teachers should be responsible for intervening in and preventing HTP bullying. In one group specifically, participants questioned whether teachers should be responsible for handling *any* kind of harassment and said that counsellors needed to take a more active role to raise awareness about homophobia and transphobia in high schools. P8 exclaimed:

... it may sound crude, but [the teachers] job is not to rescue little Johnny who just got picked on because he got called a faggot. That’s what counsellors are for, that’s what student safety administrators are for. ... those people should be enhanced, and it’s not, you know, it shouldn’t be laid on the teachers so much. (P8, gay, male)

Supporting what P8 says above, Meyer (2007b) found the most common theme when she asked six Canadian teachers why they did not intervene in HTP bullying related to time constraints to meet curriculum requirements. Leading efforts to educate their school community about HTP violence, counsellors may be able to provide enough base knowledge that teachers could intervene in their classrooms without having to plan an entire lesson around the teachable moment.

In this study, participants said counsellors should take a more active role in HTP. They also believed counsellors need to be more approachable and make it known they are open to talking to queer youth. Explaining why he did not report the harassment he experienced in high school to school counsellors, P10 said:

They need to be more approachable. There’s that whole stigma! I mean, when everyone was coming up and asking me [if he was gay], I didn’t feel like I could go to the counsellors. I didn’t feel like I could just go into the office and be like ‘they
keep asking me this, and I don’t know why.’ I never felt like I could go in and ask that sort of question. (P10, gay/homosexual, male)

In agreement with this comment, P9 added:

I don’t think... the friendly approach for help is there. Like, you know there are counsellors and you know they can help you, everyone always gets that typical thought in their head, like they’re just going to sit there and listen and not tell you anything productive... they’re not doing a good job of saying, you know, ‘hey if you need a shoulder (p9, *, female)

Participant 14 believed his experience with a school counsellor illustrated the potential positive impact they could have on queer youth in high school:

I used to have a school counsellor, well, she didn’t know anything about ... situations of gay bullying, right? But even though I was out of school ... I’d still ... go to her office, and even though I wasn’t part of the school anymore, she’d sit down and talk to me about my situations I’m in. If there were more counsellors like that, I swear, every school would be a little bit better. Like, you don’t have to deal with the bullies, but if you can at least help the student get it off their chest, or talk to them about it, you know, give them some sort of support, I think, things would be a lot better in schools. I don’t know any other counsellor that was that supportive. [a lot of agreement/head nodding from others] (P14, gay, male)

Certainly, Rutter (2007) and Smith (1998) suggest that counsellors should take a more active role in providing support for queer youth in schools. Still other participants said students should speak up and challenge the homophobia and transphobia that exists in schools. For example, when asked why he thought HTP persists in high school, P12 thought students should take the harassment more seriously and recognize the potential impact their words could have:

I think that a lot of people think that homophobia is a joke. It’s like, it’s OK, it’s just a joke among their friends ... they joke about it too much, and they don’t realize how serious it really is. It’s just as discriminating as calling someone black, or nigger, or anything like that. It’s just as bad and some people don’t think of it like that. ... It’s just the same as being racist! Being homophobic ... and they don’t seem to make the connection there. And I think that’s the problem. ... Like if someone was to walk around the halls and start calling you nigger ... everybody in the hall would probably smash them [laughs] and throw them into a locker. But someone calls you a faggot, and nobody says anything. [P9: No one does anything.] (P12, gay, male)

Participant 8 believed that it was partly his (and other students) responsibility to do something about the HTP in his high school:
I say Ok, well if my school's not gay friendly, I'm going to make it gay friendly. And I'm going to do everything I can, in my power, to get there. And so, I took on a bit of the onus in saying Ok, if I just sit here and complain and don't do anything, that's what's going to happen, right? I went to my counsellors and I went to my school and said, have you guys heard of [gay youth group], have you guys heard of all these places? And they were like 'no, no, no' and I said Ok well here's the phone numbers [acts like he's giving something], here's the addresses, call them, get information, and put that information out in the lobby for LGBT, transgender, whatever, to come and look at it. Because otherwise it's not going to get done. So I found that road really was productive... no one's going to do it for you. You have to do things for yourself. No one's going to say, I'll go hunt down the bullies and find them for you.' Like no one's going to do that. You have to be productive for yourself ... it does take confidence, it does take guts, but, at least in my experience, it worked. (P8, gay, male)

Researchers at Human Rights Watch (Bochenek & Widney, 2001) and Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) have also suggested that students can act as (and should be treated as) agents of change. Young people should demand and develop means of addressing the harassment they face (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). In Kenway and Fitzclarence's (1997, 124) opinion, students should be treated as "agents rather than passive recipients of anti-violence reform". For many people, GSAs are the most obvious way to provide a space for anti-homophobia and transphobia organizing in schools; yet, participants did not always think this was the best option.

A Note on Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

Contrary to what is often reported by academics (see for example, Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Radkowsky & Seigel, 1997), not all participants were quick to relate the positive impact of Gay Straight Alliances in their schools. For example, P1 referred to a GSA during our interview session; when I asked whether it benefited them, they answered that ghettoization was sometimes the result:

For whatever reason I was the one who ended up being... stuck with it, you know I didn't perceive myself being stuck with it, but it was like after a while ... the teacher

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61 Ghettoization here refers to the offloading of responsibility for addressing HTP to those involved in the GSA.
sponsor of the GSA just kept on coming to me. And it was unfortunate because I'm not a very political person. And I was having a lot of personal problems at the time so I wasn't really... [trails off] (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Another participant described his GSA as “horrible” and “stupid”, because:

... it was just lots of things that were wrong with it. The first day they were like ‘Ok well introduce yourself and tell us your orientation’ and that. [everyone acts shocked/laughs] I mean that's so... so.... wrong! [all laugh] And then we all went around in a circle and I wasn't ready yet so I lied or whatever. But it was like, for someone who’s questioning... [implying that it made it more difficult] ... and they would even say 'oh you can trust everyone here', but really, can you? (P4, gay, male)

As discussed in Chapter One, sometimes queer youth abuse alcohol and drugs as a way to deal with the homophobia and transphobia they experience. Given this, P1 pointed out, sometimes GSAs and other queer youth groups may not be a positive influence. Talking about a queer person they knew who became increasingly isolated from family and friends in high school and who relied more on a queer youth group for support (referred to earlier), P1 said:

She increasingly depended on people at [queer youth group] to give her a place to crash if she didn’t feel like she could go home. Unlike her high school friends, many of these people who she started hanging out with were above 19 and could get into clubs and bars and buy alcohol. They were self supporting and did not depend on their parents in large part for money, and the jobs that they held (if they even held jobs) were more flexible than high school which allowed them the ability to party a lot. They also started bringing her to house parties. They also introduced her to drugs stronger than marijuana by passing joints around that were laced with harder drugs like heroin and not informing her of this until afterwards. ...she [became] addicted to crystal meth and dealing ecstasy. It was not until a year later when she hit her rock bottom that she quit drugs entirely. (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Despite the evidence that queer youth may use alcohol and drugs as a means to cope with HTP they experience, most researchers tote the positives of GSAs without critically examining how substance abuse and queer youth groups intersect.

Another participant thought high school was a tough age to expect people to take on such serious issues as HTP:

It’s pretty rough, you know you have like grade eight kids who are immature. .... I guess it’s still when everyone’s at that age where people are still not really sure of themselves. I don’t know. It’s a hard thing to do. (P4, gay, male)
A participant in the same group suggested that GSAs would benefit queer youth more if political issues were downplayed and social activities were emphasized. Although their high school did not have a GSA, they spoke hypothetically about what kind of group they would have liked to join:

... having more of a social setting, I think would get more students out, and then, of those students, only a portion of them would be activists, which is cool, but I think it's almost too much to ask of them. ... if anyone had told me in high school, 'come to this meeting' I would have been like 'um, no, I'm going to go hang out with my friends...'. Like let's have fun! Instead of like [serious voice] 'Today we're going to talk about issues, how's everybody doing today?', 'cause that just gets boring, I find. So having someone be like, 'let's go play hockey with all of us and then randomly get a table somewhere', like that kind of thing. (P5, queer/lesbian, *)

Some participants thought GSAs were not inherently worthless, but thought their own had room for improvement. One participant thought his GSA had good intentions but that it could have been more efficient. When asked how his GSA could have been better, P3 responded:

... we only had ... a regular 3 or 4 people every meeting, you know, and that was kind of sad. ... we only had meetings at lunch time so I guess maybe we should have had it after school or something .... I guess that the one thing is that we should have had people actually in the hallways being like you should come to the GSA! Rather than on speaker phone, because, first of all, it's really tough, classrooms are pretty noisy and it hard to talk over it. And second of all, it doesn't address one on one, so it still makes you feel like you're still part of the whole, like lost in the crowd kind of feeling. Whereas if you talk to people one on one maybe you can get a better sense of who they are (P3, gay, gay)

Others shared some positive experiences and suggestions they thought would make GSAs better. For example, P4 talked about the impact one initiative had:

... they put on a poster campaign ... [with] pictures of people and details about their bashing. So that was a good event, because people I saw stopped and I just saw how people reacted and were outraged. That was a good event. (P4, gay, male)

Overall, participants stressed raising visibility of queer people in high schools (both students and staffs) as well as increasing awareness about how innocuous homophobic and transphobic sentiments, language, and behaviours can affect them. One way to raise awareness about HTP, participants thought, would to include the topic in teacher training.
Teaching the Teachers: Lack of Resources & Teacher Training

Most participants attributed teachers and counsellors' ignorance or discomfort when it came to addressing HTP harassment to a lack of training or resources. Consequently, recommendations stressed the importance of providing training about issues that affect LGBTQ youth, either once hired or during the course of teacher education programs.

... if teachers were given ... more training of accepting diversity in the classrooms, I think that would be really helpful. Like stopping that kind of homophobia when it happens in the classroom or even in the hallways, just taking a more proactive stance on it. (P2, gay, male)

P7: If that was actually a part of teacher training and administrator training. If that was something that they learned in school or learned in the training process, or in a workshop, or something, you know. Like, this exists, we need to address it, and here's how you do it, and here's what's going on.
BH: Do you think that's something that would have to be mandatory?
P7: ... I think that should be a mandatory part of teacher training. Like, not just homophobia, homophobia being one component of it, but homophobia, racism, classism, whatever. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Participants believed that students, teachers, and counsellors were not educated about homosexuality or gender variance and that, often, HTP stemmed from such ignorance. Other researchers have attributed teachers' failure to intervene in HTP bullying to feelings that administrators would not back their decision to do so and a lack of resources to deal with homophobia and transphobia (Meyer, 2007b). In interviews with six Canadian teachers, Meyer (2007b) found that those who had some level of training regarding homophobia and transphobia were more likely to intervene when they encountered bullying related to those phobias. Decisions to intervene also hinged on the culture of the larger community in which the school was located. Factors related to geography, social conservatism and religiousness are discussed below.
"The Land of the Severely Normal"\textsuperscript{62}: Lack of Exposure Related to Geography, Religiousness and Social Conservatism

Geographical location, social conservatism and religiousness are not always related; Karslake's (2007) movie, \textit{For the Bible Tells Me So}, illustrates how some Catholic\textsuperscript{63} and Christian people are supportive of family members who come out. Participants mentioned these factors, however, sometimes as a dyad or triad contributing to HTP in their high schools. P7 seemed to associate urban locations with acceptance, or at least awareness of issues affecting queer people:

I think part of it is definitely geographical location. I went to ... a school that's located ... [in] Vancouver ... It's kind of in an area that's ... becoming trendy and it's a little bit off beat already, so it's kind of alternative, ... so I think that helped a lot and I think that it helped a lot to have teachers who came from that, also urban background. And had been dealing with, I mean, gay issues in the newspaper or around in the community. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Participant 8 also made reference to geographical location on local and global levels:

We're really lucky because we live in a great city that allows you to be really gay, like if you go to Vancouver, and open. You know. We're really lucky. But if you go to Abbotsford, maybe not so much. So ... that's where I see it from too. You know, where I live. That's a huge part of it. ...you couldn't be doing this in like Rwanda, for instance, where you get stoned to death if you're gay. Or you get killed in Iran if you're gay. (P8, gay, male)

Other participants identified lack of awareness and social conservatism as factors contributing to HTP:

I think there's a lot of positive things that happen, in like Vancouver and other more liberal places, but I think where things really need to be concentrated are places like [name of smaller city], [it's] not a small town but it's a really conservative town and ... it could change so many people's lives, just by dealing with a city like that. (P2, gay, male)

I think that a lot of people just didn't know any better. ... they weren't exposed to anything like that. They grew up in Conservative households. (P2, gay, male)

\textsuperscript{62} This phrase it taken from the title of Gloria Filax's (2006) book entitled \textit{Queer Youth in the Province of the Severely Normal}, which documents the plight of queer youth in Alberta.

\textsuperscript{63} For research on homophobia in Canadian Catholic schools, see Callaghan (2007).
Another participant believed people in her town were influenced by beliefs espoused by leaders of some organized religions. Here she seems to associate Church attendance with conservative beliefs. When asked if she agreed with P7's assertion (above) that geographical location played a part in HTP harassment in high schools, P6 replied:

Pretty much, yeah. Everyone goes to Church [in the area she was in]. And if they don't go to Church, their Grandma goes to Church. [laughs] ... I think it happens because of the parents. The parents don't accept it [being gay], they take that down to you, put it down onto you, so you're not going to accept it, you're not going to understand it, you're going to be scared and you're going to take it out [on other people]. If your parents go to church, you're more likely to go to church... (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

P6 reinforces what Radkowsky and Siegel (1997, 193) observed over a decade ago when they said, "the negative stance of most major organized religions toward homosexuality has greatly contributed to anti-gay bias in our society". Aside from religions, participants believed lessons about homosexuality and gender variance learned in other social and cultural institutions seeped into schools, including messages from the law and media, which are discussed in the next section.

**Schools as a Microcosm of Larger Society: Systemic Silence and HTP**

A few participants thought schools only exacerbated the silence or negative messages about HTP people emanated from larger society. One participant (P8) noted the historical maltreatment of LGBTQQ people by the State through law. Echoing his sentiment, Radkowsky and Siegel (1997, 193) note that due to the codification of homophobia and transphobia into "religious beliefs, laws, and social policies, anti-gay [and trans] bias is an intrinsic part of the socialization process for all youth".

Another participant (P5, gay, male) implicated the media for portraying heterosexuality as the norm, a factor that he saw as increasingly influential today as children's
time in front of television (and now on the internet) rivals time spent with working parents.\footnote{Although written in a British context, Sanderson’s (1994) Mediawatch: The Treatment of male and female homosexuality in the British Media provides insight about how the media frequently portrays queer people.}

Participant 4 agreed that the media often fails to portray homosexuality and gender variance:

\ldots when we were first getting started with the GSA we passed around this survey\ldots
I remember reading one of them, [they] said it’s just something that... isn’t very common, isn’t as portrayed as much [in the media] and that’s why people are scared of it, they’re scared of \ldots difference \ldots and they just see it as something that’s completely foreign. (P2, gay, gay)\footnote{Speaking about cinema originating from Hollywood and Hong Kong, Helen Leung (2008, 50) asserts that LGBTIQ people are virtually invisible in film and argues, \ldots when queer characters are on screen, they largely occupy marginal roles- as neighbour, best friend, victim, or killer -and (until quite recently) are rarely protagonists.}

Not only do the media convey their own biases, they also report on those of others.

In his research on queer youth and suicide, Kitts (2005, 625) poignantly notes that a young person:

\ldots does not need to be directly victimized to be affected by discrimination against gays. Matthew Shephard, a University of Wyoming student, was brutally murdered in 1998 because he was gay. What impact did this devastating event have on young individuals who were beginning to realize that they too were gay and living in the same society in which the murder was praised? What messages are protestors and politicians, including our President, who are against gay marriage sending to gay adolescents? How does living in a society where people can be rejected, disapproved of, or hated for their sexuality affect a gay adolescent’s self-esteem or identity development?

Although Kitts (2005) speaks about America, his words can be easily transferred to the current context in Canada. In 2001, Aaron Webster, a gay man, was bludgeoned to death in Vancouver and non-fatal attacks happen even in the most diverse of Canadian cities (Janoff, 2005). Our current Prime Minister, Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, has consistently voted against legislation meant to extend human rights of LGBTIQ people. These messages from larger society have an impact, not only on queer youth, but on others who learn that LGBTIQ people do not deserve to be treated as respectable citizens of our Nation let alone in schools.
The final theme arising from participants conjectures about why HTP persists related to the maturation process.

**HTP Bullying as a Normal Part of Growing Up**

Some participants thought perhaps bullying, including HTP harassment, was a natural result of the maturation process or was a means to bolster one’s own self confidence. High school might be a time when homophobia and transphobia is prevalent because students are reaching sexual maturity and yet are still immature. When asked why they thought HTP harassment happened in high school, P1 answered:

I think that homophobic and transphobic bullying happened in my high school because that’s when for a lot of people sexual feelings really start raging (at least for a lot of people) so there’s a greater awareness of sexuality in general and it becomes important to define ... “normal” sexual feelings .... now that people are more aware of queer/trans issues and of the idea that sexual orientation is intrinsic maybe people feel as though they have more to prove. Maybe in order to reinforce the idea that they’re heterosexual/avoid any ambiguity, bullying is a way of showing one’s sexual orientation by asserting what one finds to be repugnant... by asserting what one is by asserting what one is not? (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Herek (1992, 156) makes a similar assertion about the roots of prejudice against queer people, saying homophobia “helps people to define who they are by directing hostility toward gay people as a symbol of what they are not”. Similarly, Pascoe (2007) and Kimmel (1994) have explained homophobic behaviour as a means of asserting one’s heterosexual masculinity. Some participants discussed the role of sexual differentiation in HTP bullying in a slightly different context. P12 wondered whether another male’s persistent harassment was a result of his latent homosexuality:

... he seemed to pay attention to me more than anybody else. I almost think he was gay. .... Because he just seemed to, like, I don’t know, I took off my shirt or something and like... he... made some weird stupid comment. (P12, gay, male)
Other participants thought bullying was a result of insecurities that are sometimes a normal part of adolescence or teen years. Problems at home may exacerbate those insecurities, as P2 stated:

... their parents also ... a lot of the people were in really tough situations ... so I think they had a lot of problems at home. ... just about everyone I knew came from broken families or abusive families, their parents were drug dealers [laughs], there were quite a few. So they had a lot of issues too that I think they needed to deal with and they kind of dealt with it by putting other people down I think. (P2, gay, male)

To counteract HTP messages students may learn at home and in the media, participants expressed the importance of positive representations of queer people in schools. They believed students and staff should be educated about the potential impact of HTP language and behaviours in schools. One participant, however, openly questioned the extent to which inclusion of LGBTIQ people in school curriculum would challenge lessons learned at home.

I think they can put an influence on the kids life, but the chances of changing it are slim to none. Because when they get home it'll go back to how their parents are. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)

Yet P7, the other participant in the group disagreed with P6, stating:

I think that they can. I don't know ... just kind of teach kids that it' OK to believe what you believe, but, you know, it's not OK to push it onto others. And, teach people, you know, respect! That's all it is, just respect. (P7, queer, androgynous)

In general, however, P7 and P6 were unsure of the extent to which HTP bullying could, or should, be challenged in high school. Instead, they thought the severity of bullying incidents should be addressed. When asked how we could address HTP in high schools, these participants said:

P6: You'll never be able to stop it.
P7: Yeah. You can't stop it. For sure. (P7, queer, androgynous)
P6: And for one thing, I would never want to stop it. Because it does help people grow. [P7: Yeah] It just needs to be.. lessened. [P7: Yeah, definitely!] It's really extreme. Back in the day, two guys got in a fight, 'Ok, let's go get a drink now' Nowadays it's not the same.
BH: Why do you think it will never stop? [pause]
P6: Human nature. (P6, lesbian/queer, female)
Following up on this exchange, P7 said they thought that bullying might be a normal part of growing up. They agreed with P6 that bullying could not be eradicated completely, but thought that it needed to be reduced:

I agree with that. I do agree with that. ... you could give everyone, all the students and all the teachers all the sensitivity and awareness training that you wanted and then you’d still have some kid walk up to another kid and go ‘Fuck you fucking faggot!’ and punch him in the face. It would still happen. It’s just kids. ... it’s just part of growth. But I just, I don’t think that it should be at the level of intimidation that it’s at recently. (P7, queer, androgynous)

Most of us can probably agree with calls to address severe forms of bullying. The contention that other forms of harassment cannot, and perhaps should not, be addressed, however, is more controversial. Foucault and Bourdieu might view such a suggestion as an indication of the dominance of (and acquiescence to) the status quo. On the other hand, perhaps, as Foucault (1990) outlines in The History of Sexuality, some level of repression is inevitable and indeed necessary for the formation of a political and group will to improve our place in society. Without identification as an “outsider” group, the queer communities that have formed might not exist. Queer community formation and resistance movements have been a response to others resistance to us.

The problem, I believe, with saying that we need to address the extremity of HTP bullying lies in the invisibility of subtle forms of HTP harassment. We are at a paradoxical time when it comes to HTP harassment in schools. As Foucault has argued in reference to the Criminal Justice System in the 1800s, there has been a shift from “spectacular” forms of discipline to more subtle forms of inducing gender conformity and (at least the appearance) of heterosexuality. In these participants’ experiences, physical violence is not the dominant form of HTP bullying; yet, this is where our focus remains. By proposing to tolerate subtle bullying, we contribute to the invisibility of the most frequent manifestations of homophobia and transphobia and exacerbate perceptions of harmlessness when they are
visible. In addition, less visible forms of HTP create environments where physical manifestations may take place, undermining any effort to reduce those forms as well.

I believe, rather than focussing on more extreme forms of harassment, we need to raise awareness about more frequent and subtle manifestations of HTP and the effects they have on queer youth. Working to address the underlying homophobic and transphobic sentiments and to debunk the stereotypes that fuel them would go a long way towards reducing subtle and extreme manifestations alike (Khayatt, 1994).

In the concluding Chapter, the major findings and themes from the discussions with queer youth who experienced HTP in a B.C. high school are reviewed. This “topological map of the terrain” can provide a starting point for addressing subtle and overt forms of HTP (Foucault, 1980). Raising visibility of queer people and the issues that affect them was seen as essential to this goal. Bourdieu and Foucault see critical reflection on power relations as vital for resistance and change as well, and their thoughts lend support to participants’ ideas about how to address HTP in schools.
CHAPTER FOUR DISCUSSION: USING BOURDIEU AND FOUCAULT TO EXPLAIN EXPERIENCES WITH HTP IN B.C. HIGH SCHOOLS

... knowledge can be emancipatory. The better we understand the external constraints on our thoughts and action, the more we will see through them and the less effective they will become (Hoy, 1999, 18).

As Hoy (1999) comments, knowledge can help us to become more aware of power relations and appreciate how they shape and are shaped by social norms. In this final Chapter, the works of Foucault and Bourdieu are used to clarify the most prevalent themes of this study on HTP in B.C. high schools. First, parallels are drawn between Foucault’s (1977) discussion of shifts in techniques of discipline in the 1800s and forms of HTP bullying in high school. Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of symbolic violence is useful to describe the more subtle forms of HTP that seem to characterize high schools in B.C. today. Second, it is argued that high schools constitute what a “surveillance society” (Foucault, 1977) in which sexual orientation and gender identity, or the behaviours and mannerisms often associated with them, are closely scrutinized. The effects of such careful monitoring on what Bourdieu (1991) terms the habitus are detailed. Finally, this Chapter highlights how participants recommendations for change, and perhaps this thesis project in general, are in line with Bourdieu and Foucault’s call for “desubjugation”, challenging social hierarchies that

66 These parallels were first illustrated in a paper Dr. Burtch and I presented at the Canadian Sociological Association General Meeting in June 2008 titled Beyond the Black & White: Queer Youth and Informal Lessons About Gender Binaries in High School.
are normally taken for granted. On their own, participants recommendations are valuable policy recommendations, but grounded in theory they are invaluable. As Winfree and Abadinsky (2003, 15) note:

Policies that are devoid of theoretical underpinnings... may have limited utility, as they may meet immediate needs if based on current research but be unable to meet the demands of a changing society.

I believe, as Foucault and Bourdieu did, that even the knowledge of, for example, which forms of HTP are most frequent and least likely to be addressed, provides a starting place for change. The participants’ recommendations serve as useful guidelines, from insiders, as to how homophobia and transphobia can be addressed in high schools.

Introduction

Foucault (1980, 62) suggests that researchers are better off providing a “topological and geological survey of the battlefield” than acting as advisors. In this thesis, participants provide a survey of what is going on in schools by sharing their experiences with HTP bullying and how they were affected. Recommendations made in this final section come from these queer youth who have experienced harassment and who wish to work to reduce homophobia and transphobia in high schools. In addition, I believe the recommendations promote awareness about power relations and expand our thinking about gender identity or expression and sexual orientation. Foucault advocates raising awareness of the range of possibilities neglected under the status quo (Hoy, 1999, 82). It is hoped that the recommendations in this section help to “shake up habitual ways of working and thinking” (Foucault, 1996, 462) and open a space for reflection and dialogue about some of the taken for granted assumptions related to social norms and hierarchies in our society and schools.
First, however, a few words on the limitations of these findings. Some of these limitations are outlined in Chapter Two but they are important to consider here when discussing.

First, the sample size of this exploratory study on experiences with homophobia and transphobia in high schools in B.C. was 16 people, and because of a lack of information from one participant, was reduced to 15. The findings are not generalizable to all queer youth or all high schools. From the discussions, however, observations and recommendations are made that may apply to some queer youth.

Second, and a factor not outlined in Chapter Two, this study does not explore the ways marginalized identities intersect and may lead to forms of harassment and discrimination. For instance, although participants shared the various ethnicities they identified with, no in-depth analysis was undertaken on how those backgrounds may have played into participants' experiences. In the future, researchers may want to consider how the intersection of various identities (e.g. race, gender, abilities, class) influences experiences with HTP and how participants make meaning of them.

Finally, as a reminder, there were no trans or two-spirit identified people in the study. I recognize that these communities face unique challenges and forms of harassment, however, “T” acronyms are included because I believe that at least some of the findings from this study will be relevant for them. There is a need for research that focuses on the unique issues these communities face, especially in regards to youth, in a Canadian context. Recommendations for researchers hoping to fill that void are included in the Introduction and Limitations sections.

The following sections draws on the works of Foucault and Bourdieu to provide theoretical understandings of the major findings that were detailed in Chapter Three.
Using Foucault and Bourdieu to Explain Manifestations of HTP

Forms of HTP: The “Spectacle” of Physical Violence

The first area explored in this thesis study pertained to the forms, frequency and context of HTP bullying in B.C. high schools. The findings from this thesis are that subtle forms of harassment (i.e. verbal harassment, exclusion, general heterosexism and genderism) are the most common forms of HTP participants experienced. Yet, some participants reported that physical harassment motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity persists in B.C. high schools. Foucault’s discussion of “discipline and punishment” is useful in contextualizing this persistence.

In *Discipline and Punishment* (1977), Foucault traces the shift in techniques of discipline from the 18th and 19th centuries. The 18th century featured corporal forms of discipline (hanging, torture etc.) to make an example of the punished. In the 19th century, Foucault (1977) argues, there was a shift to a “surveillance society”. Focussing first on corporal forms of discipline, Foucault says a small group of people (the King and law enforcers) subjected others to inordinate amounts of pain and torture aimed at instilling fear in the population and acting as a general deterrent. In this era, and through the “spectacle”, the unruly body was “the major target of penal repression” (Foucault, 8). Similarly, I argue, the use of physical discipline in schools to promote gender conformity is characteristic of the “society of spectacle” in which punishment is designed to set an example and to induce adherence to bodily and behavioural norms.

Treating educational institutions as sites of discipline, Middleton (1998, 9) argues that “[t]hroughout the educational histories of Western countries, male and female bodies have
been subjected in schools to normalizing practices which reinforce this opposition". In her analysis of school bullying, Middleton describes efforts to enforce gender norms directed at the body, in the form of corporal punishment, a technique established in many schools until the mid 20th Century:

... many (but not all) schools demanded that teachers administer corporal punishment in order to avoid being positioned as 'weak' or 'soft' by their colleagues and students. Authority was, at least in part, equated with physical stature and with strength, a quality deemed to be lacking in women and suspect in men with smaller bodies.... corporal punishment can be read as complicit in the construction of embodied masculinity and embodied femininity (Middleton 1998, 36, author's emphasis).

Corporal punishment has been prohibited in Canada since 2004, at least at the hands of teachers. Yet, as participants pointed out, physical aggression persists, mostly among students.

Physical force can work to validate one's own hegemonic femininity or masculinity. With the decline of corporal punishment, this imperative may have transferred from school authorities to the student body. By failing to curtail students' efforts to monitor and regulate gender transgressions, it is possible that teachers and administrators tacitly grant permission for youth to perform corporal punishments they can no longer mete out. Along with the transfer of power to punish through physical means, the instruments of discipline shifted as well; what was once carried out through external tools (straps, rulers, and canes) became an embodied practice with the use of fists, feet, mouths, and other body parts. Yet, as Foucault argues about discipline in the nineteenth Century, I argue there may have been a shift from

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67 Corporal punishment was not prohibited in schools nationwide until a 2004 Supreme Court decision affirmed parents' rights to physically discipline children between the ages of two and twelve. In regards to the use of corporal punishment in schools, Justice McLachlan said teachers may use force to "remove children from classrooms or secure compliance with instructions..." but that, in general, "corporal punishment by teachers is not acceptable" (Canadian Foundation for Children..., 2004, ¶38). Most (but not all) schools, however, had policies against physical discipline of students by teachers before then.
spectacular and physical forms of harassment to more subtle yet effective manifestations of HTP.

**Forms of HTP: “Gentle” Forms of Violence**

Speaking still of techniques of discipline in the 1800s, Foucault (1977) writes about a shift in power relations from spectacular and physical forms of punishment to subtle and yet effective means of discipline applied by all members of society. Foucault sees discipline operating so efficiently in modern society that he compares it to a “machine”. He attributes this efficiency to a diffusion of first, the power to discipline and second the people targeted. According to Foucault, discipline is no longer directed from one body to another, nor characterized by exorbitant amounts of force. On the contrary, modern techniques of discipline are used by, and targeted at, the entire social body. With everyone able to monitor everybody, discipline has become much more universal and yet much less noticeable. Modern forms of discipline, Foucault (1977) argues serve a “generalized function”, discouraging those who transgress social norms from doing so again at the same time as they deter others from wanting to do so in the first place.

Like Foucault, Bourdieu (1991) focuses on ‘invisible’ forms of discipline and uses the term “symbolic power” to describe them. He defines symbolic power as “a power of constructing reality, and one which tends to establish a *gnoeseological* order: the immediate meaning of the world (and in particular of the social world)” (Bourdieu, 1991, 166, emphasis in original). We can see symbolic power at work in the social hierarchies that tend to value certain sexual identities and gender expressions over others. When one operates under the assumption that social hierarchies are natural (or mistrecognizes that they are socially
constructed) and imposes that view on others, a form of symbolic violence has taken place (Bourdieu, 1990). Symbolic violence, or symbolic domination, involves:

[a] power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and thus the world itself. [l]t is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is misrecognized as arbitrary (Bourdieu, 1991, 170).

Symbolic violence is exercised when teachers or students frame heterosexuality as the only, or at least the normal, sexual orientation. This occurs, for example, though curriculum that erases, or at least overlooks, queer people, through assumptions that students are heterosexual and through HTP harassment itself. Gender expressions are also caught up in symbolic power relations, through which certain behaviours and appearances are valued over others based on one’s perceived biological sex. In relation to gender, educators exert symbolic violence when they impose their perceptions of gender norms. For example, a physical education teacher may encourage a young man to engage in the “rough and tumble” sport of football rather than the graceful athleticism of gymnastics. Even subtle forms of HTP create the perception that LGBTTQ identities and the appearances or behaviours often associated with them are unnatural and unacceptable, constituting a form of symbolic violence. As Bourdieu (1991, 51) says,

...the ways of looking, sitting, standing, keeping silent, or even of speaking ('reproachful looks' or 'tones', 'disapproving glances' and so on) are full of injunctions that are powerful and hard to resist precisely because they are silent and insidious, insistent and insinuating.

When experienced by queer people, Bourdieu (2001, 119) argues, symbolic violence "takes the form of a denial of public, visible existence". "Invisibilization", a neologism coined by Bourdieu, denies social and legal legitimacy and encourages stigmatization of those who attempt to make themselves visible (Bourdieu, 2001, 119). In high schools, subtle or symbolic forms of violence lead to the harassment of youth who do not exhibit behaviours
or appearances associated with valued identity categories (such as heterosexuality and gender conformity). Yet, frequently people deny, or overlook, the fact that there may be people (some LGBTTQ) who are offended or affected by homophobia and transphobia. This is especially true in high school contexts where young people are present. Consequently, educational institutions, often perceived as apolitical fields, may be carrying out a form of symbolic violence (and condoning other forms of aggression) as they quietly reinforce dominant worldviews (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, 4) say that symbolic violence “constitutes a form of violence precisely because it “generates the illusions that it is not violence”. Speaking of this illusion, Bourdieu (2001, 1) describes symbolic violence as “a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims”. Subtle, constant techniques of discipline are more effective and more likely legitimized precisely because they go unrecognized as forms of power. This “misrecognition”, as Bourdieu often calls it, of subtle forms of homophobia and transphobia was evident in participants’ narratives, especially in their struggles to define bullying.

Although physical harassment was not the most frequent form of bullying reported in this study, participants (as do most others) seemed to focus on addressing “extreme” forms of HTP over other subtle but more frequent manifestations. When recalling subtle forms of harassment that seem to flourish in heterosexist and gender-limiting school environments, most participants compared them to the physical harassment others sometimes face and downplayed their own experiences. Participants “it could have been worse” mentality raises the questions, when, and why, is any level of homophobia or transphobia acceptable?

One important finding of this thesis, then, is that more attention needs to be given to “gentle” forms of HTP violence; surely, more extreme forms of homophobia and
transphobia will flourish as long as more subtle manifestation persist. Participants discussed the role of teachers, teachers training, counsellors and students themselves in intervening and raising awareness about subtle HTP in B.C. high schools. The most resonant theme of all of these recommendations, however was that someone needs to intervene.

In addition, participant narratives indicate that forms of HTP may vary according to the gender, or perceived gender, of those involved.

**Who is Bullying? The Role of Gender**

Participants frequently discussed gender in relation to HTP bullying. First, participants indicated that males were more likely to engage in HTP harassment than females. When speaking about females who do engage in HTP, participants said young women use more subtle and indirect techniques (i.e. gossip) more so than males. Perhaps, then, females do engage in HTP as often as males but do so in ways that are less likely to draw attention. Overall, however, participants in this study implicate males and hegemonic masculinity as problematic for queer youth in high school. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) attribute males’ proclivity for violence in schools to attempts to claim, or at least adhere to, hegemonic masculinity. Criminologists and sociologists like Connell (2002, 2000, 1995), Kimmel (1994; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003), and Messerschmidt (2007, 2004, 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) have started to deconstruct how hegemonic masculinity can negatively affect youth in high school, but the findings from this research indicate that there is more work to be done.
Creating Docile Bodies: The Silencing Effects of “Gentle Violence”

There is no need for... physical violence... Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. In this “machine”, no one is exempt from the gaze; everyone is at once the surveyor and the surveyed (Foucault, 1980, 155).

The second area of exploration in this thesis was effects of HTP on queer youth in high school. As socially constructed and valued identity categories, heterosexuality and gender conformity are promoted and enforced in high school environments by students and teachers alike. As a result, students learn to behave in ways that allow them to “pass” by stifling cues often associated with queer identities. Bourdieu (1991, 52) would argue queer youth “learn not only to act. The power of suggestion... instead of telling the child what he must do, tells him what he is, and this leads him to become durably what he has to be...”.

As Hetrick and Martin (1984, 11) observe, at a time when most young people are “learning how to socialize, young [queer] people are learning to conceal large areas of their lives from family and friends”. Participants’ constant self-censorship in high school and in the years after constitute part of what Foucault terms the “surveillance society”. Central to the surveillance society is the Panopticon, a prison design and penal device designed by Jeremy Bentham to increase surveillance. Foucault (1980, 147) describes the innovation as:

[a] perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the centre of this, a tower, pierced, by large windows opening on the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell.

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68 Bourdieu (1991) describes symbolic violence as a gentle violence.
69 Passing is a term that can be used to describe members of a group (i.e. sexual or gender identity) who attempt to present themselves as another (Monette, 2004).
All that is then needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker or a schoolboy.70

Generalizing the concept of the Panopticon, Foucault says, an “inspecting gaze” characterizes modern society and current techniques of discipline, creating a panoptic society (1980, 155). In this “machine”, we are “the gaze” referred to in the quotation beginning this section; but we are also its subjects as it emanates from and onto ourselves as well as from and onto others. Under this regime, we monitor and encourage behaviours congruent with social norms and stifle those that are not. Foucault (1980, 107, emphasis in original) terms this new era the “society of normalization”.71

High school may be a time when gender expression and sexuality are monitored especially closely. The association of adolescence with sexual maturity leads to hypersurveillance of students by school staff, classmates, and even themselves. Student bodies are sexualized with an increasing number of behaviours read as indicators of homo- or heterosexual sexuality. Through HTP harassment, adherence to heterosexual gender norms becomes an imperative. Consequently, students subject themselves to the “inspecting gaze” just as much as they do their classmates (and their classmates do them) creating a “surveillance society” within educational institutions (and constituting, as I understand it, a form of biopower). Speaking of the surveillance society, Foucault (1977, 304) says:

70 Although he disagrees somewhat with Foucault’s timeline and the sharp contrast he portrays in modes of discipline, Garland (1985, 12) also discusses the “day-to-day objectives” of the prison regime in the late Victorian years (late 1800s). He describes these as “the production of a disciplined and orderly regime; a regime which enforced an intense form of obedience through a number of uniformly distributed conditions and procedures” (Garland, 1985, 12). Like Foucault, Garland argues that the architecture of the prison building played a large role in establishing surveillance and control.

71 In speaking about modern penology, Garland (1985) makes a similar argument, saying that the power to discipline has become de-centralized from the prison system and shifted to other social organizations and bodies that aim to prevent offending and to normalize. He refers to these institutions as “the shallow end of penalty”, used for those who are not yet criminal or else returning to normal life after a period of institutionalization (Garland, 1985, 238). At the same time, the modern era is characterized by responsibilization where each of us is expected to monitor and be responsible for our own behaviours.
The judges of normality are present everywhere. … each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements.

Certainly, such surveillance does not cease once youth leave the high school environment. Bourideu (1990) would argue that HTP affects participants in the long-term because of its impact on the “habitus”.

**Long-term Effects of HTP and the Surveillance Society**

Experiences with heterosexism and genderism, along with HTP harassment, teach us enduring lessons through which “the whole social order imposes itself at the deepest level of bodily hexis” (Bourdieu, 1990, 75). Once internalized, or embodied, norms related to sexuality and gender and the corresponding behaviours expected of us become part of what Bourdieu terms the ‘habitus’. The habitus, Bourdieu (1991) explains, can be seen as our “second nature”. We determine appropriate courses of action, or know “how to act and respond in the course of [our] daily lives” by comparing present experiences with the circumstances in which the habitus was developed (Bourdieu, 1991, 13). Put into action, or embodied, these (pre)dispositions are termed a “bodily hexis”, “a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu, 1990, 69-70). Our bodily hexis, or the way we behave in our physical world, is practiced in a manner that is wholly unconscious, leading Bourdieu to view the habitus as “not so much a state of mind as a state of body” (Bourdieu, 1991, 13).

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72 The term hexis, Hoy (1999) explains, is our bodily orientation. In other words, it is how we use our body in the social world.

73 Imagining the body as a repository for our past experiences, Bourdieu (1991) described the habitus as incorporated or embodied history; embodied in that abstract norms are physically enacted and reinforced through our behaviours.
According to Bourdieu, then, social interactions, including HTP harassment, tell us not only how to behave; they tell us which identities are accepted and should be adopted and developed (Bourdieu, 1991, 52). In the context of this study, whether they experience HTP directly or not, youth in high school may learn to suppress behaviours and avoid activities that are associated with de-valued queer identities and that lead to harassment. Rather than merely stifling characteristics associated with LGBTQ identities, some youth go to great lengths to prove they are straight, or occupy a straight habitus. Because aggression is often associated with hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality, young males may engage in aggressive behaviours and activities, particularly HTP harassment to avoid being targeted themselves.

Once internalized into our habitus, Bourdieu (1991) says, our thoughts and behaviours are almost automatic. Bourdieu (2001) asserts that internalization and adherence to norms relating to gender and sexuality is a largely unconscious process that does not easily lend itself to undoing. Heterosexist and gender limiting environments, including some high schools in which queer people are not portrayed or discussed in a positive light, are contexts in which we learn that heterosexuality and gender conformity are the norm. The natural appearances of behaviours associated with hegemonic identities, such as male aggression, make them especially resistant to reflection and change. Consequently, the habitus becomes part of the taken-for-granted normative model that created it, strengthening and legitimizing power relations in society. Our failure to critically reflect on

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74 As Redman (2000) points out, several scholars have attributed homophobia in schools to unconscious processes, including unrecognised homosexual urges in the harasser (Freud, 1991), reaction formation (Watney, 1987), "narcissistic rage" about the threat of anal sex to phallocentrism (Bersani, 1988), and "fear of the feminine" (Watney, 1987).
social norms ingrained in our habitus contributes to sustained denigration of certain 
behaviours and the (queer) identities associated with them (Bourdieu, 1991).

In his later works, Bourdieu seems to allow for somewhat more flexibility in the 
"habitus"; critics\(^75\) argue, however, that he overlooks the very human characteristics of 
rational thought, reflexivity and resistance. That participants in this study were able to 
discuss the ways they consciously monitored their own behaviours calls into question 
Bourdieu's contention about the unconscious nature and durability of the habitus. In 
another study, Nayak and Kehily (1996, 217) found that "acting straight" or conveying 
"heterosexual masculinity" was a constant performance for the youth they spoke with. These 
findings contest Bourdieu's belief that behaviours become so ingrained they become second 
nature.

In focussing on the oppressive nature of socialization, Bourdieu fails to account for 
the critical thinking skills \textit{also} encouraged through every day interactions. Analytical thinking 
and reflexivity may be just as enduring as other traits Bourdieu identifies as part of the 
habitus. It makes sense that our past interactions and experiences influence our future 
behaviour, but I believe that Bourdieu downplays our ability to "think grey", that is to 
recognize our world outside binary categories. Alternatively, in his concept of the docile 
body, Foucault leaves open the possibility of resistance.

Foucault (1977, 137) believes that modern forms of discipline (i.e. surveillance and 
other subtle forms of control) are effective at "obtaining holds upon [the body] at the level 
of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity; an infinitesimal power 
over the active body". Subtle, constant, and unnoticeable forms of discipline produce what 
Foucault (1977, 138) calls "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies". A docile body, 
\(^75\) See, for example, Calhoun's (1995) Chapter entitled \textit{Habitus, Field and Capital} and Swartz (1997).
Foucault (1977, 136) says, is one “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved”; in other words, the docile body is open to discipline.76

Many of the youth in this study were subordinated in high school and constituted as docile bodies. The process of subjection (what Foucault deems objectification), Penttinen (2008, 21) explains, involves seeking recognition of one’s existence “in the categorizations that come from the outside”. Many of the youth in this study adopted cues that would encourage others in their high school to see them as straight (or distanced them from the abject77, “other”, or queer identity). The characteristics they attempted to adopt, as well as those they stifled, do not constitute any sexual or gender identity in and of themselves; on the contrary, the young people in this study operated under assumptions and definitions imposed by peers in their school and other aspects of larger society. One could argue that the queer youth in this study were subjected; in Foucault’s terms, they were constituted as objects, and as docile bodies.

Foucault does not view the process of subjection (objectification) and production of the docile body as a result of top down power relations, domination, or of one body controlling the strings of another (I’m thinking here, of course, of a marionette). Instead, Foucault imagines that each and every body is imbued with power. The power of the docile body, however, has been coercively directed towards certain behaviours. Because each of us holds some degree of power, there is always potential for its re-formulation and for resistance. As Penttinen (2008, 25) explains, “subjection is the precondition for agency”;

76 Goffman (1963) has made similar observations about the effects of stigma on people. Using his categories of discredited and discreditable, Radkowski and Siegel (1997, 195) say a discreditable gay youth “who sees what happens to gay adolescents whose sexual orientation is discovered, may spend an enormous amount of energy constantly monitoring what should be unconscious and automatic behaviour”.

77 On the abject, Penttinen (2008, 22) says, “[t]hose who are deemed as abject bodies enable, through differentiation from them, the domain of subjects to exist”. She uses the term synonymously with the social other.
power subjects, but in doing so activates "the subject so that the subject can reinstate or redo the power that preceded its becoming...". In this study, several participants said negative experiences in high school propelled them to make more positive changes in their high school or at least in their peer group.

According to Foucault and Bourdieu, subtle forms of discipline play an important role in normalization. Encouraging critical reflection about the subtle ways we are induced to adhere to norms, however, creates an opportunity for youth to challenge the social hierarchies inherent with them. The youth in this sample were able to reflect on and call into questions the norms that lead to the HTP they experienced. Providing a venue for other young people to engage in critical thinking may help to raise awareness about and, ultimately, create resistance to HTP in high schools.

**Resistance to Oppression in School and Academic Research**

As noted in Chapter Two, there is a tendency in social science research to focus on oppressive practices and to downplay the agency of participants (Darwich, 2008; Fox, 2004; Savin-Williams, 1990). Theorists, including Foucault (1990), have urged researchers to acknowledge how people resist, or push back, against oppressive power relations. In this thesis, ways participants pushed back against HTP in their high school were highlighted.

According to Foucault (1990), sex or sexuality is a central focus of our society. The paradox in such a fascination is the proliferation of discourses around sexuality and increasing desire to engage in them that results. Discourse is a powerful tool of oppression but also for resistance depending on the strategy used and the person who is speaking. In

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78 Discourses can include language as in speech and writing, but also ways of thinking and even behaving.
this sense, the same words can have very different meanings, as Foucault (1990, 101) explains:

... discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. ...it reinforces [power], but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

Foucault argues that the increasing use of labels to categorize (for example, in the medical or psychological fields) can sometimes lead to denigration; however, it also opens a space for a “reverse discourse”. Although Foucault (1990, 101) speaks in terms of medical categories, in general, reverse discourses make it possible for queer identities to speak on “[their] own behalf, ... demand that [their] legitimacy or ‘naturality’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which [they] were ...disqualified”.

In Chapter Three participants expressed the belief that queer people were rarely discussed in their high schools. When LGBTTQ people were referenced, it was often in a negative light. For example, although participants did not agree on the impact of such words, most of them heard phrases like “you’re a fag” quite frequently in their high schools. According to participants, staff and students rarely intervened upon hearing such insults. One participant said that teachers who did intervene framed words associated with queer identities as “bad words”. Several authors, however, have suggested that situations where LGBTTQ people are denigrated can be seen as teachable moments. These opportunities provide a space for negative perceptions and often mis-conceptions about queer people to be challenged. Presenting students with a reverse discourse to negative perceptions of homosexuality and gender variance enables them the opportunity to engage with it and to use it themselves. In this study some participants’ generated reverse discourses of their own.
This thesis has attempted to present ways participants resist oppressive power relations, including their creation and use of reverse discourses. Participants shared various ways they pushed back against the HTP harassment they encountered through humour, physical violence and by channelling the oppressive power into more constructive endeavours. In fact, three participants described their high school experiences as generally positive, mostly because they found support from classmates and staff, but also because they worked to create a safe environment for themselves. Some participants resisted 'victim' labels by volunteering for this thesis study with the express intent to discuss positive experiences and how HTP helped them to grow. Positive experiences are especially useful in thinking about how they could be replicated and what changes could be made so that queer youth in high schools feel safe.

Participants who believed classmates and/or teachers at least somewhat supported them in high school had valuable insights that could help to create similar environments in other schools. In other cases, discussing positive outcomes may have helped to reconcile participation in a study that could bring up negative feelings they may not have reflected upon as of late. Although more work is needed to learn about HTP in Canadian high schools, including why the phobias persist, which is the topic of the next section, research exploring more positive experiences would be just as useful.

**Why are we Subjected? Explaining HTP in B.C. High Schools**

The third area explored in this thesis involved participants’ speculations about why HTP harassment persists in B.C. high schools. The major themes that emerged were gender regulation, silence or negative stereotypes about queer people, and bullying as part of the maturation process.
Beyond the Black and White: Gender Regulation in High Schools

First, participants implicitly and directly identified gender variance as a precipitating factor in expressions of HTP. Many of the participants were not ‘out’ about their sexual orientation in high school and were read as queer because of their gender variance. Foucault and Bourdieu implicate the role of gender in various oppressive power relations.

Foucault and Bourdieu note the tendency for us to organize our social world in oppositions or “mythical categories” that are judged in relation to the other (Bourdieu, 2001, 24). Gender is a significant example of this tendency, as Bourdieu (2001, 24, emphasis in original) believes it only exists “relationally – [as] a body socially differentiated from the opposite gender…”. Binary distinctions like male and female cause us to overlook the commonalities and overlap between valued and de-valued identity categories and, in this case, the range of possible gender expressions that elude such simplistic classifications (Bourdieu, 2001, 93).

Due to the widespread belief in Western societies that gender is determined by biological sex (Pascoe, 2007), gender and gender expression are usually classified under one of two categories (masculine or feminine). Even biological sex categories (male or female), though, can be seen as social constructs that fail to represent all of the biological possibilities (Fausto-Sterling 2000, 1992). Yet, we hold onto sex and gender categories so tightly that when we encounter bodies that contradict them we find ways to alter the bodies, through incentives, disincentives or even surgery before we alter our frameworks (Middleton, 1998). Viewing gender in such strict terms causes us to overlook the wide range of naturally occurring gender identities and expressions and to view those who fail to adhere to hegemonic gender expressions as unnatural. Negative reactions to gender non-conformity

79 “Beyond the Black and White” was the name of a 2008 paper authored with Dr. Burtch (Haskell & Burtch, 2008).
are framed as natural, justified or legitimate. That a project on homophobic and transphobic bullying in high school even exists is testament to this process.

Foucault (1977) believes that social norms, including those related to sexuality and gender, become so ingrained that any threat to them is seen as a threat to social order and can result in rejection. Rejection, ostracism, and aggression can function as deterrents to certain behaviours, especially gender non-conformity. According to participants, educational institutions are fertile ground for the differentiation, segregation and maltreatment that Bourdieu and Foucault describe, with educators, peers and even architectural structure\textsuperscript{80} contributing to the division of males and females.

The findings from this study indicate that youth who disrupt dominant assumptions linking biological sex, gender, and gender expression may be the most affected by HTP bullying. If this is the case, trans and gender variant youth may be most at-risk of experiencing HTP harassment and perhaps the most direct forms. Wyss (2004, 710) concurs with this assertion, saying:

...among the queer young people who may have the most difficulty are trans and genderqueer youth. Their relationships with peers are fraught not only with the usual adolescent tensions but also with dynamics introduced when 'alternative' gender identities come face to face with the homophobia and transphobia that are rampant in almost all schools.

Elsewhere Dr. Burtch and I (Haskell & Burtch, 2008) have argued for the reframing and re-naming of homophobic bullying to emphasize the importance of gender. In her work, Namaste (1996) has proposed the term “gender-bashing”; I have adopted and used “transphobia” throughout this thesis. Because of the aforementioned propensity to associate

\textsuperscript{80} Washrooms are one example of how differences between males and females are accentuated and how differentiation is routinely encouraged. In The History of Sexuality Vol. 1 (1990, page 27-28), Foucault discusses the juxtaposition between the silence within the walls of various institutions when it came to matters of sexuality and the tremendous preoccupation that builders must have had with it.
gender variance with homosexuality, it is difficult to tease out the motivating factors for harassment and to label incidents as either homophobic or transphobic. Often these classifications are made solely on the basis of the sexual and/or gender identity of the person harassed, without critical assessment of the motives or discomfort that lead to the harassment.

To reflect the role that gender plays in HTP harassment, I advocate for the use of “transphobia” and apply it beyond situations where trans people are targeted. It is hoped that using the term more broadly may help to call attention to how regulation of gender norms can sometimes intersect with the regulation of sexuality. Studies on homophobic bullying often refer to or include trans youth but focus on the regulation of sexual orientation rather than gender. Many of the youth in these studies experience harassment because of their gender variance; yet, there has been almost no research on the ways that trans and gender variant youth are affected by transphobia and the propagation of mainstream gender norms in high schools. There is a dire need, then, to reframe our explorations and to call attention to the ways that strict gender expectations may motivate homophobia and transphobia.

In addition to calling attention to gender as a motivating factor for HTP bullying, participants’ illustrate the importance of exploring how HTP is experienced differently according to one’s gender. Participants said classmates and teachers regulated gender norms related to masculinity more rigorously than they did those related to femininity. Several participants in this study said that “effeminate males” were most likely to experience HTP harassment in Physical Education classes, venues where the associations between aggression, masculinity, and heterosexuality are especially clear.
Many would argue that feminist movements have broadened views on how women can behave and appear. Although there is an increasing movement to challenge hegemonic notions of masculinity, one could argue that males are not privy to the same leeway in terms of gender expression that females have gained. As Walls (2008, 62) says, “[h]eterosexual femininity is not as tied to possessing gender appropriate traits as is heterosexual masculinity”.

Burn (2000, 3) posits a different explanation for the prevalence of HTP directed at males over females, saying:

This difference may be due in part to the general invisibility of lesbianism in comparison to male homosexuality, an invisibility which contributes to an out-of-sight-out-of-mind situation. Worldwide, lesbianism, like female sexuality in general, has been rendered invisible by cultures who naively limit female sexuality to reproduction carried out as part of heterosexual marriage. …. We also find more research on male homosexuality, more media portrayals of male homosexuality, more clubs for male homosexuals, and, worldwide, more laws prohibiting male homosexuality than female homosexuality. Historically, women have been considered lower status than men, and it was only through heterosexual marriage that status and economic security could be achieved. This too has contributed to the invisibility of lesbianism, as many lesbian and bisexual women lived heterosexual lives or quiet homosexual ones. In short, the lesbian possibility is largely invisible …

Burn (2000) asserts that acceptable expressions of femininity may not have expanded at all, but that female may be paid little attention when it comes to sexuality (unless it relates to reproductive sex). Burns goes on to argue that hegemonic masculinity may create a space for some queer women in other ways; women who behave in typically masculine ways may be accepted (or at least tolerated) because of the value placed on hegemonic masculinity. Males who are seen as “effeminate” may be more likely to be harassed than gender variant females, then, because of the gender being portrayed (femininity) rather than the gender of the person who is portraying it.

In short, Burn (2000) argues that hegemonic masculinity is rewarded regardless of who is expressing the characteristics typically associated with it; conversely, feminine
characteristics are denigrated. In this study, however, at least some participants who displayed characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity when perceived as female experienced HTP harassment. Thus, the masculinity hypothesis, or the assertion that femininity is generally undesirable is not supported, at least not in all cases of HTP relayed by participants in this thesis. Perhaps, as Khayatt (1994, ¶6) posits, “lesbians experience compulsory heterosexuality as a social invisibility, a silence surrounding their sexual preference, while for gay men, compulsory heterosexuality is often articulated violently”.

The HTP that queer young women experience, then, may be invisible for two reasons. First, as Khayatt (1994) states, young queer women seem to be invisible. Second, the HTP queer women may experience more subtle forms of HTP than their male counterparts. More research is needed to explore how these differences manifest. Educators can help, though, by being aware of the various forms of HTP and how they may vary according to gender.

Generally, gender was a significant theme in discussions with participants about their experiences with HTP in high school. Consequently, researchers should approach the topic of HTP bullying with a gendered lens (Walton, 2006) and explore how techniques and frequency of HTP harassment vary with the gender of the harasser and the harassed. This research seems to indicate that gender, or gender variance, is a motivating factor for HTP harassment; it would also be useful to gauge whether gender mitigates the effects. That is, do the effects and coping mechanisms vary according to the gender one identifies (or does not identify) as? In addition, because participants identified gender as such an important factor in HTP bullying, school staff may help to reduce levels by first, expanding students’ ideas about masculinity and femininity and, second, by encouraging them to reflect on the usefulness of those categories to begin with.
Silent Subjects: Lack of and Mis-Information

The second theme related to why HTP persists was a general feeling that homophobia and transphobia stem from ignorance ("not knowing any better") bred through a lack of exposure to queer people. Participants believed that mis-information and negative views about homosexuality and gender variance from other social institutions and contexts seep into educational institutions. Urban centres were perceived to be more supportive of queer youth compared to rural areas where social conservatism and religiosity were believed to be common. Due to hesitancy of queer people to come out in socially conservative environments, participants also believed youth in rural areas lack positive queer role models and any opportunity to engage in productive discussion about issues that affect LGBTTQ youth. Family, media, and the law were also mentioned as factors that influence opinions, and behaviours in schools and that can work to support or oppress queer people.

Many participants believed schools could provide a space where prejudices learned at home, including HTP sentiments, can be challenged. Yet, participants said there was frequently a lack of or hesitancy to discuss issues affecting queer people or even acknowledge the existence of queer youth in some cases. Perhaps students who bully queer youth are trying to enforce some standard of congruence between the curriculums educators teach and the real world they are supposed to reflect. In this case, the silence in classrooms speaks loud and clear, giving students implicit permission to expunge those identities that do not "fit" with their formal curriculum. Educators themselves may be doing harm to students, or engaging in symbolic violence, by failing to recognize and portray the natural existence of a range of sexual and gender identities.
Growing Pains: Bullying as a Normal Part of Maturation

The third and final theme in relation to why HTP happens related to the maturation process. Several participants saw bullying as a natural occurrence that could be exacerbated by, for instance, problems at home. Homophobic and transphobic harassment, however, may be more prevalent than other forms of bullying because of teachers lack of intervention in those cases. Failing to address HTP in schools may actually create an “acceptable” form of bullying and frame queer youth as fair game. Due to its prevalence and the preponderance of outside influences leading to HTP bullying, some participants questioned the extent to which homophobia and transphobia could be challenged in high school. Still, participants were able to make several suggestions on how to make B.C. high schools better places for queer youth, some of which are outlined in the following section.

Desubjugation: Outing HTP Bullying

A small number of participants were sceptical about the extent to which HTP can be reduced in B.C. high schools. As Foucault (1980, 59) says, though, power relations can work in many ways and “power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress...”. Foucault believes that resistance can be found wherever power relations exist. Bourdieu (2001, 13-14, emphasis in original) believes “there is always room for a cognitive struggle over the meaning of the things of the world and in particular sexual realities”. Most

81 Foucault does not conceive of resistance as solely a positive uprising of good versus bad; resistance is always met with counter-resistance, hence the conception of both power and resistance as everywhere.
participants came up with means of what Hoy (2004) terms "critical resistance"\(^{82}\), usually involving raising awareness about HTP bullying and increasing visibility of queer people in schools.

According to Bourdieu and Foucault, revealing power relations and providing a starting point for resistance to them requires increased awareness and reflexivity in our everyday thinking and sociological thought. In sociological terms, Foucault terms this type of project a *genealogy*\(^{83}\) or a *genealogical critique* (Hoy, 1999, 81, emphasis in original) and Bourdieu *socioanalysis* or *reflexive sociology* (Hoy, 1999, 138, emphasis in original). For Foucault, a genealogical critique results in *desubjugation*, "...so that the acts, gestures, discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous" (Lyotard, 1987, 235, emphasis in original). Similarly, Hoy explains Bourdieu's thoughts, which opened this Chapter, as follows:

> ...reflexivity of the sociological insight into how asymmetrically the social situation is structured can neutralize the force of the bodily dispositions... to a degree knowledge can be emancipatory. The better we understand the external constraints on our thoughts and action, the more we will see through them and the less effective they will become (Hoy, 1999, 18).\(^{84}\)

As Swartz (1997, 10) explains, revealing vested interests behind current social hierarchies can call their legitimacy into question and create the possibility for change.

Participants' recommendations provide a starting place for a genealogical project to reduce HTP in B.C. high schools. By providing insight into the nature of power relations around sexuality and gender in schools and calling for increased visibility of queer people

\(^{82}\) Following in Nietzsche's footsteps, Hoy (2004, 2) states that resistance is often thought of as emancipatory in the face of domination. He points out, though, that resistance can also take place in response to efforts for emancipation. He calls the former (emancipatory) critical resistance.

\(^{83}\) The use of "genealogy" in this sense originated in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche (Hoy, 2004).

\(^{84}\) Dr. Burch keenly pointed out the irony of this quotation in which Hoy discusses knowledge, resistance and empowerment yet writes in a jargonistic and inaccessible tone.
and awareness of the harassment that affects them in high schools, they set the wheels in
motion for change. By volunteering, participants called attention to many invisible aspects of
schooling crafting their own genealogical project.

To start the process of “desubjugation” in schools, participants said subtle forms of
HTP need to be recognized and addressed. Part of this would involve better teacher training,
but it also requires a rethinking of what we currently consider when we think of bullying
(Walton, 2006). Participants qualified recollections of subtle forms of HTP with statements
like “I didn’t necessarily experience bullying, but...”. Perhaps our concepts of what
constitutes bullying should be expanded; clearly, the subtle experiences participants recalled
impacted them otherwise they would not have recalled them, let alone volunteered for this
study. Such definitions may reflect the persistent tendency of researchers and school
administrators to focus on physical forms of bullying at the expense of others that may be
more frequent.

No form of HTP, however, can be addressed without calling attention to the
heterosexist and genderlimiting nature of educational institutions. In line with the works of
Foucault and Bourdieu, participants thought school staff should encourage reflection on the
social categories we often take for granted (and in turn that teacher trainers should do the
same). Increasing awareness about the range of sexual and gender identities that exist could
help reduce the perception that LGBTTQ identities are unnatural, wrong, and deserving of
punishment. Martino (2000, 11) has made similar recommendations in his work on
masculinities, homophobia, and youth, saying “we have to find ways to help students
problematize the whole idea of what is considered to be natural and given and how we have
come to understand ourselves in these terms". Yet, participants in this study believed their schools failed to represent LGBTTQ people accurately if at all.

Due to murky policy directives for teachers when it comes to the discussion of queer topics, many feel as though they have no option but to avoid the discussions altogether or to maintain a neutral stance in those that take place (Owens, 1998). While some administrators and educators pay lip service to the idea of diversity, they often fail to include a diverse representation of minorities, especially queer people, in their lessons. Silence, however, can sometimes send a more effective message than words and implies that discussing homosexuality and gender variance is inappropriate. In turn, youth may assume the identities associated with those topics are inappropriate. Challenging that conception requires, first, that LGBTTQ be represented in schools and second, that they be portrayed in a positive light.

As Youdell (2004) states, identities are fragile constructions that come about through discourse. Labels arising from discussions of sexual minorities provide a means of, at the very least, acknowledging the existence, and legitimacy of queer identities (Youdell, 2004; Foucault, 1984). Through this acknowledgement, school administrators gain access to discourses about sexual minorities and with that, the 'symbolic power' to reconstruct the sullied identity conferred upon them (Bourdieu, 1991). This reconstruction can be accomplished by speaking about queer people in a positive manner and through the reclaiming of the presently stigmatized labels surrounding queer identities (or as Foucault, would say, by creating a reverse discourse) (Penttinen, 2008).

85 Dorothy Smith (2005, 29), whose thoughts underpin the methodology of this thesis, advocates sociologists use institutional ethnography to “enlarge the scope” of what is visible, including “how we are connected into the extended social relations of ruling and economy and their intersections”.

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Finally, participants stressed the importance of an integrated approach. Discussions about queer people should not be sensational or meant for entertainment; homosexuality and gender variance should be discussed in the same manner as any other topic (Owens, 1998). As Youdell (2004) notes, a successful initiative to address HTP bullying must attend to the mundane, day-to-day activities in which homophobic and transphobic attitudes are formed. Researchers can also work towards the desubjugation of queer youth, as is discussed in the next section.

**Research as Desubjugation: The Usefulness of Focus Groups**

This thesis itself can be seen as a form of desubjugation. For example, the findings section answered Foucault and Bourdieu’s call for reflexivity by exploring how interactions in B.C. high schools work to both reinforce and undermine social norms. Readers have also been encouraged to think critically about questions of sexuality, gender, power, and schooling. The focus groups themselves, however, also acted as venues where critical reflection could take place.

At the beginning of the group discussions for this thesis, several participants qualified their experiences, saying they were “not that bad” because they had not experienced physical violence. Yet, through their discussions with others, the frequency and commonness of more subtle forms of HTP harassment became apparent. Participants’ reflections illustrate how these modes worked to regulate gender expression and sexual orientation. Subtle manifestations of HTP often go unrecognized and students who engage in them are usually not reprimanded. Consequently, these forms may be more effective than overt or physical forms of harassment that are almost always addressed. Some of these
insights may not have materialized in one-on-one interviews, which do not allow participants to reflect on others' definitions and experiences and to weigh them against their own. Due to their potential to provide an atmosphere for critical reflections, perhaps small group discussions are something school administrators and teachers should consider in their efforts to address HTP bullying in schools.

In the research setting, some may have trepidations about using group formats due to concerns about privacy or the possibility of discomfort discussing what are sometimes seen as sensitive topics in front of others. In this study, only one participant specifically said the group format made it tough for him to open up about his experiences. After the discussion, however, this participant actually sought me out to tell me how much he enjoyed having the opportunity to be heard. In fact, he continued to tell me more about the harassment he had endured and the ways it had affected him both positively and negatively.

Other researchers working with queer youth have spoken of the benefits of group formats. Speaking of group work with young male to female (FtM) sex workers, Klein (1999, 101) says:

...[t]hrough the examples of others, members learn about themselves, as they share commonalities of their experience and feel the connection to their peers. The positive achievement provides group members with direction and feelings of hope about the future.

Group work and discussions could be useful in high schools as well.

Using a small group format to discuss the various manifestations of homophobia and transphobia in high schools and how they may affect queer (and straight or gender conforming) youth may be beneficial to those wishing to address HTP. Discussing even hypothetical situations in a group format can help students to identify harmful behaviours or actions that otherwise may not have registered as such. Expressing their own, and hearing
others opinions on what “counts” as bullying and HTP may encourage youth to at least be aware that others believe their language or behaviours are hurtful, even if they do not see it that way themselves.

Conclusion

As I write this concluding section, the headlines in most local, and some national, news sources tell of a gay man bashed in the West End of Vancouver this past week end. As Jordan Smith walked along Davie Street, one of the most prominent gay neighbourhoods in Canada, holding hands with a male friend, four young men walked towards them hurling anti-gay epithets (Apparent Gay Bashing, 2008). Though Smith walked away from the group, the men pursued and one punched him in the face so hard that it broke Smith’s jaw and knocked him to the ground rendering Smith unconscious. Thanks to bystanders who intervened and called police, the attack stopped and the police apprehended a suspect soon after. At this point, police are treating the assault as a hate crime and it looks like Crown Prosecutors will follow suit (Apparent Gay Bashing, 2008). The incident, the widespread attention the media has given it thus far, and the decision to prosecute it as a hate crime have created mixed emotions for many, including myself.

Certainly, this incident is not unique; according to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) gay men and lesbians reported experiencing violence at more than 2 times and bisexuals 4 times the rate that heterosexual people did (Beauchamp, 2004, 8). This difference held even when variables that often predispose people to violence (age, lifestyle, income etc.) were controlled for. Similarly, in his 2005 book entitled Pink Blood: Homophobic Violence in Canada, Janoff details the brutal attacks on and murders of over 100 LGBTTTQ people in Canada since 1990. That the most recent bashing of a gay man in Vancouver happened in
public, in a known queer space, and in front of bystanders illustrates the very real dangers that LGBTIQ people face and speaks to the relevance of a project on homophobia and transphobia in high schools.

I suspect that the young man who allegedly punched Jordan Smith did not wake up the morning of September 27th and decide that he hated gay men enough that he would physically attack one. Instead, the attack was probably the culmination of years of exposure to homophobia and transphobia that went unaddressed, sending the message that queer people are acceptable targets and that, when targeted, there are no repercussions, at least not for the attacker(s). Subtle forms of HTP lead to more visible and physical forms of violence because they foster the belief that queer people deserve to be punished, especially those of us who are brave enough to "flaunt" our sexuality and gender variance in public. Given the role those other forms of violence play in creating an environment where physical harassment can and does happen, I cannot help but wonder, what has not been reported?

In the wake of the bashing described above, Jennifer Breakspear, the current Executive Director at The Centre, a community centre for LGBT people and their allies, noted that queer people often do not report harassment they experience because of hesitance to deal with police (Wintonyk, 2008). In fact, the Centre and the Vancouver Police Department are teaming up in an unprecedented partnership to improve relations between the queer community and the police through a series of public forums in November 2008. Perhaps least likely to come to police attention, however, are incidents involving HTP in schools, which are often viewed as the purview of school staff, not law enforcement. Rather than protecting them, the law requires queer youth (up to the age of 16) to enter an environment that can be perceived as threatening and that may in fact be dangerous.
physically and mentally, due to the lack of acceptance of homosexuality and gender variance in schools (Owens, 1998).

Participants in this study recalled several physical and verbal attacks that happened both off and on school property, only one of which came to the attention of police and certainly none of which were reported in the press. Yet, Owens (1998) reports that adolescents are the most likely of any age group to commit acts of violence against queer people. What is currently being dubbed a hate crime and has thus far received vehement response by police, media, and the public is often downplayed as “kids being kids” (or usually “boys being boys”) in the school context. When addressed, HTP harassment in educational institutions is often treated as “bad behaviour”, the result of one “bad seed”, yet the same behaviours, when in a different context are labelled as hate crimes – why the discrepancy?

While schools disseminate common knowledge, they also “teach” students to conform to the taken for granted roles and norms of society. In doing so, schools generate and perpetuate the perception of queer people as problematic rather than identifying homophobic and transphobic attitudes as a problem in need of addressing (Flowers & Buston, 2001). Consequently, the current attempt to create “safe schools” where diversity is respected and valued sends a contradictory message (Walton, 2006); the failure of schools to challenge societal norms encourages bullying behaviours directed towards those who contravene them, especially students perceived to be queer. Yet, when people police sexual and gender boundaries outside of the school context we accuse them of hate, identifying the homophobia and transphobia underpinning their actions. Perhaps this is a case of little too late; can we blame people for internalizing the lessons they learned in high school, even if those lessons are informal of ‘hidden’?
Participants shared their experiences, both positive and negative, as queer youth in B.C. high schools. Three of sixteen participants classified their experiences as positive; yet, several others said their experiences were negative and even horrible. Clearly, there is room for improvement. Regardless of how participants interpreted their experiences, their recommendations were the same; queer people, and especially queer youth need to be acknowledged in schools through inclusion in the curriculum, intervention in homophobic and transphobic behaviours (including more subtle forms), and with the creation of an open dialogue with and about queer youth. These youth are not alone in their call to action; recent research (Darwich, 2008; Espelage et al., 2008; Elze, 2005) shows that having supportive teachers, peers and parents can help queer youth to develop positive self-identities and mediate against homophobia they encounter in schools, but also in society in general. As P7 said about the lasting impact the support she received in high school had:

I think it’s helped me to realize also that I can help others too. Like... seeing an instructor and administration and my friends support me then... when I was learning about myself and just kind of coming out and all that stuff, seeing how they supported me has helped me to support others in progression. So I think that’s kind of helped to make, not just me better, but hopefully, in some small way, make the World a better place too. (P7, queer, androgynous)
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

Volunteers Needed! Study on Homophobia and Transphobia in High School

Are you....

• a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited or queer (GLBTTQ) individual who feels that you were bullied in high school because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?

• 19 years of age or older?

• someone who graduated from or left a Canadian high school in the year 2002 or later?

• interested in discussing your experiences (both positive and negative) with other GLBTTQ people who have also experienced bullying?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you’re invited to participate in a one-time group discussion exploring experiences with homophobic or transphobic bullying in high school. This confidential research is being conducted by a Graduate Student at SFU to gain a deeper understanding about homophobia and transphobia and promote a safe learning environment for high school students in Canada.

For more information, or to volunteer, please contact Rebecca at bullystudy@hotmail.com.
Appendix B: Information Page

SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION PAGE

High School Experiences with Homophobia and Transphobia.

You are asked to participate in a research group discussion facilitated by Rebecca Haskell, a graduate student in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University. The information gained in the discussion will be used to help promote the safety of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) youth, and those perceived to be GLBT, in schools and will facilitate Ms. Haskell's completion of the Master's program in Criminology.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Ms. Haskell or Dr. Brian Burtch, project Supervisor at (604) 291-4038 or burtch@sfu.ca.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

To better understand homophobic and transphobic harassment and promote a safe learning environment in high schools in the lower mainland of B.C.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a 45 minute group discussion focused on your experiences with homophobic and/or transphobic bullying in high school.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in the interview.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
Research participants will be making a contribution to educational programs and to academia by raising awareness about homophobia and transphobia in high schools. In addition, the information provided will be useful in developing policies and practices to combat harassment motivated by sexual or gender identity and to determine areas in need of further research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

The information will be used for the purpose of Rebecca Haskell’s Master’s thesis.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your information from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. Ms. Haskell may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Board of Ethics at SFU. You may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting Rebecca Haskell at the School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University by e-mail at rhaskell@sfu.ca, or by phone at (778) 999-4342. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, about the responsibilities of researchers, or if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the manner in which you were treated in this study, please contact the project Supervisor, Dr. Brian Burtch at (604) 291-4038 or burtch@sfu.ca, or the Director, Office of Research ethics by e-mail, hweinber@sfu.ca or phone at (604) 268-6593.
Appendix C: Interview Guide

Objectives:
• Gain a better understanding of homophobic and transphobic bullying
• Attempt to understand the effects of homophobic and transphobic bullying through the experiences of those harassed
• Brainstorm about why harassment motivated by sexual orientation/gender identity takes place and how it could be prevented

Introduction
- Introduce self and purpose of study
- Reiterate confidentiality and right to abstain from discussing topics or to leave group if uncomfortable
- No specific order – provide input whenever you want, encourage you to say you agree or disagree or had similar/different experience than others
- Safe space – right to disagree but do so respectfully and please value the confidentiality of what it discussed by not discussing it with people outside of this room

Contextualized Understanding

• when, where, what happened; frequency; who was involved

You offered to participate in this discussion group because you feel as though you or someone else in your school was harassed because of their sexual or gender identity. Can you describe some of the things that came to mind that made you decide to volunteer?

Possible Probes:
Does anyone have similar stories they would like to share?
Are these experiences different from anyone else’s?
How would you describe the person/persons who were harassing you?
Was there usually anyone else around when the harassment happened? What did they do? Other students, teachers, staff, parents?
Where did these incidents usually take place?

Effects

• Determine effects on target

How do you think your experiences in high school affected you?

Possible Probes:
Do you think the harassment made you change your behaviour at all? (i.e. stopped going to class, avoided them)
What do you think the negative consequences of the harassment were?
What about positive consequences, do you think anything good came about because of the harassment?
Do you think you are still affected now by what you experienced in high school?

**Why Harassment Happens and How to Prevent It**

- Hypothesized reasons for harassment
- Target, harasser, others present

Why do you think that someone was harassing you (or another student)?

Possible Probes:
What makes you feel that this harassment happened because of your (or the other persons) sexual or gender identity?
What are some suggestions that you would make to help prevent the harassment you experienced from happening to other students in high school?

**Conclusion**

- Reaffirm confidentiality and ask that others remember to respect others privacy
- Thank for participation and discuss what happens next in research process
  - How to obtain copies of final report
- Contact info. for any questions/concerns

Distribute follow-up questionnaire
Appendix D: Follow-Up Questionnaire

Do you identify with any sexual identity or orientation? If so, what term do you use to describe your sexual identity or orientation?

Do you identify with any gender identity? If so, what term do you prefer to describe your gender?

What term would you use to describe your ethnicity or racial background?

What do you do know that you’re out of high school? (ie. continuing studies, type of employment, seeking employment etc.)

Is there anything that you didn’t get the chance to share during the discussion that you would have liked to? (For example, did you think of an experience with homophobia or transphobia in high school that you didn’t talk about? Do you have other suggestions for prevention?) If so, share your thoughts in this space.

Can you please take a moment to provide some feedback about the discussion that just took place? How you feel at the end of this discussion. Would you participate in a discussion like this again? Do you have any suggestions that might help to make others feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences or thoughts? Any comments or suggestions are welcomed in this space!

Thanks again for your participation!
REFERENCE LIST


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Kempling v. British Columbia College of Teachers, 2005, BCCA 327


Pegura et al. v. School District No. 36, 2003 BCHRT 53

Pegura and Forster v. School District No. 36 (No. 3), 2004 BCHRT 170


