

“It’s *just* inappropriate”: The normalization of sexual harassment in Ontario schools as revealed through teachers’ stories

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis project to Rehtaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd and their families. Although a lot of the media coverage of these two cases has quieted down since I began my thesis, there are still many researchers, feminists, bloggers and teachers who have not forgotten these girls and the horrible trauma that they experienced.

We are still here marching in the streets, writing and critiquing rape culture discourses that make the world unsafe for many marginalized folks including girls, women, gender-nonconforming folks, boys, and men who do not adhere to the desired “dominant” versions of masculinity. When I thought about Rehtaeh and Amanda during those late nights and early mornings working on this project, it reminded me why I had chosen to write about sexual violence and encouraged me to keep writing.

Abstract

This study examines teachers' experiences witnessing and addressing the sexual harassment of girls by boys in elementary and secondary schools in Southern Ontario. Through a feminist, poststructural framework using feminist methodologies, I interviewed seven teachers from different schools in order to determine teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment. Although participants' experiences varied, their responses revealed that sexual harassment is normalized, naturalized and reinforced in secondary and elementary schools. Themes that surfaced revealed how their understandings of sexual harassment existed outside of power relations; how language is "softened" when describing sexual harassment and sexism; how the seriousness of sexual harassment was minimized; and how gendered Islamophobia intersected with the normalization of sexual harassment. Acts of resistance challenging pervasive discourses that normalize the sexual harassment of girls by boys also arose during interviews.

Key words: sexual harassment; sexism; feminist poststructuralism; teachers; gendered Islamophobia; rape culture; gender

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Introduction

When high school students Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd killed themselves after experiencing relentless sexual harassment for being sexually victimized, a common response that circulated in the media was an inquiry into the roles that teachers should play in preventing student-to-student violence. A report in the *Toronto Star* (2013) stated that there was "shame [felt] by teachers wondering if they could have done more" for Rehtaeh Parsons (para, 6) and heavy debate circulated about whether teachers should be allowed to show their students a YouTube video that Amanda Todd made prior to her suicide (CBC, 2012). The news coverage from mainstream media sources such as *The Globe and Mail* (Dhillon, 2012) and *CTV News* (2015d) focused the discussion on how student "bullying" in schools was to blame for both tragedies. In contrast, articles written on feminist blogs and websites such as *Feministing* (2013), *Shameless Magazine* and *Bellejar* (2013) argued that living in a "rape culture" legitimized and supported the excessive and relentless violence both women experienced, which eventually resulted in their deaths.

Following the media conversations about Rehtaeh and Amanda, led me to reflect about my own experiences with sexual harassment, both as an elementary and high school student and as a student-teacher years later. Two significant aspects about the sexual harassment that I experienced as a young person were that it was so prevalent and normalized that I would not have known it to be "sexual harassment" until many years later, and that if teachers witnessed it, they never interfered. When I was in Teacher's College, one of my female associate teachers pointed and nodded in agreement when a male student adlibbed during a class skit, "if girls dress inappropriately, how else do they

expect us to treat them?" Another time, I also heard my associate teacher say that girls who dress "a certain way" "don't have respect for themselves" and "give boys the wrong idea." Through the approval of the boys' statement and some of her own comments about girls and dress, my associate teacher indicated to the students that violence towards women is sometimes justifiable. I felt silenced, conflicted and ashamed that I did not challenge this dominant belief during my time in her classroom. In reflection, I wondered how these discourses in the classroom affected the students and influenced their possible future behaviours. I revisited this moment many times when reading about Rehtaeh and Amanda, thinking deeply as well about why I, as a student-teacher, felt unable to intervene in the middle of the discussion. I thought back to my own teachers and wondered why they also did not intervene when my peers and I were sexually harassed. Reflecting on these experiences and my positioning as a teacher has led me to explore my main research question—*what are teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment in schools and what support do they need to challenge rape culture attitudes in schools?*

Across academic literature and discussions in elementary and secondary schools, there are several varying and competing definitions of "sexual harassment." For my research purposes, I define sexual harassment as acts that are committed by boys towards girls that are aggressive and sexual, and which aim to reinforce boys' dominant positioning over girls whether verbally, physically or through suggestive gestures. Although researchers sometimes use "sexual harassment" and "bullying" interchangeably (Craig, Bell & Lescheid, 2011; Duncan, 1999), I seek to make a distinction between the two terms.

Meyer (2008a) (2008b), Robinson (2012) (1992), and Ringrose and Renold (2011) agree that blurring sexual harassment into an "anti-bullying" framework depoliticizes the discussion about sexual harassment and neglects to acknowledge why boys sexually harass girls in the first place. Ringrose and Renold (2011; 2010) argue that the "anti-bullying" discourses, while "gender-blind" in the past have now been reframed to claim that boys and girls both "bully," but differently--boys' bullying is viewed as "aggressive" and girls' bullying is viewed as "manipulative" and "covert" (2011, p. 183). While a shift has occurred to recognize that boys and girls can also be perpetrators and are affected by violence differently, analyzing acts of aggression in the context of "bullying" fails to recognize how certain bodies have privilege over others while those who are women, racialized, poor, disabled, LGBTIQ or gender non-conforming are marginalized within dominant discourses that influence school policies, behaviours and attitudes. Privilege and marginalization are fuelled by structures and systematic practices in institutions such as schools and impact how sexual harassment is perpetuated and embedded in cultures as "normal."

In contrast to the anti-bullying frameworks, I focus on girls' experiences and explore how they are particularly at risk for experiencing sexual harassment. I wish to acknowledge, however, that while girls are more often to be sexually harassed than boys in schools (Duffy, Walsh & Gallagher-Duffy, 2007), boys who appear "effeminate," are gender-non conforming (Meyer, 2008a) or do not adhere to the desired "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1996) are also at risk of gendered-based harassment such as homophobia (Meyer, 2008a, Walton, 2008). Further, although reported to be less common, boys can also experience sexual harassment from girls (Renold, 2005). I

recognize that all forms of gendered-based harassment are serious issues that need more attention from teachers, administrators, parents, students and researchers. For my research purposes, however, I wish to focus specifically on the sexual harassment of girls by boys.

I define "rape culture"¹ as embedded in sexist language, gender constructions and gender stereotypes, which legitimize, normalize and rationalize systematic violence towards women and girls such as sexual harassment or rape. The legitimization, normalization and rationalization of violence towards women and girls is sustained and engrained by dominant attitudes and behaviours about gender and upheld systematically by institutions such as schools. Using "rape culture" is important when discussing my research on sexual harassment, because it acknowledges that all forms of violence towards women such as sexual assault, rape and domestic abuse are linked. Many rape jokes, for example, reinforce women's positioning as marginalized subjects and continue to normalize and trivialize the rape of women. "Rape culture" is also important to integrate into my thesis because it is a recognizable term that identifies connections between current pockets of political and feminist circles actively resisting the systematic institutions and prevailing discourses that perpetuate and normalize sexual violence towards girls and women. Such examples include protesters' mobilizing in response to the innocent verdict in the Jian Ghomeshi trial (CBC News, 2016b), female reporters speaking out against sexual harassment they have experienced while reporting the news (CBC News, 2015b) and grassroots organizations forming on university campuses to

¹ The term "rape culture" is usually taken up by "activist groups" (Ringrose and Renold, 2012) and was first coined during the 1970s' second wave feminist movement in the United States (Harding, 2015; WAVAW, 2014). Ringrose and Renold (2012) define rape culture as a "gender culture [in which...] women are still subject to deeply sexist social and cultural values" that blame girls and women for personal

challenge administrative responses to sexual violence such as SASA (Students Against Sexual Assault) at Brock University (Pfaeffli, 2016) and Silence is Violence at York University (Kauri, 2015).

In my use of “rape culture,” I do not wish to argue that all forms of violence towards women are experienced equally, or that the aftereffects of sexual harassment are equal to the aftereffects of rape. I am also not intending to suggest that men and women who embody “rape culture” by referring to women as “sluts” or believing women should be paid less than men in the workplace, for example, are intentionally supporting rape or will commit rape. I suggest, instead, that we must recognize how everyday behaviours and attitudes that seem trivial and harmless sustain the marginalization of women and continue to uphold the conditions that make violence towards women possible. We must challenge the pathologization, and dehumanization of perpetrators and challenge the idea that individualizing acts of violence as isolated incidents are actually sustained and perpetuated systematically.

Using a feminist poststructural approach, I engage with theorists such as Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Bronwyn Davies, and Mary Barrett to acknowledge that teachers, students and administrators are all part of discourses that define, produce and limit us as subjects and that current, dominating discourses perpetuate and allow the sexual harassment of girls by boys to continue. Existing discourses also influence the creation of problematic school policies such as the “anti-bullying” frameworks and school dress codes, which I elaborate on in my literature review and theory chapters. I explore in detail how discourses also provide possibilities for subjects to take up new,

competing discourses that can challenge dominant understandings about the construction of gender, power and violence.

My study is important because I believe that teachers can play significant roles in challenging the perpetuation of sexual harassment and altering rape culture attitudes and systems--if they are given support to do so. Researchers who put together the 2008 Ontario study, "Respect Culture," argued that teachers are all responsible for ending school violence and must always intervene when witnessing gender-based violence. While I agree with the importance of teacher involvement and intervention to help address gender-based violence in schools, I believe that it is naive, irresponsible and unrealistic to expect teachers to always intervene without addressing rape culture attitudes that are engrained so deeply within school cultures or investigating the barriers that prevent teachers from stopping sexual harassment.

My research is also important to study through a feminist poststructural lens because of school boards' reliance on the anti-bullying discourses to solve student-to-student violence. As I elaborate further in the upcoming chapters, the anti-bullying discourses fail to address the issues of gender inequality, racism, homophobia and instead, individualize such problems (Walton, 2008). Wearing pink shirts to combat homophobic "bullying" without integrating discussions about gender-based violence in schools will not address the behaviours and beliefs that create homophobia in the first place. Creating policy documents without implementing policy changes can also gloss over the real issues of student-to-student violence and will not help to explain the reasons for sexual harassment. Therefore, I also argue that adopting a scope of "rape culture" is more beneficial than "anti-bullying" because rape culture discourses help make broader

connections between all forms of gender-based violence, sexual violence and gender marginalization while anti-bullying discourses de-politicize the discussion about discrimination and systematic marginalization (Ringrose & Renold, 2011).

In the following thesis project, Chapter 1 begins with my literature review. In this chapter, I examine what is currently known about the attitudes and beliefs about sexual harassment within secondary and elementary schools, teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about sexual harassment and possible barriers that might influence teachers' ability to intervene. Chapter 2 outlines my theoretical framework. In this chapter, I engage with feminist poststructuralism and apply this theoretical approach to critique the dominant discourses within secondary and elementary schools that perpetuate rape culture and the sexual harassment of girls by boys. I also explore pathways to resistance and suggest possibilities of how teachers can take up new discourses as an alternative to recycling the dominant discourses. Chapter 3 outlines my methodology and methods in which I provide details about how I framed my research using feminist poststructural methodologies to conduct individual interviews with teachers across Southern Ontario asking them about their experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment in schools. Chapter 4 contains my findings, which reveals the ways in which the sexual harassment of girls by boys is normalized and naturalized by discourses taken up by subjects within the education system. I explore five prevalent themes in this chapter: how sexual harassment was understood outside of power relations; language that was used to "soften" the discussion; minimizing the seriousness of sexual harassment; racism and Islamophobia's relationship to sexual harassment and sexism; and resisting dominant discourses that

normalize and perpetuate sexual harassment. Chapter 5 contains my conclusion in which I end with recommendations for changes in schools and possibilities for future research.

Chapter 1:

Literature Review

Introduction

June Larkin's 1995 book, *Sexual Harassment: High School Girls Speak Out*, contains a collection of female students voicing their experiences with sexual harassment in Ontario schools. Larkin identified the sexual harassment of girls by boys as a significant problem that had been "normalized," seldom discussed in schools and ignored by some teachers and administrators. Although Larkin's research took place over 20 years ago, sexual harassment in schools continues to be a pervasive issue across the globe (Meyer, 2008b, Robinson, 2012; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; 2011). Current researchers such as Robinson (1992; 2000; 2005; 2012), Shute, Owens and Slee (2008) and Rahimi and Liston (2011) have found that sexual harassment is normalized, trivialized, and integrated in school cultures, resulting in a kind violence that many girls have reported to experience every day. Responses to combating gender-based violence have focused on changing policies instead of attitudes, as we see in the Ontario government's recent "Keeping Our Kids Safe at School" Act, which makes it mandatory for teachers to report all student violence that occurs in and outside of school (OSSTF/FEESO, 2013; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). Similarly, the 2008 "Respect Culture" report identifies that teachers and administrators play a significant role in combating gender-based violence in schools, and emphasizes the importance of adult intervention. However, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, sexual harassment has also been framed under an "anti-bullying" discourse, which individualizes the problem, pathologizes perpetrators (Walton, 2008) and makes the issue of sexual harassment more invisible (Robinson, 2012).

While these initiatives aim to end violence amongst students, current research reveals that teachers are still often reluctant, and unprepared, to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment, or do not intervene at all (Meyer, 2008b; Rahimi & Liston, 2011). The inability for some teachers to address sexual harassment poses a significant question: *What are teachers' experiences witnessing, hearing about and addressing student-to-student sexual harassment and what support do teachers need to challenge and disrupt rape culture attitudes in schools?*

First, I discuss how sexual harassment is defined within academic literature. I then address dominant discourses of homophobia and heterosexuality, which are embraced by many teachers, students and administrators that perpetuate sexual harassment and sexism in Ontario schools. Following this, I discuss how school dress code policies function to uphold sexism and support the perpetuation of sexual harassment. I then critique the anti-bullying initiatives and how they undermine the efforts of combating sexual harassment by framing it as an individualized problem.

I then dedicate four subsections to focus on teachers' experiences regarding the following: understandings of sexual harassment; perceptions of masculine violence; personal experiences with sexual harassment; and how working conditions, access to resources and support and teacher training influences their experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment. I identify gaps that still need further exploration.

Defining sexual harassment

Academic literature does not always define sexual harassment (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2007), and the criteria for what is deemed to be sexual harassment is often "blurred"

(Rahimi & Liston, 2011, p. 799). The lack of a clear definition might be due to the complicated and contradictory elements of sexual harassment (Robinson, 2012). It is difficult to discuss school-based sexual harassment within the literature because it often falls under the definition of "bullying" (Ringrose & Renold, 2010; 2011; Meyer, 2008a, Robinson, 2012). One definition of school-based harassment states that it is "'sex discrimination--unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature' that interferes with the right to receive an equal educational opportunity" (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013, p. 439). A female participant from a Canadian study inquiring about student-to-student sexual harassment said it is, "something that makes you feel uncomfortable about who you are... because of the sex you are" (Larkin, 1995, p.21). Shute, Owens and Slee (2007) emphasize that defining sexual harassment should focus on how the victim *receives* the harassment, but problematically, some victims do not realize the damaging effects until after the incident occurred (Ringrose & Renold, 2011).

Homophobia and the regulation of heterosexuality

Studies in schools examining gender and the perpetuation of violence reveals that sexual harassment serves to regulate heterosexuality and heteronormativity (Meyer, 2008a; Pascoe, 2012). In school discourses, sexual harassment is often understood as "an expression of sexual interest within heterosexuality" (Robinson, 2012, p. 79) as opposed to an act of domination and regulation of gender and power (Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose & Renolds, 2011; Robinson, 2012). One way that teachers reinforce heteronormativity is by regulating teenage sexuality with gender stereotypes (Pascoe, 2012). For example, in Pascoe's (2012) ethnographic work examining how teachers and students construct masculinity in school, "Ms. Mac" only handed out condoms to the boys, perpetuating the

stereotype that boys are more interested in sex than girls. Pascoe states as well that the administration funded and organized "school rituals that fostered a sexist heterosexuality, with girls as sexual objects or rewards" (p. 51). When teachers reinforce such dominant gender constructions, simultaneously they are reinforcing systems of power and marginalization (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012).

Although females experience sexual harassment more often, and more severely than their male classmates (Walsh, Duffy & Gallagher-Duffy, 2007), the boys who appear more "feminine" can be victimized as well (Meyer, 2008a, 2008b; Robinson, 2012; Walton, 2008; Pascoe, 2012). Such harassment is usually in the form of gendered-based harassment and homophobic acts (Meyer, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Walton, 2008; Duncan, 1999; Robinson, 2012; Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Pascoe, 2012). Meyer (2008a) defines gendered-based harassment as "the term used to describe any behaviour that acts to assert the boundaries of traditional gender norms: heterosexual masculinity and femininity" (p. 34). Gendered-based harassment, sexual harassment and acts of homophobia are subconsciously taken up by boys in order to regulate normative gender, power relations, and heterosexuality (Robinson, 2012; Ringrose & Renold, 2011) and defend themselves against homophobic violence (Meyer, 2008a).

It should be recognized that some girls also play a role in regulating heterosexuality by taking part in homophobia themselves (Renold, 2005; Walton, 2005) and face pressures to adhere to compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980; Pascoe, 2012). Significantly, the sexual harassment of girls and the homophobia towards boys are linked—they both regulate gender and identity, reinforce systematic power relations and

marginalize subjects who do not adhere to the dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity (Robinson, 2012).

School dress codes and their role in perpetuating sexual harassment

Some teachers view girls to be responsible for the sexual harassment that they experience (Shute, Owens, & Slee, 2007; Pascoe, 2012). This “victim-blaming” narrative is upheld by certain school policies such as dress codes (Pomerantz, 2007; Raby, 2010), which blame and shame girls for being sexually harassed. Raby notes that the dress codes are absolutely "gendered" (p. 334) and usually directed towards girls. Language used by teachers to regulate and enforce the dress code in Raby's study promoted that girls must show "respect for themselves" and dress code violators are "too distracting" to boys and staff, implying that it is girls' responsibility to protect themselves against sexual harassment. Pomerantz (2007) indicates that school administrators and teachers deem girls who challenge the dress-code policies as "deviant" (p. 380) posing a risk to herself and boys.

The use of dress codes in schools serve to control several marginalized groups in an attempt to punish them for failing to adhere to the “desired” form of femininity and masculinity (Pascoe, 2012; Pomerantz, 2007). For instance, Pomerantz (2007) notes that for girls, dress code policies are predominantly "about the containment of the body" (p. 383) whereas for boys it is "about the containment of racial and ethnic identities" (p. 383). In Pascoe's (2012) ethnographic research at River High School in the United States, she mentions how the rules about dress are constructed differently for girls and boys as the principal addressed female and male students separately in the school

newspaper, urging that the girls "should dress in clothes that cover [their] bodies" (p. 30) while in contrast, boys should ensure that their "pants remain at the waistline" (p. 30).

Inconsistent dress codes are also applied differently to girls based on their body types. Pomerantz (2007) notes that girls who are thin and have smaller breasts are less likely to be punished for violating the dress code than girls who are more developed and larger in size. Such a practice sexualizes and shames girls as gendered beings and reinforces dominant power relations not just between girls and boys, but also *between* girls. Further, it privileges certain body types over others by punishing girls for their physical parts instead of their behaviour.

In a deeper connection to sexual harassment, teachers and administrators often reinforce school dress codes by claiming that having such rules promotes "safety" for girls (Pomerantz, 2007; Raby, 2010). Attributing dress to "safety" to certain kinds of dress encourages the belief that should girls adhere to these guidelines, they will be safeguarded from sexual harassment. It therefore implies that girls who violate dress code policies are responsible for their own victimization (Raby, 2010). Even more problematic, the dress code discourses limit females from obtaining bodily autonomy as it suggests that girls' bodies should be controlled and contained (Pascoe, 2012). While dominant discourses of femininity aim to suppress female sexuality by regulating their dress in school, girls are simultaneously entrenched within discourses that regulate their dress to be more provocative such as within media advertisements (APA, 2007). Therefore, sexist discourses that regulate girls' sexuality in relation to dress contradict, compete, and maintain the marginalization of girls.

Although many female students challenge dress-code policies, they also actively take up these narratives embedded within the school climate. While teachers and administrators punished dress-code violators by sending them home, or forcing them to cover up (Pomerantz, 2007), the female students in Raby's (2010) study used derogatory language to describe their female peers who broke the dress code and argued that girls who violated the dress codes attempted to be fashionable, had poor fashion sense or wanted to get boyfriends. By taking up such gendered discourses, girls regulate their peers and reinforce hegemony even though they themselves are limited by such narratives. However, Raby (2010) also recognizes that taking on such stances about the dress codes, may temporarily benefit them. For example, girls who follow dress code rules might be praised by teachers for adhering to accepted gender expectations in the context of "slut-shaming." Hence, school discourses about dress codes taken up by teachers, administrators and students are intertwined with the actions that perpetuate, normalize and legitimize the sexual harassment of girls by boys.

Anti-Bullying discourses

It is not surprising that there has been little success in reducing school-based sexual harassment despite years of strategy implementation given that school policies rarely depict sexual harassment as a "widespread socio-cultural practice that operates everyday to constitute and regulate identities and relations of power" (Robinson, 2012, p. 74). Student-to-student violence such as acts of homophobia and sexual harassment has instead been amalgamated under anti-bullying discourses (Meyer, 2008a, Walton, 2008), which are enacted through school policies and discussions amongst students, teachers, parents and administrators on how to respond to almost all forms of student-to-student

violence. Meyer (2008a) argues that responding to school violence with "blanket bullying policies" (p. 33) does little to change school climates that perpetuate student violence in the first place. Ringrose and Renold (2011) agree, and argue that "the dominant 'bullying discourses' are untenable for understanding and coping with the complex range of experiences of peer aggression and violence in school" (p. 181). While the tactics from anti-bullying discourses might help individual students obtain empathy for others and gain confidence (Walton, 2005), "institutional complicity at reinforcing negative associations with difference remain unchallenged" (p. 59). Therefore, anti-bullying discourses fail to question and dismantle how the positioning of marginalized people (such as women, youth of colour and non-gender conforming students) is reinforced within institutions. Once again, this reveals how sexual harassment is normalized (Larkin, 1995; Robinson, 2012) and not understood in relation to the authority of institutions to uphold and perpetuate existing dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity. I elaborate on the dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity examined through a feminist poststructural framework in more detail in the following theory chapter.

The anti-bullying policies function to depoliticize the entire discussion about sexual harassment (Robinson, 2012), which parallels some government policy changes and recommendations that do not acknowledge that sexual harassment towards girls in schools reflects an entire system that normalizes violence against girls and women (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012). The "Keeping our Kids Safe at School" Act (OSSTF/FEESO, 2013), the 2008 "Respect Culture" Report from Ontario (Safe Schools Action Team, 2008) and Bill C31, which was passed by the former, Conservative Federal Government (Puzic, 2015) for example, are similar to the anti-bullying policies because

they all aim to address student violence such as sexual harassment, but fail to make connections between gender, sexuality, and dominant power relations. The lens of "anti-bullying," neglects how women and girls like Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd were framed as "sluts" and "hos" within their schools who needed to be punished for being victims of coerced and/or forced sexual acts such as rape. Without offering a critical perspective rooted in feminist theory or an anti-rape culture approach, the anti-bullying policies fail to address how and why teachers often do not stop gender-based harassment and sometimes take part in the behaviour themselves (Meyer, 2008a; 2008b).

It should be noted that researchers such as Robinson (2012), Meyer (2009), and Ringrose and Renold (2011) recognize that there is a distinction between "bullying" and "sexual harassment," but it is a common trend within some academic literature and school contexts to discuss both interchangeably, making sexual harassment even more "invisible" (Robinson, 2012). For instance, Craig, Bell and Leschied (2011) define "school-based bullying" as a wide set of forms of violence "ranging from playground pushing and shoving to *sexual harassment* [emphasis added], gang attacks and dating violence" (2011, p. 22). The conflation of sexual harassment and "bullying" in academic literature parallels how teachers, administrators and students within schools also conflate and confuse sexual harassment with bullying. I argue that combining sexual harassment with anti-bullying can lead to confusion about the specifics of gender-based violence, which is problematic since being able to identify sexual harassment could influence teachers' ability to intervene (Charamarman, Jones, Stein and Espelage, 2013). Research interviewing teachers on their perceptions of student-to-student sexual harassment in schools, in fact, reveals that teachers' definitions of sexual harassment are inconsistent

and unclear, and they often have difficulty being able to identify sexual harassment when it happens (Rahimi & Liston, 2011). A lack of understanding of sexual harassment might cause teachers to ignore this kind of violence, blame the victim for "being sexually precocious" (Charamarman, Jones, Stein and Espelage, 2013, p. 442) or feel unprepared on how to stop harassment from occurring. Charamarman, Jones, Stein and Espelage (2013) argue that being knowledgeable about sexual harassment will assist teachers and principals on intervention strategies when it does occur between students. In contrast, when teachers, administrators, students and researchers frame the discussion of sexual harassment under a broad "anti-bullying" discourse, behaviours that qualify as sexual harassment might not be easily identifiable.

Also problematically, the educational research behind anti-bullying initiatives often pathologizes the bully (Walton, 2005) instead of recognizing that bullying is a social act (Duncan, 1999; Walton, 2008) and relates to a socio-cultural norm that regulates hegemony and gender identities (Robinson, 2012). Foucault's (1974) discussion on how mental illness became institutionalized and socially constructed assists in understanding how the "bully" has also been socially constructed in schools within anti-bullying discourses (Walton, 2005). Foucault argued that mental illness was framed as an ailment with a cure, similar to how anti-bullying policies have been coined as "cures" to remedy all forms of student-to-student violence in schools (Foucault, 1972; Walton, 2005).

After attending anti-bullying conferences in Kingston and Ottawa, Ontario in 2004 that were aimed towards educators and youth workers, Gerard Walton concludes: "Through the lens of scientism, bullying has become defined, objectified, categorized,

and psychologized" (Walton, 2005, p. 57). The conferences were embedded in discourses that favoured "objectivity, rationality and scientific validation" (Walton, 2005, p. 57) and therefore, individualizing the issue of bullying.

Walton notes that researchers have also contributed to upholding school discourses regarding bullying behaviour. He critiques the work of researchers such as Olweus (1993), and Craig, Peters and Konarski (2001) for reducing the concept of bullying to individual acts separate from school cultures (Walton, 2005). He explains that

bullying [is] a concept with political and historical antecedents, or, in Foucauldian terms a "discursive practice," which Foucault describes as practices of technical and methodological purpose and process, disseminated by institutions that have interests in imposing and maintaining them. (p. 59).

Further, as with the subject, the production of the "bully" is fluid and ever-changing depending on how dominant discourses construct the conceptualization of normalized practices and behaviours of masculinity. As Walton (2005) indicates, Foucault's work helps remind us that the discourses that amalgamate all student-to-student violence under the umbrella of "bullying" defines and limits ways in which teachers can address violence that is maintained and perpetuated by systems that marginalize gendered subjects such as sexual harassment.

Teachers' Experiences

Understandings of sexual harassment. Teachers often have misconceptions about the impacts of violence, viewing physical forms of aggression as more dangerous than covert forms of abuse such as "sexual name calling" (Rahimi & Liston, 2011, p. 801) that might occur in cases of sexual harassment (Berman, Izumi & Arnold, 2002;

Craig, Bell & Leschied, 2011). Sexual harassment is usually associated with adults in the workplace (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013; Robinson, 2012) and most research on the subject has been targeted towards adults (Walsh, Duffy & Gallagher-Duffy, 2007; Robinson, 2012) therefore, high school students often do not find it relevant in their lives (Robinson, 2012) and teachers continue to reinforce harassment at school by seeing it as “normal” between teenagers (Larkin, 1995; Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012). Robinson (2012) indicates that sexual harassment is "normalized, naturalised and legitimated through everyday discursive practices, especially those of powerful groups, which create and recreate power relations and constitute the subject—for example, what it means to be a girl or a woman" (p. 73).

Although research in Australia revealed that girls in their study experienced sexual harassment everyday in schools (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2007) many studies indicate that teachers are unable to recognize sexual harassment (Rahimi & Liston, 2011; Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013; Meyer, 2008b). In a series of focus groups with teachers on bullying and sexual harassment in the United States, some teachers believed that interfering is pointless, arguing that sexual harassment is "normal" (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013). In addition, some teachers believe in "gender-blindness" (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Scantlebury, 1995), which Scantlebury (1995) defines as an "ideal that sex is the difference that makes no difference". Adhering to "gender-blindness" ignores how gendered subjects negotiate their power differently within discourse. Disregarding that females and males navigate in the world differently based on power relations may further prevent teachers from acknowledging the sexual harassment of girls.

Teachers in Robinson's (2012) studies that took place in six schools within Australia perceived sexual harassment to be a common part of boys' development and a reflection of their growth process, describing it as "awkwardness" and "childishness," but *not* sexual harassment. Comments such as "boys will be boys" (Meyer, 2008b; Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012) are used by teachers to legitimize and naturalize boys' sexual harassment of girls. When teachers reinforce that it is "natural" for boys to sexually harass girls, they automatically reinforce that it is "natural" for girls to be sexually harassed.

It is possible that teachers have difficulty identifying sexual harassment because it can be subtle (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009) and sometimes complicated to fully understand. Robinson (2012) notes that girls reported feeling "contradictory feelings" (p. 81) when they experienced sexual harassment such as anger and shame "intersected with feelings of being flattered" (p. 81), which she argues are "often the basis of some teachers' perceptions that young women encourage sexual harassment by boys" (p. 81). Further, female students sometimes attempt to regain power by laughing at the sexual harassment as a way to indicate that the boys' comments did not affect them (Robinson, 2012). It has also been reported several times within the literature that a common way for boys to downplay sexual harassment is by perceiving comments of sexual harassment as merely "jokes" (Meyer, 2008a; Ringrose & Renold, 2007; Shute, Owens & Slee, 2007; Berman, Izumi & Arnold, 2002, p. 272). Therefore, the previous examples can be used to argue that teachers do not always understand the complexities of sexual harassment, which might influence them to blame the victim, deflate the seriousness of the harassment and ultimately, ignore it.

Teachers who do recognize that sexual harassment in school is a problem have voiced frustration when their colleagues do little or nothing to stop it (Meyer, 2008a; Meyer, 2008b; Larkin, 1995; Robinson, 2000). One female teacher in Meyer's (2008b) study stated that when she reported her colleague for sexually harassing a student, the department head said he was already aware of the situation, but the teacher was never disciplined and continued to teach at the school. Therefore, teachers might also feel that there is nothing they can do to stop sexual harassment when fellow teachers also engage in and ignore this violent behaviour.

Perceptions of masculine violence. Ringrose and Renold (2011) reveal that teachers legitimize sexual harassment by upholding and normalising dominant masculine violence. Teachers in their studies perceived the violent acts between boys as "play fighting," when the researchers perceived these same acts as bullying and some boys embodied violence as a way to bond with their male peers (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Yubero & Navarro, 2006). Further, violent masculinity as developed within primary and secondary school plays a key role in the development of hegemonic masculinity, which I address in more detail in the following theory chapter (Connell, 1996; 2005; Ringrose & Renold, 2011). Upholding masculine hegemony marginalizes boys who do not adhere to ideal versions of masculinity (Meyer, 2008a) and leads to the victimization and subordination of girls positioning them as subjects to be dominated (Robinson, 2012).

Personal experiences with sexual harassment. An additional challenge to consider in terms of whether teachers are able or choose to intervene with sexual harassment is teachers' personal experiences with, or vulnerability to, sexual harassment themselves. Although the research on student-to-teacher sexual harassment is limited, the

AAUW (American Association of University Women) reported that 36% of high school students claimed that students sexually harass teachers and staff (Shane, 2009). In a study from the United States that interviewed teachers about sexual harassment, one female teacher shared that male students will "put their hands...around the shoulders [of female students and teachers] and such" (Rahimi & Liston, 2011, p. 802). Further, an Australian teacher from Robinson's (2000) study recalled that she heard a student yell to her, "great tits, Miss!" outside of a classroom window (p. 82). Following her interviews with teachers about sexual harassment, Robinson concluded that boys engaged in the sexual harassment of female teachers "to gain and shift power relationship within the classroom and within the school more broadly" (p. 81).

Teachers who are younger, of colour, and/or non-heterosexual are even more at risk for experiencing sexual harassment (Robinson, 2000). Several teachers in Robinson's (2000) study indicated that they did not speak out about the sexual harassment they experienced because of "institutionalized and individual racism" leading them to fear that they would not be supported by colleagues or the system (p. 84). Lesbian teachers are additionally marginalized and susceptible to harassment because of heteronormativity, which legitimizes punishment and violence against queer individuals for their rejection of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990; Ferfolja, 2008). Robinson's participants heard homophobic slurs such as "lezo," and "cunt sucker" and one woman received several harassing notes from a male student claiming she needed a "good fuck from a real man" (p. 85) and which offered to perform sexual acts on her.

The systematic marginalization of teachers needs more attention because ways in which they negotiate their power and privilege might influence their ability to intervene

when witnessing sexual harassment. When Meyer (2008b) interviewed teachers about addressing gender-based violence, participants voiced that they wanted to be part of combating sexual harassment, but felt that their ability to do so was limited because they were in vulnerable positions as minorities in their schools. More interestingly, Meyer noted in this same study that teachers who have more institutional privilege (therefore likely to be less susceptible to sexual harassment) might not recognize sexual harassment as a problem because of a possible lack of exposure to, and knowledge of systematic discrimination.

Prevailing discourses about discipline and authority in schools also affect teachers, administrators and the likelihood of recognizing the sexual harassment of teachers by students. Robinson (2000) found that authority was “gendered” and female teachers were apprehensive to report sexual harassment from students, because they feared being labelled a “bad” teacher who could not “control” the classroom. She states, "The problem is viewed primarily as a matter of discipline, rather than sexual harassment stemming from gender and power issues, possibly interrelated with other social forces, such as racism, lesbophobia or ageism" (p. 83).

Teachers who experience sexual harassment, especially women of colour, often state that they would not report sexual harassment, believing it would not be taken seriously by colleagues or principals, or that it was not taken seriously in the past (Meyer, 2008b; Rahimi & Liston, 2011; Robinson, 2000). Many teachers in Meyer's (2008b) study felt that they were not supported by their administration when working to end the sexual harassment of girls by boys, and Rahimi and Liston (2011) reported that the teachers they interviewed often stated that their schools rarely addressed instances of girls

being sexually harassed. One woman in Robinson's (2000) study voiced that she was called "the prude" (p. 87) and a "radical feminist" (p. 87) by her colleagues after she reported sexual harassment from her male students. In another incident, one teacher stated that she was re-victimized by her principal who blamed the sexual harassment she experienced on her race. She stated that he "just made this racist insinuation about women from my background learning to be less subservient with males and standing up for myself more" (p. 84). Similar to students who have been reported to eventually stop "seeking help" from teachers and parents to intervene in sexual harassment and gender-based violence (Ringrose & Renold, 2007), sadly, some teachers also learn that their administrators and colleagues will not take their reports of sexual harassment seriously, and so they stop reporting it. When a cultural environment exists where colleagues and administrators downplay sexual harassment and re-victimize teachers who are sexually harassed, the sexual harassment of girls by boys is likely to be difficult to address by teachers, knowing that they would receive little support from their colleagues and principal.

Working conditions, resources, support, and education. In addition to teachers' attitudes and beliefs about sexual harassment, stressful demands of the job might also prevent them from intervening to stop sexual harassment. For instance, in a study examining how school staff members view bullying and sexual harassment in U.S. middle schools located in the Midwest, teachers reported that they were hesitant to intervene because of practical reasons such as lack of time and feeling pressure to complete other work (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013). While many teachers articulated a desire for more training on how to intervene with sexual harassment (Charmaraman,

Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013), teachers also mentioned that "their plates [were] full" (p. 440) and did not have the time to dedicate to sexual harassment prevention. Teachers in Canadian secondary schools that taught in the same urban district from Meyer's (2008b) study were genuinely concerned about addressing gender-based violence, but also said that they felt "overworked" and "overwhelmed" due to the pressure to cover curriculum requirements, which led teachers to ignore some problematic behaviours. Unions' helping to regulate workloads and provide resources on sexual harassment prevention, such as OSSTF/FEESO's (2010) *Still Not Laughing: Challenging Sexual Harassment in Our Schools Report*, does provide support to teachers to address sexual harassment; however, there is little information within the academic literature investigating unions' roles in relation to sexual harassment in schools. Thus, further research on support systems from unions is needed. Consequently, past studies reveal that when given the opportunity and time to learn about how to combat sexual harassment in schools, teachers are willing, but current pressures often leave teachers prioritizing other school obligations over combating sexual harassment (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013; Meyer, 2008b).

Professional development days are opportunities for teachers to learn how to support students who experience student-to-student violence, and access resources, but there is little research on such programs (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013). One study that collected surveys from teachers about their views on gender-based violence reported that school policies regarding sexual harassment within heterosexual, dating relationships provided teachers with little support (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009, p. 522). Teachers in Charmaraman, Jones, Stein and Espelage's (2013) study

claimed to receive more training on “bullying” during professional development education than on sexual harassment and education on student-to-student violence was often optional at their schools. Despite the lack of research on teachers' education in this area, Walsh, Duffy, and Gallagher-Duffy (2007) insist that "...intervention programs targeting sexual harassment in schools must be directed not just at students, but also teachers" (p. 116).

Research investigating teachers' ability to stop sexual harassment and discuss sexism is significant as such harassment can greatly impact students' experience in schools. A study by California Safe Schools Coalition (2004) reported that students feel safer and experience less harassment when their teachers intervene (Meyer, 2008a, p. 37). However, even when teachers consider themselves to be knowledgeable about sexual harassment, they might need more training and support to be able to fully address student-to-student sexual harassment. A quantitative study across several U.S schools revealed that although the staff considered themselves progressive and dedicated to intervening in gender-based violence such as sexual harassment, students still reported experiencing this kind of violence often (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009). It should be noted that the school handbook had little information to help support students and teachers to address gender-based violence at this school (Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009). Therefore, the lack of information in school policies reveals the importance for teachers to receive support and resources from administration in order for their intervention to be effective.

Unfortunately, teachers often express a lack of support from their administration when reporting gender-based violence such as sexual harassment (Meyer, 2008b;

Robinson, 2000). As previously mentioned, teachers also fear being labelled a “bad” teacher if they ask for help when addressing student-to-student violence (Robinson, 2000; Craig, Bell, Leschied, 2011). Some teachers from Meyer's (2008b) study stated that even if they addressed gender-based violence every time, the principal had the most influence in creating the environment for how sexual harassment would be handled. Despite these findings, few studies analyze teachers' responses to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence (Amagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009), making it difficult to draw specific conclusions on the effectiveness of schools' educational programs, resources and administrative support.

In regards to educational support for teachers, there is extremely limited academic research on how teachers are trained to intervene with sexual harassment. The research that *does* exist indicates that the content in teachers' college programs usually focuses on academics (Beran, 2006), leaving few lessons for teacher candidates on gender (Skelton, 2007; Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013) or sexual harassment prevention (Rahimi & Liston, 2011). When referring to her training in a Canadian teachers' college, one teacher from Meyer's (2008b) study stated, "I don't know if I was really attuned to [sexual harassment][brackets original]--to be quite honest. Maybe that's why I wasn't so aware that it was going on because as a part of my training it had never really been brought up as an issue to be concerned with" (p. 560).

Christine Skelton (2007) found that when teacher education aimed to promote social justice initiatives, words like "gender," and "race" were replaced with "diversity," which essentially "softens" the discussion about social inequalities and systematic oppression. This research relates to the idea that current anti-bullying policies depoliticize

the discussion about gender, power (Ringrose & Renold, 2011) and homophobic bullying (Walton, 2008). However, even the effects of the anti-bullying policies and their presence at the teachers' college level remain unclear. Interestingly, teachers often report accessing education on sexual harassment and bullying on their own (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013), which might suggest a lack of support from their teacher education classes prior to being hired as teachers. Further research is needed on the education that teacher candidates receive in their education classes about discussions of gender, sexism and sexual harassment in schools to fill the gaps in such research.

Rahimi & Liston (2011) argue that examining acts that could constitute as sexual harassment "should begin with teacher education programs" (p. 802). Teacher candidates must be encouraged to discuss anti-sexual harassment strategies to challenge their current belief systems and be able to develop confidence in ending school violence (Meyer, 2008a). Meyer (2008a) argues that applying Freire's anti-oppressive pedagogy to teacher education can encourage teacher candidates to change the patriarchal and heterosexist systems that help sustain sexual harassment. In Meyer's words, Freire's framework assists educators to "transform learning while making explicit the dominant power structures that influence how knowledge is produced" (p. 41). Teacher education must play a central role in altering sexual harassment in schools and applying a feminist pedagogy that examines how gender and power intertwine to create knowledge as well as a democratic approach to teacher education could potentially be a force of change (Scerif, 1997). Further, when administrators and teachers include teacher candidates in the development of policies to combat sexual harassment in the school, it can help establish a safer school environment.

Conclusion

Research has shown that teacher intervention in response to sexual harassment in schools is not as simple as the 2008 "Respect Culture" report might suggest. Dominant beliefs about gender and power can be challenged, but teachers need adequate support and spaces where they are able to acknowledge their entrenchment and investment in rape culture narratives and discourses that normalize the sexual harassment of girls and women (Larkin, 1995; Shute, Owens and Slee, 2008; & Rahimi and Liston, 2011). As Rahimi and Liston (2011) argue:

Teachers should not be blamed entirely for their inability to address instances of harassment. Teachers need adequate and in-depth opportunities themselves to discuss harassment, examine its impact, and be allowed opportunities within the schools to directly address sexist and racist behaviours (p. 807).

Teacher education classes and school cultures must be inviting spaces to question engrained attitudes, behaviours and school policies that uphold sexism, racism, homophobia and heteronormativity, which function together to perpetuate sexual harassment. Teachers and administrators must support fellow teachers if they have been sexually harassed and take all forms of sexual harassment seriously. Recognizing systems that marginalize some individuals over others, and critiquing the anti-bullying discourses for their inability to adequately explain the causes of sexual harassment, might be the next steps in helping to remove barriers that prevent teachers from intervening in the sexual harassment of girls by boys.

Chapter 2:

Theoretical Framework – Feminist Poststructuralism

Introduction

A key focus of feminist poststructural theory is the acknowledgement that subjects are entrenched in discourses, and thus unknowingly accept existing discourses as truth and enact these discourses through language and everyday social acts (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Discourses are extremely powerful and enveloping and enact to produce and sustain subjects' positionings (Davies, 2006; Weedon, 1987). Joan Scott (1998) describes discourse as "not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs" (p. 35). Discourses offer subjects possibilities and also provide limitations to what subjects can attain and become (Barrett, 2008; Weedon, 1987). Barrett (2008) explains, "discourses produce and circulate values, beliefs, and notions of what is possible, doable and acceptable" (p. 213).

In this chapter, I apply feminist poststructural theory to argue that prevailing discourses that construct the sexual harassment of girls as natural, normal and unavoidable within elementary and secondary schools, prevent teachers from addressing sexual harassment. Further, I argue that schools must adopt new discourses to implement social change and eliminate the perpetuation of student sexual harassment. In my discussion, I explore this central question: *How does a feminist poststructural framework inform research examining the normalization of boys' sexual harassment towards girls elementary and secondary schools in North America?* I discuss how teachers and students as subjects actively take up discourses that perpetuate the sexual harassment of girls by

boys. I argue that instead of using anti-bullying discourses² to address the issue of sexual harassment, which ignores how sexism perpetuates student-to-student violence, taking up new discourses that actively challenge prior understandings of "the subject," may lead us to think about sexual harassment in schools with a broader understanding of the intersection between gender and power.

To provide a brief overview of the following chapter, I begin by discussing how poststructuralism supports my research by challenging humanism to reject the existence of a unified "truth" and instead, offers a lens to examine how gender and knowledge are constructed based on existing power relations. I briefly explain how agency exists within the discursive and can be accessed to disrupt prevailing discourses. I then elaborate how subjects use language to construct meaning through the repetition of social acts, which perpetuate and can also challenge existing gendered power relations within the discursive.

Following the discussion on language, I outline how discourse is understood within feminist poststructural theory and briefly discuss how it contrasts from an understanding of "ideology." I then discuss how discourses compete, resulting in the subject to be in a continued state of conflict (Weedon, 1987) and possibility (St. Pierre, 2000). I examine the dominant discourses of masculinity in relation to "hegemonic" masculinity (Connell, 1996) and "hard" masculinity (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002) and also explore the dominant discourses of femininity that bound and limit girls to passivity also aim to regulate their sexuality.

² In this chapter, I will sometimes address anti-bullying policies as "anti-bullying discourses" as it is commonly described within the academic literature. However, when I use "discourse" as part of this phrase, I do not mean "discourse" in a poststructural context that refers to how meaning is understood and constructed through the repetition of language, text and signage. Instead, "discourse" here will take on a more specific meaning referring to how "bullying" is discussed as reflected in school board policies.

I then explain how prevailing discourses when taken up by subjects operate to navigate subjects' power and positionings within and outside the matrix of intelligibility and the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990; 1993). I link this discussion to address discourses that gender students as subjects perpetuate and reinforce sexual harassment. Using Rich's concept (1996) of compulsory heterosexuality and briefly revisiting Butler's (1993) concept of the heterosexual matrix, I discuss how prevailing discourses that reinforce the institution of heterosexuality also perpetuate sexual harassment in schools when taken up by teachers and students.

I conclude by unpacking how teachers and students can actively resist and transform dominant discourses that currently perpetuate sexual harassment in schools by taking up new ones. Throughout this chapter, I draw upon the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Bronwyn Davies, Elizabeth St. Pierre, M. J. Barrett and Chris Weedon to analyze poststructuralist concepts of language, agency, subjectivity and discourse in relation to gender and power.

Poststructuralism: A Challenge to Humanism

Existing discourses within schools operate through a humanistic view of the world that promotes students as independent beings with the ability to access "reality" by using "objective truth" and "logic" (Davies, 2006). St. Pierre (2000) explains that in humanist terms, the individual "is generally understood to be a conscious, stable, unified, rational, coherent, knowing [and] autonomous being (p. 500). In contrast, poststructuralism argues that students are constructed subjects embedded in the discursive, and that "reality" is not fixed (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000). Students and teachers as subjects are usually understood in humanistic terms and

humanism asserts that students are "autonomous individuals with varying degrees of freedom to choose what kind of a person to be" (Davies, 2006, p. 425). Poststructuralism, in contrast, acknowledges that students as subjects are embedded in varying discourses that limit and define their existences (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000). For example, the anti-bullying frameworks reflect how students are often understood in humanist terms and the categorization of "bully" implies that subjects have "fixed identities" and that understanding of "bully" as a concept transcends across histories and cultures, where as poststructuralism would honour the fluidity of subjectivity and acknowledge that subjects' positioning is ever changing, in process and a reflection of existing prevalent discourses (Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000).

Although Michel Foucault resisted categorizing himself as poststructuralist, poststructuralists such as Butler (1990), Davies (2005), St. Pierre (2000), Barrett (2006) and Weedon (1987) have challenged humanism by using his research that traces the Western societal constructions of sexuality, sex, and madness (Foucault, 1976). Humanism derived from the Enlightenment period, in which "objective truth," "reason," and "rationality" were believed to be achievable using the scientific method (Foucault, 1976; Walton, 2005). Foucault (1976) also recognized that existing conditions and power relations led to the social construction of homosexuality and heterosexuality as opposed to a scientific "truth". His intention was to acknowledge that there was "a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normative, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture" (p. 4).

Subjects' acceptance of heterosexuality as "truth" operated to maintain structures of hegemony and marginalize all other forms of sexualities. The construction of

heterosexuality led to the belief that the kinds of sexual pleasures to be considered socially acceptable were those that occurred between married, heterosexual couples (Foucault, 1976). Foucault (1976) explains, "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny...the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (p. 43). As such, Foucault's research into the history of sexuality provides poststructuralists with information to critique and deconstruct the "normative" views of sexuality in cultures that exist today.

Foucault's (1972) challenge to the humanistic view of "truth" attained by science is also demonstrated in *Madness and Civilization* as he outlines how "madness" became a mental illness in the modern period of Western culture. Foucault recognized how science categorizes and therefore produces certain individuals as "mad" or "abnormal," which challenges the idea that there is always a scientific "truth" that is "objective" (Walton, 2005). According to Foucault (1972), our perception of mental illness is not "natural" but constantly changing based on the societal conditions. Such conditions, rooted in discourse, aim to control, limit and define subjects. Foucault states, "psychiatric discourse finds a way of limiting its domain, of defining what it is talking about, of giving it the status of an object--and therefore of making it manifest, nameable and describable" (p. 41). Foucault's research on the "insane" challenges humanism's concept of adhering to "reason" and "science" as a way to obtain "truth."

Consequently, tracing the history of what is considered to be "acceptable" forms of pleasure, sexuality and sanity, reveals how subjects are entrenched into such discourses and that our reality is constructed by these narratives (Barrett, 2006).

Foucault's work provides insight to how such concepts have changed over time, therefore, debunking the concept of there being any form of fixed “truth” or “reality.”

Humanism and poststructuralism. Deconstructing humanism allows us to question what is considered to be “truth” and “legitimate,” but several poststructural theorists such as Barrett (2005) and St. Pierre (2000) argue that rejecting humanism entirely is impossible and ineffective due to the fact that humanism is everywhere and engrained so deeply in all social systems. St. Pierre (2000) explains:

Humanism is in the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures. (p. 478)

While poststructuralism allows us to deconstruct the concept of “truth,” it can also co-exist with humanism, which claims that a “truth” is capable of being obtained (St. Pierre, 2000). Foucault (1984) also notes that “we must not conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected, but that the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve an axis for reflection” (p. 44).

While feminists use poststructuralism to critique humanism, “poststructuralism cannot escape humanism since, as a response to humanism, it must always be implicated in the problematic it addresses” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479).

Poststructuralism invites questions as opposed to finding answers. It is not concerned with finding an alternative to humanism, or “destroy[ing] the humanist subject” (Davies, 2000, p. 133). Its aim is to question how we, as subjects, are positioned and negotiate power within discourse and what we consider to be “natural” and “normal.”

The purpose of poststructuralism is therefore not to dismantle humanism, "but to enable us to see the subject's fictionality, whilst recognizing how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real" (Davies, 1997, p. 272).

Poststructuralism and the education system. Poststructuralism is a useful theoretical framework for challenging sexism and sexual harassment in the education system because schools are sites in which gendered subjects learn how to perform "woman" and "man" (Butler, 1990). These reinforcements of gender constructions are part of the dominant discourses that define and also limit subjects, creating conditions that perpetuate existing systematic imbalances of power (Robinson, 2012). While humanism is everywhere and has shaped language, culture, and politics, feminist poststructuralists acknowledge that it has created conditions that also perpetuate racism, homophobia, sexism and other cultural structures (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479).

Poststructuralism rejects the objectivity of the subject, since the subject exists in a continual state of conflict within discourse (St. Pierre, 2000). Weedon (1987) explains:

Unlike humanism, which implies a conscious, knowing, unified, rational subject, poststructuralism theorizes subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the process of political change and to preserving the status quo. (p. 21)

Therefore, poststructuralism recognizes that power is maintained and reinforced systematically in institutions and subjects who are limited by these institutions experience conflict because of these limitations (Barrett, 2006; Weedon, 1987). Although schools are intended to offer safe spaces to children and adolescents to grow and learn, they are also institutions that aim to reinforce a certain kind of citizenship and produce future workers to maintain the capitalist system (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). The maintenance of such a

system creates conditions that marginalize certain groups and privilege others, based on aspects such as gender, sexual orientation and race. Schools play a key role in constructing the type of citizens their countries want and teachers are expected to set the boundaries of possibilities that their students are able to become and work within (Davies, 2006). Poststructuralism offers the ability to critique such forms of discrimination especially in how it assists in recognizing the power of discourse, how subjects are positioned into such discourses, and how these discourses continue to limit and produce us as subjects (Davies, 2006). For teachers, parents, administrators and students who are critical about, and wish to alter, the education system, "we need a theory which can explain how and why people oppress each other, a theory of subjectivity, of conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, which can account for the relationship between the individual and the social" (Weedon, 1987, p. 3). Poststructuralism offers feminist theorists and educators the tools to deconstruct the dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity that continue to limit and produce subjects in their cultural contexts. This theory can offer an alternative to current understandings of sexual harassment and the conditions that perpetuate its existence and normalization within schools (Larkin, 1995; Robinson 2012).

Agency in Poststructuralism

Agency is linked to the notion of subjectivity (Barrett, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). The subject's positioning is constantly changing and in process within discourse, "but [subjects] cannot be agents outside of the discourses that produce them" (Barrett, 2005, p. 87). In humanism, agency is "inherent" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 500), "available to everyone as a natural right" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 489), but in poststructuralism, agency cannot exist

outside of discourses that are available to the subject (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000). As stated in more detail in further in this chapter, in the context of elementary and secondary schools, students and teachers are produced, entrenched and limited by various gender discourses that overlap and compete with one another (Davies, 2006). While the discursive is powerful, enveloping and inescapable (Barrett, 2005), poststructural agency states that subjects within schools do have agency to disrupt and challenge existing dominant discourses producing and limiting gendered subjects (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006, St. Pierre, 2000).

Language

Young people as gendered subjects, use language to construct meaning about their worlds and are also constructed by language as subjects (Weedon, 1987). Weedon (1987) explains that "language is... the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed* [emphasis original]" (p. 21). Students and teachers as subjects construct their "reality" by using languages that are available to them (St. Pierre, 2000). Hence, language is used to reinforce normative constructions about gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990), which I explain in more detail during my discussion on the heterosexual matrix. In reference to Butler (1990), Salih (2002) notes that "gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language. If you like, it is not that an identity 'does' discourse or language, but the other way around--language and discourse 'do' gender. There is no 'I' outside language" (p. 56). Language is vital to the construction of gender and how subjects make sense of themselves in cultural contexts (Barrett, 2005).

Subjects use language and engage in social acts to make and construct meanings that reinforce and challenge existing power structures such as schools. In elementary and secondary schools, when teachers and students take up the phrase, "boys will be boys" or "she was asking for it" they are repeating language that has already been rooted in discourses available to them and thus, it is not isolated to their individual selves. Instead, "[language] constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific" (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). Foucault (1976) emphasizes that language is an essential tool that members of society use to enforce dominant beliefs of sexuality. He states, "power's hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law" (p. 82). Dominance is reinforced when boys use terms like "bitch, baby, chick and fucking broad" as a way to assert masculine power over female classmates (Meyer, 2008a, p. 40). Similarly, female students use terms like "whorish," "slutty," and "wrong" to shame their female peers for breaking the dress codes even though many girls are critical of dress code policies (Raby, 2010). Although subjects' marginalization might be supported by the perpetuation of existing discourses, they will repeat the discourses available to them (Barrett, 2005) because language constructs "reality" –it produces what we know (St. Pierre, 2000). For example, although girls might not necessarily want to be sexually harassed, they might accept the harassment because it provides them with a sort of "advantage" in producing "the 'appropriate' female subject" (Robinson, 2012, p. 79). Robinson (2012) reports that sexual harassment was considered to be a "compliment" in some incidents and was accepted by some girls when it was coming from a boy who was considered popular or adhered to a "desired" form of masculinity. She explains that "for many young women

being popular and being perceived as attractive by boys is critical to their performance of femininity so they will 'tolerate' sexual harassment in certain contexts" (p. 81). Since girls, like all gendered subjects, frequently learn to accept sexual harassment as "normal" and "natural" (Robinson, 2012), they might temporarily "gain" from being sexually harassed because it reaffirms their place as "desired" heterosexual subjects existing in the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1992). Further, although language maintains sexism and helps sustain conditions that perpetuate violence towards girls and women, it is also non-linear and contradictory and therefore, subjects can draw from these contradictions to challenge existing dominant power relations. As Davies (2000) explains, language is a powerful tool that can be used to challenge sexism as it "shap[es] what we understand as possible and what we desire within those possibilities" (p. 181).

Discourse in Poststructuralism

Barrett (2005) explains how discourse relies on language, including specific signifiers and social acts, to shape the subject in that "discourse is not specifically a language or a text, but is the effect of language practices" (p. 82). Further, she states that:

discourse is embedded in notions of identity (what it means to be a girl, boy, student, teacher, canoe trip guide, environmental educator, or activist), the meanings we attach to the words (signifiers) we use, and the rules we use to determine what "makes sense" or is possible. (p. 82)

Discourse has such power that what subjects can "be" is based on the discourses that are available to them (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006). Weedon (1987) explains,

How we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning to the material social relations under which we live and which structure our

everyday lives, depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent.

(p. 26)

Therefore, discourse offers us possibilities in how we are produced as subjects (Davies, 2006; Barrett, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). As mentioned previously, subjects' agency also enables us to take up new discourses (Barrett, 2008; Davies, 2006) in order to challenge existing and competing ones; however, agency of the subject does not exist outside of the discursive (Barrett, 2008; Butler, 1990). Hence, discourses are vital to the construction of the subject, providing the potential for possibilities and necessity for change and resistance (St. Pierre, 2000). Under the heading, Challenging existing discourses:

Resistance within this theory chapter, I explain in more detail how subjects can take up new discourses to challenge the existing ones pertaining to femininity and masculinity, which function to perpetuate sexual harassment in elementary and secondary schools.

While discourses are productive and define the subject (Davies, 2006; Weedon, 1987; Foucault, 1976;), dominant discourses marginalize certain groups over others (St. Pierre, 2000). For example, Butler (1993) recognizes how dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity limit subjects by creating conditions that consequence those who do not adhere to a gender binary or perform their assigned gender roles as expected. However, the marginalization of such groups is not unchangeable since the subjects' positioning is in a continual process based on available discourses and how they transform (Davies, 2006).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault's research (1976) on how the subject was constructed by various dominant discourses over time reveals how discourses about sex

and sexuality are constantly changing and in process. His aim was not to seek the "objective truth" about sex, as mentioned earlier, but instead he states, "What is at issue, briefly, is the over-all 'discursive fact,' the way in which sex is 'put into discourse'" (p. 11). Foucault (1976) recognized that the discursive is so powerful, that subjects accept the discourses that are available to them as "truth". Applying the idea that discourses are constructed and constantly in flux (Barrett, 2005), and that subjects can take up new discourses, can assist us in understanding the conditions that perpetuate (but also challenge) sexual harassment in schools. While discourses define and limit us as subjects (St. Pierre, 2000), acknowledging their existence and that there is no identifiable "truth" might enable us to understand how discourses can be altered to combat sexual harassment. Recognizing that sexual harassment is a response to the *constructed* ideas about femininity and masculinity and not a "natural" occurrence is difficult, however, because discourse is powerful and enveloping. St. Pierre (2000) builds off of Foucault's work to acknowledge that "once a discourse becomes 'normal' and 'natural,' it is difficult to think and act outside it...Other statements and other ways of thinking remain unintelligible, outside the realm of possibility" (p. 485).

Foucault (1976) was also interested in how institutions such as schools and governments operate and construct the subject within language and discourse. While poststructuralists are concerned with how subjects are defined by, and entrenched in, "discourse," critical theorists such as Karl Marx have been concerned with "ideology" and its relationship to materialism (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). For my research purposes, I take a poststructural approach and focus on "discourse" instead of "ideology" to explain that sexual harassment is normalized and perpetuated (Robinson, 2012) because of

existing conditions that subject take up as “truth” and “reality.” However, I will acknowledge that Purvis and Hunt (1993) theorize that there is a relationship between "discourse" and "ideology.” They state, "what makes some discourses ideological is their connection with systems of domination” (p. 497). Therefore, certain groups are privileged or marginalized based on the dominant discourses that are also taken up and reinforced in systems such as schools and governments.

Competing discourses. Subjects are capable of resisting language within prevailing discourses that reinforces and perpetuates systematic marginalization by taking up alternate discourses. As Weedon (1987) explains, "it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us as conscious, thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it" (p. 32). For example, the dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity have been and continue to be challenged by teachers, parents, administrators and students. Poststructuralism offers the ability to deconstruct discourse that we perceive to make up “truths,” allowing us to reposition our idea of what is and is not possible (Barrett, 2005). Barrett (2005) emphasizes "through language we use, we create fictions every day, often presenting them as reality--the reality that is comfortable for us, or that we wish to live" (p. 81). If language shapes our “reality,” then accessing language from competing discourses can reconstruct our concept of reality, opening up additional possibilities (Barrett, 2005). Further, subjects might be disadvantaged by a discourse from one particular setting, but advantaged by a discourse from another while being provided rewards in another group. For instance, while girls who break the dress codes become marginalized when teachers and administrators rely on and reinforce dominant discourses of femininity to uphold

such policies, they might receive rewards and acceptance within their peer groups (Raby, 2010). Therefore, discourses collide and compete, resulting in the subject to always be in a state of conflict (Weedon, 1987) and possibility (St. Pierre, 2000).

The dominant discourses of masculinity. As indicated in the previous chapter, research has shown that teachers and parents often support a violent, masculine narrative that perpetuates the discourse of boys as “natural” aggressors. For instance, Ringrose and Renold (2011) reported that a boy from their study on school violence recalled when their parents would tell him that boys must “stand up for themselves” and after hitting a “bully” his father congratulated him for “winning’ the fight” (p. 188). Such-narratives continue to normalize and uphold masculine aggression and domination. Once discourse is continuously repeated by the subjects that are entrenched within such discourse, it produces a certain form of normalcy, taken up again by other subjects and reinforced as “truth” (St. Pierre, 2000). The “boys will be boys” phrase continues to limit boys and girls in secondary schools, further embedding boys into a discourse that positions them as sexual aggressors and girls as passive subjects to be dominated. Robinson (2012) and Meyer (2008a) recognize that the sexual harassment of girls is a way boys assert their heterosexuality. Similarly, Davies (2006) notes that boys will bully and harass subjects who are associated with femininity as a way to position themselves as autonomous heterosexual subjects by signalling “‘this is what I am not’ [or] ‘this is what disgusts me’” (p. 433).

In order to contextualize the dominant discourses of masculinity and how such discourses create conditions that contribute to sexual harassment in secondary schools, an examination of hegemonic masculinity is needed. Connell (1996) describes “hegemonic”

as "a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance" (p. 209) and "hegemonic masculinity" is associated with masculine traits that are most honoured over other kinds of masculinities within a specific cultural context. For example, she explains that in a Western context, athleticism, physical strength, and heterosexuality are perceived as desired dominant traits. As male hegemony is typically linked to physical abilities and attributes, acts of aggression, harassment and violence are key components in the construction of hegemonic masculinities in primary and secondary schools (Ringrose & Renold, 2011). The dominance of hegemonic masculinity is enforced through institutions such as governments and schools (Connell, 1996) and upheld and reinforced through social acts (Connell, 1996; Davies, 2006).

How hegemonic masculinity is attained and responded to, however, is complex as noted in a British study by Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) where they interviewed boys ages 11-14 about their experiences and perceptions of masculinity in their school contexts. Boys' testimonies reinforced the establishment of a "hegemonic masculinity," which they relied on to determine how they "should" perform masculinity within a masculine hierarchy. Drawing on available cultural discourses, many boys in the study claimed that they needed to adhere to specific amount of "hardness" for peer acceptance and popularity. Boys must navigate carefully, between "acceptable" forms of aggression and "bullying behaviours," however. Similarly, in a study conducted with 10-11 year old boys from the UK, while "play fighting" with other boys was deemed acceptable, "hitting a girl" was categorized as bullying (Ringrose & Renold, 2011) and within school anti-bullying policies, "bullies" were ostracized and "othered" as pathological (Walton, 2005). Consistent with Ringrose and Renold's research, boys from the Frosh, Phoenix and

Pattman (2002) study claimed that males could also be “too hard,” indicating that boys did not always benefit when embodying attributes associated with “hegemonic masculinity” if seen as going too far. The authors state, "many boys wanted other boys to consider that they were really tough, but not *senselessly violent* [emphasis added]" (p. 83). If it is perceived as legitimate for boys to sexually harass girls in order to assert their positions as masculine subjects (Robinson, 2012; Meyer, 2008a), but also socially unacceptable for boys to be “violent,” it suggests that sexual harassment is not perceived as a form of violence within dominant cultural narratives.

The findings from the previous studies suggest that boys must navigate carefully when positioning themselves as gendered subjects and cannot be “too violent,” nor “too soft.” The difficulty in performing masculinity “correctly” is especially problematic since "students work very hard to embody themselves as appropriate and appropriated subjects, and losing their footing--being seen to be incompetent or inappropriate--can be very painful" (Davies, 2006, p. 433). Hence, teachers and students as subjects are entrenched in discourses, which normalize, value and reward certain levels of masculine aggression. Dominant discourses of masculinity are powerful, difficult to resist and easy to be recycled and perpetuated by students and teachers (Barrett, 2005).

The dominant discourses of femininity. While boys are expected to embody the “correct” amount of masculine aggression, girls are bound and limited by the discourses of morality, passivity and sexual containment. Girls are expected to uphold the morality of the school climate (Chambers, Van Loon & Tincknell, 2004; Robinson, 1992) and “get along” with peers regardless of circumstance (Robinson, 2012). These discourses imply that to be a girl who does not uphold morality or one who “misbehaves” according to the

school rules is a “failed” gendered subject, while in contrast, “naughty” boys are “just being boys” and invited to challenge the authority of teachers. It has been reported in research that teachers, especially those who are male, have trouble addressing girls who challenge their authority because they view these girls as failing to fulfill their gender expectation of “passive” (Robinson, 1992; Stromquist, 2007). Similarly, Robinson (1992) reported that teachers were likely to punish girls more harshly than boys for similar behaviours of aggression because the teachers perceived these girls to be disrupting the boundaries of femininity. When girls “disrupt” such discourses by breaking school rules, asserting their opinions, challenging authority figures and critiquing the dress codes (Raby, 2010, Pomerantz, 2007), they are met with resistance. Furthermore, when girls do not adhere to the “desired” traits of femininity and disrupt prevailing dominant discourses, they are more likely to be blamed if they experience some sort of victimization like sexual harassment (Robinson, 1992; Chambers, Van Loon & Tincknell, 2004). For example, teachers perceived female students as the perpetrators of sexual immorality despite the widespread sexual harassment that boys inflicted on the girls (Chambers, Van Loon & Tincknell, 2004).

Similar to boys who have difficulty negotiating the “correct amount” of aggression, Raby (2010) found in her research that girls had to walk a fine line when navigating between acceptable and unacceptable dress. As addressed in the previous chapter, the regulation of female sexuality is complex and potentially causes anxiety for girls about how they should dress. It must be noted that the enforcement of dress code policies is connected to a more pervasive problem embedded in social institutions in which women continue to be marginalized (Pomerantz, 2007). For example, whether

institutions attempt to sexualize or desexualize women, both are harmful to girls because these are attempts to undermine girls' authority over their own bodies and attempt to control how they should or should not construct their bodies. Girls are limited and defined by discourses of femininity including those upheld by school policies like the dress codes in regards to how they should "properly" perform their gender (Butler, 1990).

As demonstrated through an earlier analysis of dress code policies, teachers and students are entrenched in discourses that imply girls' bodies and sexualities must be contained and controlled especially by those in positions of authority (Pascoe, 2007). For example, Pascoe (2007) notes that teachers repeatedly intervened when girls danced in sexualized ways while boys sat in chairs and watched them, and teachers warned students that those who danced "inappropriately" would be removed from the dance. Interestingly, teachers were focused on controlling sexual acts between students, but did not question lines in music that students sang along with that demanded females to "take off all [their] clothes" and stated to males that "no matter where [they] go, [they] see the same ho" (p 39). She remarks on a critical distinction between both incidences--teachers intervened to stop sexual acts between students, with a specific focus on the actions of girls, but seemed to allow misogynist statements about women. In a poststructural perspective, this is significant since language "enables us to think, speak, and give meaning to the world around us" (Weedon, 1987, p. 32).

Performing "correct" identities of masculinity and femininity. Entrenched in dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity, subjects such as teachers and administrators reinforce these discourses of normative gender expectations and reward individual subjects who are "successful" at performing their assigned gender (Robinson,

2012). Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity critiques the dominant belief that gender is innate –instead, she argues that gender is an illusion, but since it is performed continuously over time in repetitive acts, it creates the notion that gender is static and fixed in an identity. According to Butler (1990), gendered subjects must exist within the heterosexual matrix and the matrix of intelligibility. Pascoe (2011) defines the heterosexual matrix as “the public ordering of masculinity and femininity through meanings and practices of sexuality” (p. 27) while the matrix of intelligibility sets parameters for who qualifies for “personhood” based on how they adhere to culturally desired traits. Subjects who exist outside of the matrix of intelligibility compromise “personhood” within peer and social groups and have less power than those inside of it (Butler, 1990). Hoeft (2009) explains, "Persons are intelligible to the extent that they have been made intelligible by language and its regulatory practices" (p. 57). For instance, gendered subjects are rewarded by systems and other subjects when they perform the gender identity given to them at birth “correctly” in accordance to cultural standards. Examining the heterosexual matrix and the matrix of intelligibility in an educational context, girls who adhere to the school dress codes are rewarded by a discourse of feminine respectability, more so than the girls who do not adhere to the dress codes (Raby, 2011). Girls who challenge the dress code are considered to be "morally inferior" (Chambers, Van Loon & Tincknell, 2004) and become non-intelligible gendered beings outside of the matrix of intelligibility (Butler, 1990). Further, students who do not conform to a gender binary identity or are non-heterosexual are positioned as subjects outside of the heterosexual matrix. Butler (1990) states, "The very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherence' or 'discontinuous'

gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined" (p. 23). Discourse has the power to position subjects as "intelligible" or "non-intelligible" based on how successfully they perform their gender in accordance to societal expectations (Butler, 1990).

The power of the heterosexual matrix and the matrix of intelligibility perpetuates the sexual harassment of girls by boys as boys attempt to fit in as desired, gendered beings existing within these matrixes (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012). When boys feel as though their masculinity is threatened, sexually harassing girls becomes a "legitimate" response, reinforced by the cultural narrative that informs them that they have the ability and the "right" to dominate and control female subjects (Robinson, 2012). If boys challenge sexist discourses by refusing to take part in sexual harassment, they compromise their position as gendered subjects being able to attain "personhood" (Butler, 1993) and also potentially become at risk for being bullied by other males. Robinson (2012) explains that "[t]he perspective that sexual harassment is something that some boys and men 'have to do' becomes very real for some who are aware of the consequences of not getting their performance of masculinity right amongst their peers, including being the subject of similar harassment and violent punishment" (p. 78). Therefore, the cultural discourses that subjects are entrenched in that create the illusion of gender as fixed (Butler, 1990) sustain the conditions that maintain and continue the sexual harassment of girls by boys. Social institutions such as schools uphold these dominant discourses and thus play a key role in the production of narrowly gendered subjects.

When subjects actively reinforce the current discourses that place non-dominant gendered subjects outside of the matrix of intelligibility, it creates “others” and in turn legitimizes their harassment. It dehumanizes them by compromising their ability to attain “personhood” (Butler, 1993). Butler explains, "local conceptions of what is human, or, indeed, of what the basic conditions and needs of human life are, must be subjected to reinterpretation, since there are historical and cultural circumstances in which the human is defined differently" (p. 37). Butler therefore recognizes that diversity amongst individuals must be acknowledged and our concept of “the person” must be broadened.

How the gendering of students perpetuates sexual harassment. The existing, prevailing discourses available to girls and boys in secondary schools provide gendered subjects a limited and specific range of options that they are able to choose from in how they can “correctly” perform their genders (Butler, 1990). It must also be recognized that the gendering of subjects is not perpetuated in isolation—gendered subjects learn how to treat other gendered subjects through discourse (Robinson, 2012) and social acts (Davies, 2006). Sexual harassment is reinforced and perpetuated in schools as it continues to be normalized by teachers, students and administrators when they take up the discourses of femininity and masculinity that marginalizes girls.

Sexual harassment is perpetuated not only through discourse, but through the actions of subjects entrenched in such discourses (Davies, 2006). Davies (2002) explains:

In becoming that possible subject...[the subject] reiterates and confirms those conditions that make it, and go on making it, possible. Those conditions of possibility are embedded not in discourse alone, but in mutually constitutive social acts. (p. 426)

For instance, it has been found that some male teachers will laugh along when male students make sexist comments about women and girls as a way to "bond" (Pascoe, 2007), affirming the subordination of women and girls. These social acts reinforce the dominant discourses and reveal the extent to which subjects are entrenched in discourse and how subjects rely so deeply on discourse to make sense of themselves (Davies, 2006).

The notion that girls are responsible for their own victimization is enacted in language, such as through the common phrase, "she was asking for it," which teachers as well as students repeat and reinforce in social situations. In one case in Meyer's (2008a) study, for instance, a teacher did not stop sexual harassment and ridiculed a girl for punching a boy after he grabbed her chest. The teacher told her that "she deserved it" (p. 40) because she was wearing a skirt. The idea that girls are responsible for the sexual violence they experience is a common trope, and not original to the subject speaking it (Butler, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000). A poststructural critique of such a situation would acknowledge that the teacher was recycling dominant discourses of femininity and masculinity available to him (St. Pierre, 2000), thus perpetuating the normalization of sexual harassment of girls by boys in schools.

How discourses sustaining compulsory heterosexuality perpetuate sexual harassment. While prevailing discourses that marginalize and privilege subjects based on their gendered performances perpetuate sexual harassment, dominant discourses that privilege heterosexuality over other sexualities also perpetuates the sexual harassment of girls by boys, which will be examined below. In Rich's (1980) "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" she opens with a quotation by Rossi, which

demonstrates his assumption that all women are "innately" sexually attracted to men. She notes that this viewpoint is not only his, but is connected to a wider span of literature and broader discourse within the social sciences (p. 632). Rich focuses on how there has been little attention paid to how all women must engage in heterosexual relationships, regardless of their sexual orientation. The mandatory adherence to heterosexual marriages and partnerships is because heterosexuality is "normalized" in dominant discourses of sexuality perpetuated through social institutions such as schools and religious organizations, thus marginalizing all other sexual orientations. Rich highlights that "the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution would be akin to failing to admit the variety of forces that maintain the economic system of capitalism and the caste system of racism" (Eyre, 1993, p. 274).

Heterosexuality is reinforced and validated, which continues to privilege such relationships and marginalize non-heterosexual partnerships. Teachers re-enact compulsory heterosexuality when they use non-inclusive language and assume all their students to be heterosexual (Pascoe, 2007). Using a poststructural approach, we can apply Rich's (1980) theory of compulsory heterosexuality to sexual harassment in schools by analysing how heterosexuality is reinforced and normalized by prevailing school discourses when taken up by teachers and students.

Sexual harassment is perpetuated and reinforced through compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and as discussed earlier, the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Boys and girls learn that sexual harassment is "normal" (Robinson, 2012) and a way for boys to assert themselves as heterosexual (Ringrose & Renold, 2011). The very act of sexual harassment operates within heterosexuality to maintain the regulation of

power and "discipline, normalise and produce the 'appropriate' [objectified] female subject" (Robinson, 2012, p. 79). In Pascoe's (2007) research, boys at River High, for instance, often used physical force to constrain female students in the form of "flirtation" (p. 31) as a way to assert masculine dominance and female passivity. Pascoe also references an example when Ms. Mac, a teacher at River High, jokingly referred to a male and female student as "the couple of the year" (p. 32) because they walked into class late, talking amicably. Pascoe's example highlights how teachers actively reinforce heterosexual relationships and position them as the "norm." The research demonstrates how "gendered and sexualised forms of aggression, harassment and violence are central in the production of 'hegemonic,' heterosexual masculinities across primary and secondary schooling" (Ringrose and Renold, 2011, p. 184). Institutions such as schools reinforce "heterosexual hegemony" (p. 62) "*—a form of hegemony kept in place through intimidation and violence.*" (Helen Lenskyj, 1991, as cited by Eyre, 1993, p. 274). The sexual harassment of girls is one form of violence that operates to maintain hegemony in relation to gender and sexuality through the reinforcement of compulsory heterosexuality.

Challenging Existing Discourses: Resistance

Poststructuralism theorizes that subjects reproduce the discourses that are available to them (Davies, 2005). However, "we can use the power of discourse to disrupt its effects and reposition ourselves" (Davies, 2006b) often by taking up new discourses to enact social change (Weedon, 1987). Research in the literature on sexual harassment in schools has provided suggestions of how subjects can "reposition ourselves" and challenge current dominant discourses. For instance, as mentioned briefly in the literature review of this thesis, Meyer (2008a) suggests that teachers' education programs and

school boards implement anti-oppressive pedagogy in which teachers discuss concepts such as "privilege," "oppression," and how sexual harassment creates barriers in students' educational experience. However, it is important to acknowledge that sexual harassment is not only perpetuated by individuals repeating existing discourses—it is also reinforced and challenged in social institutions that exist to maintain current power systems (Weedon, 1987; Barret, 2005; Davies, 2000). Weedon says it best:

Social meanings are produced within social institutions and practices in which individuals, who are shaped by these institutions, are agents of change, rather than its authors, change which may either serve hegemonic interests or challenge existing power relations. (p. 25)

It must be recognized that challenging current discourses is difficult and while "resistance to discourses of domination is possible" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 486) there also "cannot be agents outside of the discourses that produce them" (Barrett, 2005, p. 87). Instead, "poststructuralist agency...acknowledge[s] that we may be able to take up discourses that disrupt hegemonic cultural narratives, and given that language and practice produce structure, words and actions can be turned against those very structures they produced" (Barrett, 2005, p. 87, as cited from Davies, 2000).

However, when repositioning themselves, subjects who challenge dominant discourses often experience resistance from dominant forces, since challenging the prevailing discourses disrupts the *status quo* and systems of power (Barrett, 2006). Students compromise their positions as coherent gendered subjects (Butler, 1990) and risk being positioned outside the heterosexual matrix and the matrix of intelligibility (Butler, 1990). The dominant discourses in schools implement the notion that to be a

“man” or a “woman,” students must adhere to specific criteria. When subjects resist or challenge current discourses by refusing to follow desired gender expectations, they are situated in vulnerable positions. For example, when boys challenge their male peers by refusing to participate in the sexual harassment of girls (Ringrose & Renold, 2011), they are at risk for being called “fag” or other derogatory terms (Meyer, 2008; Pascoe, 2007). Also, since discourses construct our realities (St. Pierre, 2000), we perceive them as “truth,” and are therefore resistant to exploring new possibilities, even if existing discourses limit us (Weedon, 1987). Weedon (1987) states, “Having grown up within a particular system of meanings and values, which may well be contradictory, we may find ourselves resisting alternatives” (p. 33).

Despite our possible resistance to change, subjects' repositioning happens in social, cultural processes that provide new opportunities (St. Pierre, 2000). For example, Weedon (1987) notes how in education and politics, the Women's Liberation Movement provided circles for women to recognize that their personal problems were not individual, but were “socially produced conflicts and contradictions shared by many women in similar social positions” (p. 33). As rooted in the literature, girls have challenged current discourses that subvert their positions as female subjects such as when they resist dress code policies (Pomerantz, 2007). However, Raby (2005) recognizes that when adolescents challenge systems of power, their resistance is constructed as “rebellion” and often perceived as “an inherent feature of their age” (p. 157), which “undermin[es] their political positions when in conflict with adults” (p. 157). Hence, if teachers deconstructed the subjectivity of “student” and how students are positioned by teachers as “becoming” or immature, they might be more willing to perceive female adolescents' resistance as

legitimate and could offer allyship in challenging dominant discourses. Teachers could also provide female students with spaces in which they are encouraged to question why their resisting of sexist school policies is punished, where they might also be able to come to the conclusion that the consequences of educational policies that marginalize them and control their sexuality are not individual to them. Teachers could provide opportunities for students to deconstruct their perceptions of the “self” in relation to topics such as power, privilege, gender and sexuality. It should be recognized by teachers that students also have agency within discourses and can take up “resistance” in different ways. Davies (2006) explains, "Teachers, in shaping the conditions of possibility of their students, do not wholly determine who their students are" (p. 430).

Research also reveals that girls currently do find ways to resist prevailing discourses by seeking out new discourses to combat sexual harassment. For example, girls in high schools across Canada and the United States have organized a series of walkouts and protests challenging sexist school dress codes. Alexi Halket in Toronto organized “Crop Top Day: An Event Protesting the Sexualization of Women’s Bodies” after being sent to the principal’s office for wearing a crop top (Raby & Pomerantz, 2015). Also, students in several high schools across London, Ontario supported local student, Laura Anderson by dressing in solidarity and using the hashtag #mybodymybusiness days after her vice principal sent her home for wearing ripped jeans and a t-shirt (CBC News, 2015c). Some students and parents also have taken up “rape culture discourses” to challenge current dominant ones about the dress code, highlighting how these policies have broader implications and consequences for girls who are often expected to take responsibility for experiences of sexual violence (Weiss, 2015).

I argue that when subjects such as students and teachers have taken up competing discourses that challenge the dominant ones by questioning and unpacking the marginalization of subjects, it is important to repeat them so that new subjects can also take them up.

Teachers who currently apply poststructuralism or discourses that challenge rape culture in their teaching could actively provide spaces for students to unpack the power of discourse and enact new discourses. Using poststructuralism in the education system is powerful, because the theory helps us acknowledge the power of discourse in its limitations and possibilities (Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000). However, teachers as subjects also experience resistance when they actively challenge dominant discourses and Barrett reminds us that teachers as subjects are also limited by discourses in school cultures (Barrett, 2005). For instance, to be accepted as a “suitable” teacher within the realm of dominant discourses, she or he is forced to embody the role of "objective evaluator" (p. 83) and to not do so "is to risk the condemnation by colleagues, administrators, parents and students" (p. 83). Davies (2006) also explains, that "teachers are equally caught in relations of mastery and submission in being and becoming appropriate teachers" (p. 431). Therefore, while challenging dominant discourses aims to subvert power imbalances in relation to gender and sexuality, taking up new discourses can also compromise a subject's power, even those in positions of authority such as teachers.

Regardless, teachers and students can resist such pressures to conform to existing discourses; if we continue to take up the dominant discourses that reinforce gender constructions and maintain hegemony, and if discourses such as the dress code policies

and the anti-bullying frameworks go unchallenged, teachers and students as gendered subjects will continue to be limited and defined by these existing discourses and the sexual harassment of girls by boys will perpetuate and continue.

Chapter 3:

Methodology and Method

Introduction

In Chapter 3, I address my methodological standpoint and method I used to structure my research study. First, I address my application of qualitative, feminist, poststructural methodology. Then I move on to an overview of my method in which I interviewed seven teachers from elementary and secondary schools in Southern Ontario to inquire about their experiences witnessing, addressing and/or hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment. I provide specific details about the recruitment process, participants, obtaining ethics clearance and how I integrated informed consent throughout the research study. I then provide details on the interview questions and explain how they supported feminist poststructural methodology. I explore the challenges and possibilities with disrupting dominant discourses and meeting social justice goals within qualitative, feminist poststructural research. I then discuss reflexivity, the coding process and how my role as researcher contributed to making meaning throughout the research study. I follow this section by addressing the limitations in research and end with a brief conclusion.

Qualitative, Feminist Poststructuralist Methodology

Feminist researchers and epistemologists have recognized that women's voices were traditionally excluded from sociological research, which influenced how knowledge was constructed and whose knowledge was valued over others (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). To address the absence of women in research, feminist methodologies developed in sociological studies with the help from researchers like Dorothy Smith (1987) and

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) to create "stand-point theory" in order to explain women's positioning and access to knowledge. Doucet and Mauthner (2006) explain, "feminist standpoint epistemologists have challenged the differential power that groups have to define knowledge, and they argue that marginalized groups hold a particular claim to knowing" (p. 37). Feminist methodologies have since gained popularity and diversified across research about women and gender as a way to access the knowledge held by marginalized groups.

Since there are multiple feminist perspectives, there are also multiple feminist methodologies that overlap and diverge (Westmarland, 2001). Therefore, to be specific, my research study about teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and/or hearing about sexual harassment in Ontario schools, utilizes qualitative, feminist poststructuralist methodology. In contrast to quantitative, positivist research that studies groups of people to make wide generalizations, qualitative research examines social practices by developing a snapshot of subjects' experiences using interviews, field notes and other forms of textual information (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012). While qualitative research "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012, p. 3) feminist poststructural methodology, more specifically, challenges the idea that subjects exist in a "natural" state and instead recognizes that "realities" are constructed within the discursive.

Feminist poststructural researchers examine how knowledge, gender and language intersect to construct power relations and create meaning within discourse (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Standpoint theory complements a poststructural framework because "poststructural approaches have been especially helpful

in enabling standpoint theories systematically to examine critically pluralities of power relations” (Harding, 1996, p. 451 as cited by Olesen, 2011, p. 130). However, while standpoint theory acknowledges how subjects’ positions and locations determine their access to knowledge based on factors like race, class and gender, feminist poststructural methodologies acknowledge that as subjects we also take up discourses differently and negotiate our power within these discourses. Further, feminist, poststructural methodology acknowledges that researchers can only produce a “partial story of women’s lives in oppressive contexts” (Olesen, 2012, p. 132). Therefore, I do not suggest that my participants can speak on behalf of all teachers in Southern Ontario and although all of my participants identified as white, straight, middle class and female, I also do not suggest that they can speak on behalf of all white, straight, middle class women (DeVault & Gross, 2012). Instead, as a feminist poststructural researcher, I seek to explore how participants took up discourses available to them, noting how their experiences overlapped and competed.

Relevant to using teachers as my participants, a poststructural analysis is also useful to challenge a humanist perspective that is deeply embedded in the education system and various other structures. Humanism is encompassing and “overwhelmingly in its totality; and, since it is so ‘natural,’ it is difficult to watch it work” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 478). In contrast, a poststructural framework “questions that which is assumed to be normal or common sense” (Barrett, 2005, p. 80). Further, using a feminist, poststructural methodological lens can challenge notions of meritocracy that claims all students have equal opportunity to succeed (Davies, 2006). Instead, acknowledging that subjects create “reality” by negotiating their power within the discourses available to them influenced by

qualifiers like race, gender and class as previously mentioned, (St. Pierre, 2000; Davis, 2006, Barrett, 2005; Pillow, 2003) can provide feminist researchers the opportunity to examine how prevailing discourses perpetuate sexism and sexual harassment and marginalize subjects. Although gendered-based violence is usually directed towards girls and women, when it comes to discussions about violence, "discourse is dominated by men and men's concerns about property violence and that women's concerns about sexual and personal violence are silenced" (Hollander, 2004, p. 622). Therefore, feminist poststructural research on sexual harassment and sexism focuses on stories within subordinate discourses and can provide opportunity to subvert and resist such dominant discourses that have created conditions that allow inequalities like sexism, racism and homophobia (Weedon, 1987; St. Pierre, 2000).

Method: Interviews

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, lasted approximately 1 hour and were conducted over the phone. The interview format satisfied feminist, qualitative research by allowing participants to freely share their stories instead a method with a rigid template, such as a closed questionnaire. I also held a follow-up interview upon participant, Erica's request approximately six months after our initial interview.³

Researchers have traditionally used interviews as a way to seek "what happened", but feminist poststructuralists such as Joan Scott (1991) argue that "'experience' is always discursively structured" (Devault & Gross, 2012, p. 211). Therefore, I used interviews

³ Erica said to me that she wanted to follow up because she had more experiences at the school following our initial interview. She stated, "Once I became more involved, [sexual harassment and sexism] became more overt over time. Before I thought I had a hard time thinking of examples, but now I have more to draw from."

For the interview, I did not record the conversation, but typed as she was speaking. I then read back the quotes to confirm it sounded accurate to what she had said and made adjustments accordingly. The follow-up interview took place six months following the initial interview.

not to seek a unified “truth,” but to invite participants to consider how they are positioned in the discursive and how they take up language to negotiate power relations. Feminist poststructuralism also acknowledges that the self is not “fixed” as it is constantly in “flux” (Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000) and therefore, the interview process in itself played a role in the construction of the subject as participants were invited to engage with and disrupt dominant discourses about sexual harassment and sexism within schools. DeVault and Gross (2012) remind us that the “telling” of stories shapes how the subject is constructed within the discursive. Within the research process,

[E]xperience recounted is always emergent in the moment, [and] that telling requires a listening and that the listening shapes the account as well as the telling.

Further, both telling and listening are shaped by discursive histories (p. 212).

Therefore, my “listening” as an interviewer in addition to the participants’ “telling” also played roles in the construction of the subject.

Although interviews are beneficial to accessing participants’ “particular claim to knowing” within feminist research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006, p. 37) and they invite participants to navigate and reposition themselves within discourse, interviews were not my original desired method — I hoped to implement mixed methods, running focus groups with optional interviews. Feminist researchers have noted that combining focus groups and interviews are helpful in meeting social justice goals for a variety of reasons, such as

empowering participants, engaging members of a community in collective meaning making, building community support, maintaining congruence with communal values held in many collectivist cultures, neutralizing the power of the

researcher, and normalizing participants' experiences (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013, p. 80).

Further, I was interested in examining how the interactions between participants would reveal how the discourses they took up intersected and competed and how their power and positioning would be negotiated during the focus group process. However, as I will mention in more detail under the participants section in this chapter, I learned quickly in the recruitment stage that teachers are difficult individuals to access because of their busy and erratic schedules; therefore, focus groups would have been difficult to coordinate due to participants' availability. Furthermore, although focus groups would have allowed participants to build off of one another's responses to create new knowledges and could reveal how taking up and challenging discourses leads to the continued constructing of the subject, perhaps the intimacy of the interview process allowed participants to feel more comfortable in sharing their answers and less likely to feel judged by others in their profession.

Although interviews can sometimes be perceived as a "top down" approach to conducting research, in feminist research, "interviewers can [also] see themselves as co-constructors of knowledge, and may strive to develop collaborative relationships with interviewees to initiative 'change'" (Roulston, 2010, p. 52). In the semi-structured interview format, I found myself able to build off of participants' answers and ideas, so that they also guided the direction of the discussion.

Recruitment. I obtained ethics clearance from Brock University's Research Ethics Board (REB) on December 2014 (see appendix E). I recruited between December 2014 and March 2015. To recruit participants, I relied on the "snow-balling" technique,

which I chose to do since I did not obtain permission from any school board to access participants. “Snowball sampling [occurs when] participants invite others in their social network to join the sample” (Miner, Pesonen, Epstein Jayaratne, & Zurbrugg, 2012, p. 248). Therefore, participants were all accessed through personal connections. Since I attended teachers’ college and had taught for a short period in public secondary schools, I had access to former colleagues and met teachers in other capacities.

First, I contacted teachers I knew and asked if they would like to participate and/or could contact colleagues they thought might like to participate. Second, I asked education professors I knew to forward information about the study to teachers via e-mail. I spoke in education graduate classes in which some teachers were enrolled to inform them about the study. Following the end of each interview, I also asked participants to share information about the study with their colleagues.

I acknowledge that attaining a diverse pool of participants makes for richer data analysis and stronger research, since teachers’ experiences and perceptions of sexual harassment and sexism intersect with all forms of discrimination including racism, classism, and homophobia (Robinson, 2012; Rahimi & Liston, 2011). Further, feminist methodologies aims to place marginalized voices at the centre of the research process since such stories are often underrepresented in qualitative research (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). Unfortunately, my participant pool was rather homogenous, which I will address shortly, under “participants.” Although I asked former colleagues, friends, professors and teachers attending graduate classes to circulate the call for participants widely, all of the teachers who agreed to interviews were known to friends or former colleagues. Of the approximately 23 teachers I asked, I can confirm that only 5 identified as visible

minorities. Therefore, through the research process in recruiting teacher participants for interviews, I experienced how snow-balling can result in a participant pool that has a narrow demographic.

Reflecting on the recruitment process, perhaps it would have been beneficial to include a statement on the letter of invitation encouraging those with minority status to apply by stressing the importance of capturing marginalized individuals' experiences to ensure their visibility in qualitative research. However, I also did not want to promote tokenism and seek out people belonging to marginalized communities merely because of their minority statuses. Further, although I recognized that obtaining a diverse pool of participants would enrich my findings by enabling me to draw participants' stories who had a variety of backgrounds and experiences, my commitment to ensuring diversity became compromised when I found it particularly difficult to recruit teachers for the thesis project. Therefore, the pressure of time constraints within a thesis project can also influence and restrict the recruitment process.

When contacting participants, I forwarded by e-mail (or had teachers and professors forward) the invitation, informed consent form and application (see appendix A, B and C.) When interested candidates contacted me, I re-sent them all documents along with the participant information form (see appendix D). Although I used snowball sampling, which usually results in participants knowing one another, to my knowledge, my participants did not know each other and some taught in different cities across Southern Ontario. In order to encourage participation, I compensated each participant with a \$10 Starbucks gift card and educational resources about sexual harassment in schools (see appendix G). I also provided participants with contact information for sexual

assault crises centres if they wanted to talk to a councillor trained in topics related to sexual violence (see appendix F).

I originally aimed to investigate teachers' experiences within secondary schools specifically, but since I found it particularly challenging to access participants as previously mentioned, I widened the criteria to include elementary teachers as well as secondary school teachers. After I confirmed that a participant met my study's criteria by receiving their application form (see appendix C) and the participant information form (see appendix D), we scheduled time for a one-hour interview over the phone.

Participants. I interviewed seven teachers who taught either elementary or high school students at different schools across Southern Ontario who had graduated from their teachers' college programs within seven years or less. As mentioned previously in this chapter under the heading Methodology, all of my participants identified their gender identity as "female," their race as White, Caucasian or European, and the participants who disclosed their sexual orientation identified as "straight" or "heterosexual." All participants stated that they grew up in middle class households, but current socioeconomic statuses ranged depending on their job security as teachers and whether they received financial support from other individual(s) (e.g. if they had combined spousal income or were living with their parents). Dawn, Amelie, Ann and Marie⁴ had full-time teaching positions (meaning they were guaranteed a classroom every year) and were teaching in public boards. Dawn, Amelie and Ann disclosed their personal salaries as ranging from \$70,000 to \$75,000 per year and Marie chose not to disclose. Shelly was

⁴ All participants' names were changed into pseudonyms.

in the middle of completing her first long-term occasional teacher contract⁵, which meant that she had full-time hours as a teacher in a public board, but might only receive part-time work as a supply teacher the following year. Christine was also with a public board as a supply teacher⁶, but did not have a long-term contract, which meant that she relied on teachers to be absent from their classes to substitute each day. Christine mentioned how this precariousness in her work resulted in having multiple jobs in addition to working as a supply teacher. Unlike Christine, Erica *did* have her own classroom teaching full-time, but was also a precarious worker making less than \$26,000 per year in the private school sector. Such details in participants' economic status are noteworthy because job security and income may influence teachers' ability to interpret and intervene when witnessing, hearing about and addressing sexism and sexual harassment at their schools as teachers. For example, without seniority and protection from a union, teachers might feel less able to "make waves" at their school by speaking up about sexual harassment and sexism, especially if these are perceived as controversial topics within the school community.

Amelie, Marie, Erica and Shelly taught in secondary school, Dawn and Ann taught in elementary school and Christine was a supply teacher in both secondary and elementary schools. Amelie, Erica, and Shelly's schools were non-secular while Dawn, Ann, Marie and Christine taught in Catholic boards. Amelie, Dawn and Ann described their student demographic as culturally and racially diverse and Erica's students were all International students learning ESL.

⁵ Occasional teachers are all teachers employed in a publically funded school board who substitute for a regularly scheduled teacher short-term (e.g daily) or long-term (e.g. maternity leave) basis. The term "occasional teachers" includes supply teachers as well as teachers with "long-term" contracts.

⁶ Supply teaching" also referred to sometimes as "substitute teaching" refers to teachers who fill in daily for the regularly scheduled teachers.

I would describe my participants as teachers who seemed genuinely concerned about sexual harassment and wanted to tackle gender inequality in schools. Erica and Amelie both characterized themselves as teachers who highly valued social justice initiatives in and outside of the classroom and Shelly emphasized multiple times the importance of taking students' socioeconomic situations and possible mental health issues into account to see students as "people" before seeing them as "students." Further, Ann seemed genuinely concerned and perplexed with how to address student-to-student sexual harassment when some colleagues and parents "protect" the perpetrators of sexual harassment, leading it difficult for teachers to respond to incidents of sexual harassment.

Some participants had to reschedule the interviews at the last minute, because of busyness, and teachers spoke about extra activities they were committed to outside of the classroom. Marie explained that having a job as a teacher forced her to learn to multi-task and was running errands at the time of our interview. Christine mentioned that her and a colleague had at least one other job in addition to working as supply teachers due to the precariousness of teaching contract positions. When I called Dawn for our scheduled interview, she was in the middle of a meeting that had run late at the school and needed to reschedule. Therefore, the fact that my participants took the time to participate in this research study, most likely reveals their willingness to address sexual harassment as a serious issue in schools.

Ethics and Informed Consent. Participants were informed in the letter of invitation (see appendix A) and informed consent form (see appendix B) that my study was to examine teachers' understanding of sexual harassment and their experiences witnessing, addressing or hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment. At the

beginning of each interview, I provided participants with a brief summary of the interview process that was outlined in the forms and reminded them that they could refuse to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. I informed them that in addition to their names being confidential and replaced with a pseudonym, names of schools, colleagues, students, cities or any other identifying characteristics would be replaced with pseudonyms upon transcription. Participants gave verbal consent to the study at the beginning of our conversation after I reviewed the interview procedure that was previously mentioned in the letter of invitation (see appendix A) and informed consent form (see appendix B).

Ongoing consent also took place during the interviews and I gauged whether to ask for elaboration or move onto another question based on tone of voice or certain social cues like pausing or changing the subject that might suggest they felt uncomfortable. For instance, when Amelie mentioned a “rumour” of a teacher getting sexually harassed by another teacher at her school and I started asking her a follow-up question about it, she interrupted and said, “*That* I don’t know anymore than what I just told you about that incident.” I took that as a signal that she did not feel comfortable elaborating and we moved on to the next part of the interview.

The interview questions. My goal when constructing the questions was to gain insight into how prevailing discourses about sexism, sexual harassment and gender framed my participants’ understanding about their experiences with student-to-student sexual harassment in schools. I was also interested in examining how discourses related to teaching and professionalism intersected with these narratives and how discourses competed and aligned. Feminist poststructuralists “regard ‘truth’ as a deconstructive

illusion” (p. 132) and therefore the questions I created were designed to produce answers that would reveal how my participants were positioned in discourses. While positivist, quantitative research might dismiss or ignore parts of the interviews where discussions about sexism and sexual harassment were missing, I instead found meaning in the absence of discussions about these topics. For instance, as I address in more detail within Chapter 4 in my Findings, I found it noteworthy that Amelie and Christine did not talk about how female Muslim students of colour who wear the hijab are more vulnerable to sexual harassment than white girls because of how sexism is intertwined with racism (Rahimi & Liston, 2011), and gendered Islamophobia (Zine, 2006).

Prior to the interviews, I made an interview guide with the following questions:

1. What is your understanding of sexual harassment?
2. What is your understanding of sexism?
3. Did you witness or hear about sexual harassment or sexism directed towards students within your placement?
4. If you witnessed or heard about sexual harassment or sexism what happened?
5. How did it make you feel? How did you respond?
6. If you witnessed sexual harassment or sexism in your placements, did you feel prepared to intervene?
7. Do you think that there are any kinds of cultures in your school that might have made sexual harassment more likely to occur?
8. What training have you had in your teacher education classes to prepare you to address sexism or sexual harassment in the classroom?

9. (If they answer that they received training in their education classes) Do you feel that the training from your teachers' college classes prepared you to be able to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment during your placements?
10. How does your relationship(s) with your colleagues and principal affect your response to sexual harassment or sexism?
11. What kind of policies, classes or initiatives are you familiar with in your school or school board that addresses the issues of sexual harassment and sexism?
12. Are there any policies, attitudes or comments that exist within your school that you feel promoted sexism, ignored or made light of sexual harassment?
13. Do you feel prepared to discuss sexism or sexual harassment issues with your students?
14. What do you think the role of a teacher should be?

Past literature has indicated that adults have difficulty conceptualizing that male adolescents, as well as adults, can and do sexually harass girls and women (Robinson, 2006); therefore, I began the conversations asking participants to provide definitions of sexual harassment and sexism (see questions 1 and 2) in order to see how their abstract explanations would compare to their stories about specific encounters with their adolescent students later in the conversation (see questions 3 to 14). As a poststructuralist researcher, I acknowledge that the use of language makes the construction of the world possible (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000,) and creates “reality” within the discursive. Therefore, I questioned how my participants’ initial descriptions about sexual harassment and sexism would impact their understanding of their experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about sexual harassment at their schools.

I was also interested in examining how specific discourses in the Ontario school system would impact Ontario teachers' understanding of sexism and sexual harassment. Therefore, I inquired about how teacher training, school board policies and relationships between teachers helped shape their understandings and responses to sexism and sexual harassment (see questions 6 to 13). I was particularly interested in examining how these multiple prevailing discourses would intersect and compete and how participants would take up and resist discourses. Further, I was interested in exploring how participants perceived their roles and limitations as teachers especially in the context of "professionalism" and how their perceived identities as "teachers" would influence their understanding of and encounters with sexism and sexual harassment (see questions 5 and 14). I always started the questions from the top, moving from general to specific, but I did not always follow the questions in the order depending on where the participants led the discussions. Asking the questions in an order that is dependent on the flow of the conversation, acknowledges that meaning is made based on the discourses that the researcher and subject take up and challenge outside and within the interview process; thus fitting well with feminist poststructural methodology. As a poststructuralist researcher, I recognized that the participants and I are both entrenched in discourses and since I wanted to gain an understanding of the pervasive discourses within their schools, I did my best to follow the direction of my participants.

Furthermore, working within feminist methodologies more generally, I recognized that I "must be prepared to drop [my] agenda and follow the pace of the interview" (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 132-133). While I often allowed my participants to take the lead in the interview, I did struggle with "dropping my agenda" when I felt that

they engaged in sexist narratives that perpetuate the normalization of sexual harassment of girls and women, which I elaborate on in the following section.

Fulfilling social justice goals / challenging dominant discourses. Feminist qualitative research addresses questions that can seek “gendered social justice” (Olesen, 2011, p. 129) and using interviews as method in qualitative research can help fulfill social justice goals (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). However, I often found myself questioning to what degree making social change was possible during the interview process. Sometimes participants would make statements that I considered to be sexist or highly problematic and I questioned how to navigate my role as a researcher when I was expected to probe for knowledge and listen to their experiences. Similar to Lane, Taber, and Woloshyn (2012) who conducted feminist qualitative research with female adolescents and navigated between their responsibilities to feminism and to the academic institution in which they conducted their research, at certain times during the interviews, I also struggled to uphold feminist values while simultaneously allowing my participants to freely share their stories.

For example, during my interview with Ann, she sometimes held girls responsible for experiencing sexual harassment, such as when a girl sent a “revealing” snapchat selfie and it was shared throughout the school without the female student’s consent. I often navigated between determining how to challenge sexist narratives, and wanting to make my participants feel safe, heard and respected. Since discourses are enacted and repeated over time, which causes them to be taken up as “truth” and embedded in an “identity” through the construction of the subject (Weedon, 1987; Davis, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000), I

worried that if I openly challenged the discourse that Ann was taking up, she would resist sharing more as if I was challenging her “identity.”

Upon deeper reflection, I also interpreted my failure to address Ann’s comments as “self-censorship” on my part as the researcher. Although I *do* recognize that the elements of a research study and interview process will impact dialogue between the researcher and participant differently than dialogue between colleagues, I took my “self-censoring” to parallel how my participants discussed their own self-censorship with colleagues in certain contexts. As I elaborate more explicitly in Chapter 4 my theme that examines how language impacts the ways we make meaning about sexual harassment and sexism, Dawn and Ann both mentioned that they did not want to cause conflict with their colleagues and therefore, remained silent when colleagues made sexist comments. During my discussion with Ann, I too feared that I would “cause conflict” during the interview or undermine her experiences as a participant and therefore, did not address the victim-blaming narratives that she took up by ignoring them during the interview.

Reflexivity in feminist poststructuralist research. Hesse-Biber (2006) points out that reflexivity is “a process whereby the researcher is sensitive to the important ‘situational’ dynamics that exist between the researcher and the researched that can affect the creation of knowledge” (p. 130). Feminist poststructuralist qualitative researchers have questioned how responses from participants are influenced by the interviewer’s gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation (Hesse-Biber, 2006; Pillow, 2003) and use reflexivity in order to “better represent, legitimize or call into question their data” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). Examining how I too am positioned within

discourse and negotiate power in and outside of the research process calls into question how knowledge from the study is constructed (Olesen, 2011).

Although reflexivity assists feminist poststructuralist researchers to examine how prevailing discourses we take up affect how we do research, feminist poststructuralists also call into question how we practice reflexivity within postmodern and poststructuralist frameworks (Olesen, 2011), since researchers usually practice reflexivity “in ways that are dependent on a modernist subject – a subject that is singular, knowable, and fixable” (Pillow, 2003, p. 180). Therefore, I questioned how I could be reflexive when my “self” is unstable and continuously shifting (Weedon, 1987).

I also questioned how I presented myself to participants and how this affected the information that they shared. About half of my participants knew that I identified as a teacher and had also attended teachers’ college, which may have played a role in how meaning was made during the interview process. First, although Marie and I had lost touch over the years, we were friends when I was in teachers’ college. I wondered if she felt inclined to tell the stories where her response to sexual harassment was more “positive” because she anticipated what she thought I wanted to hear. Further, there were times when she probed *me* for information when she was unsure of something, which might suggest that she was hoping to find the “correct” answer.

Marie: What’s the acronym? LGB... *(long pause)* help me out here, Lauren.

(Subtle laugh)

Quinn: *(Subtle laugh)* LGBTIQ?

Although Marie’s knowledge that I was a teacher *may* have led her to be less candid in her answers, when Shelly learned that I was a teacher, the tone in the conversation shifted

and she began to express information more freely as if I would just understand what she meant.

Shelly: Umm, it started in [Speciality program for teacher candidates], yup.

Quinn: Oh ok, great. That's not challenge day, is it?

Shelly: It's the event just like challenge day, I don't know if you—or—do have I talked to you about this at all, or emailed you about it or do you just know of it?

Quinn: No, I just—like I'm a teacher as well...

Shelly: Ok.

Quinn: So I just kind of know of those days, I guess.

Shelly: Well, that's actually amazing that you know about challenge day because the event is a replica of challenge day.

Quinn: Oh ok!

Shelly: (*Subtle laughing*) Wow, that's amazing that you know that. So many people don't know challenge day.

Quinn: Oh ok (*Subtle laugh*).

Shelly: ...so when I explain my event, they don't really know what I'm talking about...

This excerpt demonstrates that Shelly seemed almost “excited” that we shared a specific knowledge. As traditional research models stress being “objective” (Westmarlin, 2001), feminist researchers recognize that when sharing personal aspects and stories that provide insight into the researcher's character it can “increase reciprocity and rapport in the interview process, thus breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of the researcher (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 128). In fact, Shelly and I spoke quite

comfortably and even continued an informal conversation about teaching and teachers' college after the interview.

While Shelly's knowledge that I was also a teacher likely influenced her to speak more "openly," an excerpt from Ann also reveals that there may have been information that Shelly chose not to share because she knew I was a teacher and we had developed rapport during the interview. I did not tell Ann that I was a teacher, which possibly influenced how she presented a critique of teachers who are new to the profession. When discussing barriers to addressing student-to-student sexual harassment she stated:

So I think that that's maybe part of the problem, like the younger ones, they don't—they question everything like, "like, should I go to the office?" "should I call the parents?" They sort of don't know what the right way is to go about it. I think a lot of the times they just refer it directly to the office because they think that's just what they should do. And then of course some are not comfortable talking about certain things or... (*pause*).

Ann's insight that newer teachers might not have the skills to be able to address student-to-student sexual harassment as easily as more experienced teachers is a valuable insight, but she might not have shared this with me if she knew that I was in fact a new teacher myself. Therefore, comparing and contrasting how Marie, Shelly and Ann shared knowledge with me reveals that participants' knowledge or lack of knowledge of my role as a teacher helped "co-create meaning" in different ways (Roulston, 2010).

Furthermore, although most of the participants did not know my race or ethnicity other than guessing by my last name, I suspect that most of them perceived me as identifying as a "white" and non-Muslim woman based on comments they made about

“Muslim,” “Arab” and “Middle Eastern” students. For example, Dawn explained that she did not want the information that she shared about Muslim students “linked” to her, perhaps because she expressed a possible connection between Muslim students’ “culture” to sexism and sexual harassment. Although she still seemed rather couched in her description, I question whether she would have shared the following information at all if I had self-identified as a Muslim woman, did not have an Anglo-Saxon first and last name, and/or she thought English was not my first language.

Dawn: ...um it’s not something that um, that I-I want in any way linked to me, but um we-we do—we have uh a large population of ummm of Muslim population in our school. Um (*short pause*) and I don’t, I-I do—I do not want to say in any way that I think most Muslim boys have *that* attitude towards women, because I don’t think that that’s true. I think that there are isolated cases of both white *and* Muslim boys that have um bad attitudes towards women.

Dawn’s comments about Muslim students reveals that the presumed identity and positioning of the researcher clearly influences how knowledge is constructed during the interview process. Although feminist poststructural researchers continue to challenge whether reflexivity always leads to “legitimacy” in the research process, this example demonstrates that “reflexivity” is central to understanding the construction of knowledge and therefore, cannot be ignored or disregarded (St. Pierre, 2011), as it is a central reveal to how meaning is made in qualitative studies.

Coding the data. My coding process took many steps. To start, I read each interview on its own about three times — the first time I used open coding and the second and third times, I coded based on broader themes and trends. I read interviews multiple

times not with the goal of seeking a unified “truth,” but to explore how multiple discourses would emerge over time. I also made notes about the contradictions found within the interviews and what they revealed about the competing discourses in the margins. I used colours to distinguish the difference between broader themes (ex: conversations about race) and after re-reading all of the interviews once, made cross-referencing between interviews and used numbers to list the various subcategories that emerged stemming from broad themes. For example, originally I created a broad theme on “language” and as I narrowed further into the coding process, subcategories that stemmed from “language” were “softening the discussion about sexism and sexual harassment,” “self-censoring or silencing,” and “anti-bullying conflated with sexual harassment.” I also made additional notes if there were details that I did not observe or insights that did not emerge in earlier readings. Following these steps, I created a separate document for each theme. Below the subheadings, I listed important quotes for further reflection and that I considered inserting into the findings.

I acknowledge that the coding process itself supposes a rather reductionist approach, and yet, applying a feminist, poststructural lens in qualitative research “include[s] diverse and contradictory critiques that resist, subvert, and refuse any structural formation” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 615). Feminist poststructural methodology invites researchers to question the coding process itself by resisting “sociology’s desire to secure a fully centered human subject comfortably situated in a world of roles, statuses, norms, values, and structured social systems” (Denzin, 2004, p. 234). St. Pierre (1997) notes that the data analysis from sociological research is made up of language and text, and therefore, “how can language, which regularly falls apart, secure meaning and truth?” (St. Pierre, p. 179). Therefore, I

do not propose that my data collection has sought a unified “truth” from participants or is a record of participants’ “fixed” positioning. Instead, I argue that my data cannot be reduced to a stable “reality,” and is merely a construction of participants’ perspectives and experiences during the interview process. For instance, comparing how Erica’s perspectives and experiences shifted from the original interview with the follow-up interview months later, reveals how the subject’s “self” is continuously in flux. Further, I also acknowledge that my own subjectivity has influenced the coding process since my state of “self” shifted between conducting the interviews and coding the data.

Since poststructural researchers conclude that it is impossible to examine a “stable” self, DeVault and Gross (2012) argue that “[i]nstead of telling what happened, researchers should examine the discourses at play and the subject ‘positions’ constructed by those discourses” p. 211). During data analysis, I paid close attention to how participants took up discourses related to topics like sexism and sexual harassment in relation to the education system. I examined the overlap in discourses amongst participants, but also how these discourses competed. For example, while Amelie and Erica both remarked about disagreeing with their school dress codes, Erica perceived the dress codes as a marker to regulate girls’ bodies while Amelie perceived the dress code to be enforced more heavily amongst the boys. Further, I was also interested in exploring how the multiple discourses that emerged within a singular interview aligned and intersected. For example, as I will address in more detail in my analysis section that examines the use of language, in some parts of my interview with Christine, she referred to sexual harassment and bullying interchangeably, but then in other parts she recognized them as distinct.

In analyzing these discourses, I not only examined the statements that participants made, but also what was missing from our discussion. For example, in the first section of my data analysis I note that participants made links to the relationship of sex and sexuality to sexual harassment, but did not explicitly express how power negotiations related to gender, race and class influence how sexual harassment and other forms for sexual violence are produced.

The researchers' role in making meaning. Although I often refrained from openly challenging participants' comments, I did not always hide my personal views or emotional responses to what participants shared. For example, excerpts from Erica and Amelie reveal how I reacted quite expressively to stories that I found to be shocking or disturbing.

Erica: ...a professor said that sometimes women bring pay equity upon themselves (*pause*) and that women are just and I quote "bitches sometimes."

Quinn: (*Gasp*). Wow.

Erica: Yeah...

In this part of the interview when Erica was sharing the problems she had with certain narratives at her teachers' college, my reaction hopefully validated her experience. There were also incidents when participants disclosed personal experiences of sexual harassment to me in which I felt it was important to validate their feelings and responses especially since prevailing discourses in the education system and beyond normalizes, downplays and ignores sexual harassment (Larkin, 1995; Robinson, 2012). For example, when Amelie explained to me that highly sexually explicit comments were posted about

her on her class website and was unsure if the student(s) was in her class when teaching, I validated her feelings of discomfort.

Quinn: Well, I'm sorry that happened to you. That's so tough. And the fact that you went to class on Monday, like I think that's really brave because yeah...

Amelie: I just felt *very* uncomfortable.

Quinn: For sure.

While traditional forms of qualitative research might argue that “agreeing” with the participants would skew the conversation (Westmarland, 2001), feminist researchers acknowledge that the researcher and the participants are “co-creators of meaning” (Roulston, 2010) and responding flatly to her experience could have further wounded and invalidated her experience. As Westmarlin (2001) notes, feminist qualitative researchers should “make every effort to conduct interviews in a way that does not further oppress the participant” (2001, paragraph 21) and while bell hooks (1984) questions the possibility of a “universal sisterhood,” Finch (1984) argues that a less-structured research format that challenges traditional research methods could help prevent the creation of “a hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee,” so that “our sisters” are not objectified in feminist research (p. 72). Furthermore, sexual harassment (especially from a male student) can be humiliating, demeaning and silencing and shake female teachers’ confidence (Robinson, 2010). Sexual harassment amongst colleagues is often downplayed or ignored (Robinson, 2010) and therefore being validated and believed in the interview could potentially help participants feel as though some of their dignity was regained. In addition, such validation might also have invited participants to challenge pervasive discourses about sexual harassment that downplay its impact and seriousness.

As a female researcher discussing sexual harassment with other women, Reinhartz and Chase (2002) as referenced by Marstavi (2004) suggest that my participants might have also gained a “heightened sense of self-awareness [by discussing a topic of] mutual interest” (p. 26). In a poststructural sense, the interview process supported participants to negotiate the meaning of prominent discourses with a researcher who was also interested in challenging dominant discourses that perpetuate sexism and sexual harassment. Therefore, although I felt that I was unable to challenge certain discourses referenced in the interviews that supported sexism and sexual harassment, perhaps by validating my participants’ experiences of sexual harassment, it helped contribute to social change. In addition, I must also note that participants have “agency” when negotiating knowledge within constructed discourses and therefore, I could not have controlled directly how participants made meaning from the interview.

Limitations in Research. One of the most glaring limitations in this research is that participants all identified as white, straight women from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. Past research studies have found that teachers’ self-locations determined by qualities like race, class, gender and sexuality impact their experiences with sexual harassment (Robinson, 2010; 2012, Rahimi & Liston, 2011). For example, Robinson (2010) found that the sexual harassment that teachers experienced from their male students was intertwined with racism and lesbophobia. And yet this research study was unable to access the voices of teachers who are the most systematically marginalized in schools based on such discrimination.

In addition, since interviews were conducted over the phone, I was unable to be able to read participants’ facial expressions and body language. Probing sometimes was

also difficult because participants could not see my expressions either. For example, researchers sometimes will nod along as a way to encourage participants' answers and make them feel more comfortable, but I had to interrupt my participants with verbal cues instead of them being able to pick up on visual ones. In addition, I noticed that it took some time for participants to warm up before they began to elaborate with their answers, which might have been due discomfort with not being able to see the researcher on the other end. As some researchers argue, sometimes it is more difficult to establish rapport with individuals when conducting interviews over the phone without visual cues and gestures (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 119).

Conclusion

Qualitative, feminist, poststructural methodology framed my research study examining elementary and secondary school teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and/or hearing about sexual harassment in Southern Ontario schools. I have outlined the specifics of how I recruited participants, created and presented interview questions to align with feminist, poststructural methodology and obtained ethics clearance. I outlined the limitations and possibilities for disrupting dominant discourses during the interview process. I examined the challenges of fulfilling social justice goals as a feminist, poststructural researcher by bringing in a discussion about reflexivity and addressed how the researcher *in addition* to the participants creates meaning in the research process. I also outlined how I coded and analyzed the interviews while acknowledging that such a process cannot imply a stable "fixed" research participant, but instead discuss how participants are positioned in the discursive during the interview process and recognizing that their positionalities are fluid and always in flux.

Chapter 4:

Findings

Introduction

In the following data analysis chapter, I discuss how the dominant thread that emerged in my findings was how the sexual harassment of girls by boys is normalized and naturalized by discourses that are taken up by students, teachers, parents, principals, social workers and police in schools. The normalization of sexual harassment is perpetuated and embedded by policies, frameworks, attitudes and beliefs within the education system. Five prevalent themes I noticed when analyzing my interviews were: understanding sexual harassment outside of power relations; using language that normalizes sexual harassment; minimizing the seriousness of sexual harassment; how gendered Islamophobia intersected with the normalization of sexual harassment; and resisting dominant discourses that normalize and perpetuate sexual harassment. My findings support previous research studies (Larkin, 1995; Rahimi & Liston, 2011; Robinson 2012; Shute, Owens & Slee; 2008) that also address how the normalization of sexism and sexual harassment are pervasive. It is noteworthy that although my research indicates that dominant discourses continue to perpetuate the normalization of sexual harassment, I will also explore how competing discourses were taken up by students and teachers to resist the perpetuation of sexual harassment contributing to the marginalization of girls in Ontario schools. I will end the thesis with recommendations for changes in schools and possibilities for future research.

Understanding Sexual Harassment Outside of Power Relations

Prior to conducting the interviews, I anticipated that my participants might not recognize aggressive and sexual acts that were taken up by boys towards girls they had seen as sexual harassment, since research indicates that teachers sometimes conflate sexual harassment with “bullying,” (Robinson, 2012) or deem it as “normal” adolescent behaviour (i.e. “boys will be boys”) (Rahimi & Liston, 2011; Robinson, 1992; Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, & Espelage 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2011). However, I did not anticipate that their understanding of sexual harassment would be so complex, layered and competing. At the beginning of each interview, I asked participants how they would define sexual harassment and they provided a variety of responses that demonstrated that they could understand sexual harassment in the abstract. A few words and phrases that they used included “unwanted” (Dawn, Erica), “makes you feel unsafe” (Shelly), “anything that would make someone uncomfortable” (Dawn), “attacks in a sexual nature” (Amelie), “antagonizing...or threatening” (Ann), and “non-consensual” (Marie). Christine, Marie, Amelie, Dawn and Erica also noted in their definitions that sexual harassment could include physical as well as verbal harassment. Although participants’ definitions included phrases and words that recognized sexual harassment as an assertion of dominance over another person, some did not apply this kind of understanding of sexual harassment to real life examples especially when it was applied to their students. The examples of sexual harassment that participants provided suggest that there was overlap as well as contradictions among participants’ understandings. A common thread that was often missing in their analyses of sexual harassment was how sexism, gender inequality and power weave into the production of sexual harassment.

Instead, participants would associate sexual harassment with adolescent sexuality, sexual attraction, sexual acts and/or sexual desire, which will be outlined in the first subheading. My discussion will also explore how these understandings of sexual harassment contribute to the normalization and naturalization of the sexual harassment of girls by boys in schools.

Conflating sexual harassment with consensual sexual acts between adolescents. Christine and Marie both presented scenarios that conflated consensual sexual exchanges between adolescent girls and boys with sexual harassment. When Christine stated that she had seen sexual harassment during one of her practicums in teachers' college and I asked her what had happened, she described the following incident:

... every once in a while there would be issues where—say like a couple would disappear into the bathroom for a while and then they would come out and it was clear that things had happened, so we'd have to practice extra vigilance with bathroom breaks and the team teachers would have to allow fewer people out to the bathroom at the same time for both classes because usually there's two grade eight class, two grade seven classes in the school.

While it is possible that some of these students may have been coerced into going to the bathroom to take part in sexual activities, Christine did not mention force or coercion in her description. Interestingly, her statement that teachers needed to “practice extra vigilance” during bathroom breaks, aligns with Pascoe's (2012) findings that teachers and administrators were highly invested in regulating adolescent sexuality. Pascoe describes school activities as “a time of increased school control of sexual activity” (p. 42) and

school dances specifically “mobilized adult concern about controlling students’ desires and practices” (p. 42). Therefore, since Christine presented an example presumed to be students engaging in consensual, sexual acts as sexual harassment, it reveals that she likely did not recognize power and inequality intersecting with sexual violence.

While Christine presented a presumably consensual sexual interaction between students as sexual harassment, Marie’s account discusses consensual and non-consensual forms of sexting interchangeably. Marie’s accounts on sexting are more complicated than the account from Christine and will therefore involve a deeper analysis. Marie recalled when social workers and a police officer used fear tactics (she said perhaps unintentionally) when delivering a workshop about online bullying to caution students about the risks of sexting. Similar to Christine’s story that described teachers regulating sexual acts between students as they went to the bathroom, Marie’s description of the workshop suggests that the adults attempted to prevent students from exchanging sexually explicit messages or photos in any context, even if sharing such content is consensual. Marie explains:

Ya, so they were essentially saying how it *is* considered child pornography, because they *are* under a certain age and it *is* distribution of child pornography if they’re sending it amongst themselves. And they were saying it was a very degrading behaviour. Ya know, both ends. So if you’re a male, you shouldn’t be asking a female for nude photos and if you’re a female, you shouldn’t be asking a male for nude photos and vice versa. And they talked about specific incidents in the media that occurred.

Marie's description about sexting is somewhat vague and therefore, it is unclear what kind of scenario she was imagining specifically when referring to students who are "sending [nude photos] amongst themselves." Her description poses many questions: is she referring to male friends sending nude photos of girls they've dated without the girls' consent? Is she referring to male and females sending them back and forth to each other who are dating or in a sexual relationship? The lack of distinction between consensual and non-consensual sexting in Marie's description implies that like Christine, the workshop presenters and possibly Marie as well, categorize all sexual acts amongst adolescents as problematic, regardless of whether both individuals are willing participants.

The social workers and police who conducted the workshop at Marie's school focused heavily on scaring the students as a way to regulate and suppress sexual exchanges between these adolescent students. Marie also mentioned that the terms, "sexual harassment" and "sexism" were absent from this conversation, which once again aligns with Pascoe's (2012) findings where teachers sometimes overlooked acts of sexism while placing high importance on controlling sexual acts amongst adolescents. While it is possible that the presenters alluded to sexual harassment and sexism in their workshop, it could create confusion and contradictory understandings about sexual consent if a clear distinction between consensual and non-consensual sexting is not made. Further, I argue that such an approach overlooks the problem of sexual violence and instead redirects the focus onto the "misuses" or "dangers" of technology. My conversation with Amelie, for instance, demonstrates how discussions about sexual harassment and sexism are sometimes directed towards the regulation of technology.

Amelie explained that when she informed her principal that a student had written sexually explicit messages about her anonymously on her class website, he immediately focused on dismantling the website to solve the problem instead of encouraging ways to challenge online sexism and sexual harassment such as education workshops for the students at the school.

It is also important to be able to make distinctions between the varying motivations behind sexting and how it is used, especially since narratives about sexting are often attached to sexism and maintain the marginalization of girls and women. For instance, the consequences of sexually charged photos, videos and messages being leaked have different repercussions for boys and girls (Karaian, 2014). Marie's statement that the exchanging of sexual photos was discussed on "both ends" fails to acknowledge that girls are more vulnerable to being "slut-shamed," held responsible if their nude photos are sent to others without their consent and more likely to experience online sexism and sexual harassment than boys (Biber et al, 2002; Megarry, 2014). While this workshop could have provided an opportunity to discuss active consent, the non-consensual distribution of sexual photos such as "revenge porn," potential sexual coercion behind the taking and sending of some sexual photos, and the non-consensual receiving of "dick pics," according to Marie's account, such gendered analyses were absent from this workshop.

As described by Marie, the workshop's narrative also suggests that girls and boys are equal players in committing acts of online sexual violence while there have been more cases of boys than girls using the internet as a tool for violence against girls (Megarry, 2014). Further, such an approach negates that sexting habits are gendered as

girls often face more pressure than boys to send sexually explicit photos in order to seek validation and acceptance based on their physical appearance (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingstone, 2013).

The lack of distinctions made between consensual and non-consensual sexting, is connected and transferred to adolescents' understanding of sexual harassment and sexual relationships. Campaigns targeted to adolescents about sexting often hold girls responsible for their own victimization (Karaian, 2014), which is similar to the discourses surrounding sexual harassment that often places the blame on girls (Robinson, 2012).

Karaian (2014) explains:

...when self-respect is framed as the obligation for girls, rather than for boys, to abstain from digital sexual expression as a way of managing its risks, it reifies a sexual double standard which, culturally and legally, has resulted in girls' sexual activities being disbelieved or judged and punished more harshly. (p. 286)

Campaigns, such as the one described by Marie, that aims to stop adolescents from engaging in any kind of sexting evoke abstinence-only education that encourages youth to wait to have sex before marriage as a form of protection (Valenti, 2009). Not surprisingly, since adolescents have started interacting sexually online, abstinence-only education such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP)'s campaign, "Respect Yourself," has developed as a way to tackle the "problem" of sexting by focusing specifically on how girls are victimized through the redistribution of their naked selfies (Karaian, 2014). The campaign credits itself as being "achievable through abstinence" (p. 287), which is problematic since it negates scenarios where girls are photographed without their consent when they are naked, having sex or being raped like

Rehtaeh Parsons (CBC, 2015d). In addition, this framework ignores that sexting between boys and girls can be safe and consensual.

While my analysis of Marie's description indicates the lack of discussion of how dominant discourses about sexting and gender impact the normalization of sexual harassment and sexual violence related to sexting, her recollection about the workshop might also demonstrate *some* understanding of how a power imbalance is related to sexual violence. Although Marie's description of sexting focused primarily on the suppression of consensual acts, in the same description she may have been alluding to non-consensual sexting when she explained that girls and boys should not be "asking" each other for sexual photos—"asking" instead of "sending" the photos indicates that she might have been referring to sexual coercion within sexting. Her comment that "they talked about specific incidents in the media that occurred," is also noteworthy regarding sexual coercion because she might have been referring to Amanda Todd who she mentioned in another part of our conversation. After a male online predator pressured Amanda Todd to flash him on webcam, he took a photo of it without her consent and used it to blackmail her by sending the photo to her classmates. She travelled from school to school to escape "slut-shaming" and "bullying" from her peers until she eventually killed herself because the sexual harassment was so severe (Dean, 2012).

Marie also emphasized that sexting between adolescents was "degrading" because it was considered "child pornography" and not necessarily because it could be "non-consensual." This focus on "child pornography" in Marie's description about sexting parallels the criminal justice system's responses to Amanda Todd *and* Rehtaeh Parsons' suicides. According to *The Globe and Mail*, the perpetrator who coerced and blackmailed

Amanda Todd and many others online was charged with “extortion, importing or distributing child pornography, possessing child pornography, luring a child under 18 via computer and criminal harassment,” (Marotte, 2016) but not any kind of sexual harassment. In addition, two of the four boys who participated in the rape of Rehtaeh Parsons were charged and convicted of “the distribution and creation of child pornography,” (CBC, 2015d), but never convicted of sexual assault or sexual harassment. Therefore, paralleling Marie’s description of the workshop on sexting, the concern becomes not necessarily about protecting women and girls from sexual violence, but protecting children from being sexualized. While sexual violence is accepted as a part of girls’ and women’s lives, children and youth are not expected, encouraged or allowed to be sexual. Marie’s description of the workshop thus also raises another question. If the focus of the workshop was to highlight the problems with creating child pornography, how do these lessons apply to the students who are no longer considered “children” under the law?

To be clear, I do not wish to suggest that children should be sexualized by adults. In fact, the *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls* (2007) reveals significant harms in the increase in the hypersexualization of young girls within various cultural avenues including media depictions, preventing their ability for full sexual and bodily autonomy. The Canadian documentary, *Sexy Inc. Our Children Under Influence* (2007) also reveals a highly concerning phenomena in which young girls are pressured to take up levels of “sexiness” that parallels “pornographic” images and depictions.

I also do not deny that age is a factor in the ability to consent to sexual acts and *do* recognize that sexualizing girls at young ages as represented in *Sexy Inc.* (2007) is highly

concerning. However, I wish to problematize how consent is reduced to a “fixed” age as it denies the fluidity of the subject and negates how additional factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, Ability and class also affect the ways young people negotiate power within sexual relationships. Further, I also find it problematic to assume that once youth reach the age of 16 (Government of Canada, D of J, 2015)⁷ they are then automatically able to “consent” to sexual activities.

In closing the analysis of Marie’s recollection of the workshop discussing teenage sexting, it is clear that unpacking her account has been complicated and it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from her short description. While more insight is needed into the workshops that are taking place in schools describing sexting as child pornography, it is possibly that such discourses surrounding sexting are connected to the pervasiveness of sexual harassment of girls by boys in that they are entrenched in victim-blaming and do not provide a clear distinction between consensual and non-consensual sex acts.

Conflating sexual harassment with adolescent males’ sexual attraction and desire. While Christine and Marie conflated sexual harassment with potentially consensual sexual exchanges between adolescents, Erica recalls a situation where her colleagues could not differentiate between sexual harassment and a male adolescent student in grade 10 having a “crush” on her. Erica explains her experience in a follow-up interview:

I had a class with only three boys, which is where I experienced sexual harassment. It was subtle and it grew increasingly uncomfortable over time. The first thing I noticed was the one student was a little too interested in my life. He

⁷ In Canada, the age of consent is 16, but is increased to 18, when “the sexual activity ‘exploits’ the young person –when it involves prostitution, pornography or occurs in a relationship of authority, trust or dependency” (Government of Canada, D of J, 2015, para, 4).

came to me after school for extra help and lingered way too long. He started asking questions like, ‘do people in Canada hug each other when they say goodbye?’ It was subtle though, so it was hard to tell. Then he said, ‘how about a handshake?’ But it’s hard to say no to that. I shook his hand and it lingered way too long. And I thought this was uncomfortable. Other teachers have felt uncomfortable with him (not in a sexual way), but that he’s a bit odd, so I wanted to blame it on his personality. But it felt different. Then I started telling other teachers about it to get some validation. The student came to the lunchroom one day and they thought, ‘oh, maybe he has a crush on you.’

In Erica’s experience, her male student tried repeatedly to physically touch her, although she displayed discomfort and in another part of the interview, explained that she had to tell him “no” several times when he asked to dance with her after graduation. Her colleagues’ acceptance of this boys’ persistence to touch Erica despite her apprehension (whether through a hug, handshake or a dance) and deeming it as “normal” behaviour of adolescent boys can be best understood through the concepts of Butler’s (2004) heterosexual matrix and Rich’s (1980) compulsory heterosexuality (1980). Male subjects are rewarded when they exist inside the heterosexual matrix, which is affirmed by the performance of masculine heterosexuality (Butler, 2004). Culturally, pursuing and “chasing” females is part of the heterosexual, masculine performance and is therefore essential to constructing the masculine subject. In addition according to Rich (1980), the production of compulsory heterosexuality as a system maintains the subordination of girls and women by affirming patriarchy. Pascoe (2012) noted in her research that the construction of heterosexuality serves “as a sort of ‘predatory’ social relation in which

boys try and try and try to ‘get’ a girl until one finally gives in” (p. 95). Under the discourses of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2004) and compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), Erica’s male student learned that persistence could eventually be rewarded even when a female says, “no” or repeatedly resists. Therefore, the maintenance of the heterosexuality matrix (Butler, 2004) operates to naturalize and normalize males’ persistence of “courting” females, so that male power is affirmed through acts of heterosexual performance.

It is therefore likely that the discourses supporting the normalization of sexual harassment through male heterosexual performance contributed to Erica’s principal not prioritizing the anti-sexual harassment workshops and her colleagues regarding her male students’ acts of sexual harassment as “normal” male behaviour. Although gender performativity (Butler, 1993; 2004) continuously *constructs* the gendered subject, the repetition of social acts that teachers and principals are also entrenched in presume gender to be fixed in an identity (Butler, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000).

In addition to identifying sexual harassment as a “normal” part of the male adolescent experience, a few participants identified sexual harassment as a typical “teen” trait as if boys sexually harassed girls because of a lack of maturity. For instance, Christine said “...they are teenagers, it *is* going to happen, but it’s still not ok, and it still needs to be addressed.” The idea that teenage boys will just eventually “grow out” of sexually harassing girls and women (Robinson, 2012) is problematic as it further naturalizes and normalizes sexual harassment, deeming it as inherent and necessary to masculine biological development instead of part of gender performance to maintain male power (Butler, 1993; 2004). The naturalization of sexual harassment by boys and

young men only further prevents girls and women from being able to be taken seriously when they report such incidents, as seen in Erica's case. Further, perhaps another reason why the sexual harassment that Erica experienced was overlooked and difficult to identify by her colleagues and principal was because it is assumed that she is always in a position of authority as a teacher. As Clark (1989) acknowledges, "The boys' behaviour has power precisely because the adult world refuses to see the boys' behaviour as similar to adult male sexual harassment" (p. 23).

Conflating sexual harassment with sexual attraction and sexual orientation. Similar to Erica's experience, Shelly was uncertain about why a male student would be motivated to sexually harass her, assuming that sexual harassment is linked to sexual attraction.

I'm not sure the background of the student. I do (*subtle laugh*)—I do know that the student ended up coming out as gay, which is ironic because then that makes no sense why he was making comments about me (*subtle laugh*) but I don't know how relevant that is, that's just interesting.

Shelly's confusion that a gay student would sexually harass her, also evokes how subjects are entrenched in the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2004) and prevalent narratives about masculinity. While Shelly recognized that sexual harassment of women and girls is problematic, embedded in the dominant discourses about male performativity, she naturalized sexual harassment as an inherent part of the heterosexual masculine subject instead of part of a constructed male subject that boys must achieve in order to fit in with desired "personhood" (Butler, 1993; 2004). Therefore, such thinking assumes that it is more acceptable and "natural" for boys who identify as heterosexual instead of non-heterosexual to sexually harass girls and women.

A further explanation to understanding the sexual harassment that Erica and Shelly experienced is a result of the expectation for boys and men to acquire hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1993; 1996). Connell (1996) notes, “The romance pattern defines masculinity in general through the masculine/feminine dichotomy, but also feeds into the hierarchy of masculinities since heterosexual success is a formidable source of peer group prestige” (p. 219). Erica’s comment that the boy was “a bit odd” could suggest that this student exists outside social circles and therefore, might face additional pressure to meet hegemonic masculine expectations. In Shelly’s case, her male student’s sexual orientation positions him outside of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993) and therefore, according to Connell (1993; 1996), he could never fully embody hegemonic masculinity since the performance of heterosexuality is necessary to the Western construction of hegemonic masculinity. Further, as confirmed in multiple research studies, LGBTIQ, gender non-conforming students and boys who do not meet hegemonic masculine expectations, are more likely to be susceptible to homophobic harassment and bullying (Meyer, 2008a; Pascoe, 2012; Walton, 2005). Since domination is entrenched in gendered discourses as an innate masculine trait, boys’ participation in sexual harassment is often overlooked when helping boys “correctly” perform masculinity (Butler, 1993; Robinson, 2012) and fit into the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993). As Pascoe’s (2012) ethnographic research reveals, “[t]hese heterosexually based gender practices serve to defend boys against emasculating insults like those in the fag discourse” (p. 86). Therefore, these sections of Erica and Shelly’s interviews reveals that dominant discourses about masculinity operate to normalize and naturalize sexual harassment by boys and impact teachers’ understanding that sexual harassment is conflated with sexual attraction and male desire.

Conclusion. I have outlined in this section that the interviews with my participants revealed that displays of sexual harassment are often not understood to intersect with how subjects negotiate power relations based on prevailing discourses about topics like sexism and heteronormativity. I drew from examples of participants' own experiences of sexual harassment as well to demonstrate how the narratives about gender impacted teachers' understanding of sexual harassment in schools. These sections from my interviews also demonstrated a lack of understanding about how sexual harassment connects to the masculine performance and how it operates to maintain male power and the marginalization of girls and women. While Erica's example reveals how sexual harassment was "naturalized" and excused by teachers, Marie and Christine perceived consensual acts between boys and girls as deviant and important to be regulated and controlled by adults at the school. Although Marie and Christine presented their descriptions as "gender neutral" there are undertones that regulating adolescent sexual desire was important because female sexual desire was present, in comparison to the response from teachers about the sexual harassment that Erica experienced, since it was perceived that the sexual harassment was motivated by male desire and that therefore such acts did not need to be regulated or controlled. Finally, while the sexual harassment that Shelly experienced by a male student was condemned and punished, she deemed the sexual harassment as particularly "unusual" because he identified as gay, which implicitly naturalizes and normalizes heterosexual boys' acts of sexual harassment.

Language That Normalizes Sexual Harassment

In the following section of my findings, I focus on the theme of language that participants used to describe sexual harassment as I noticed three consistent trends when

they addressed their experiences witnessing or hearing about sexism and sexual harassment as teachers. First, participants were often indirect when describing sexual harassment and used words that I argue weaken and mitigate the discussion. Teachers referred or alluded to sexual harassment, but seemed hesitant to use explicit language when describing specific incidents. Secondly, participants described situations of self-censorship or feeling silenced to discuss or address sexual harassment especially in regards to prevailing discourses within their school. Lastly, some participants equated sexual harassment with “bullying”, which reflected their school board’s policies addressing and talking about sexual harassment. I argue that using indirect language to describe sexual harassment, including blurring the discussion under the framework of “bullying” or other forms of violence, further downplays the seriousness of sexual harassment and continues to normalize sexual harassment in schools. Participants’ choice of language to describe sexual harassment and sexism often mirrored their understanding about sexual harassment and sexism as well.

“Softening” the discussion about sexual harassment. *Sexual harassment as “inappropriate.”* While there are many examples of how participants were vague and indirect when they spoke about sexual harassment and sexism, one of the most common words that participants used to describe sexual harassment and sexism was “inappropriate.” Participants seemed hesitant to use words that contained the word “sex” in it such as “sexual” and “sexist.” For instance, when I asked Shelly if she thought a student saying that he was going to “rape an exam” was a form of sexism, she replied:

Umm... *(long pause)* I guess not so much as a form of sexism, because guys can be raped as just as ya know, the same way girls can. I know that it’s a different

kind of, I mean they're different in nature obviously but (*long pause*) umm... I wouldn't say so much that it was like a sexist comment, I'd say it was just more of like an *inappropriate comment* [emphasis mine].

Using such a soft descriptor to refer to “joking” about rape (an explicitly violent act) is noteworthy especially since earlier in the interview with Shelly, she said she had reacted quite strongly to a student who used “that’s so gay” as a homophobic insult. Correcting a student for using the phrase “that’s so gay” as an insult likely reveals that Shelly is concerned about the effects of language especially in how it reinforces existing dominant power relations and constructs the subject (Davies, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Shelly’s use of the word “inappropriate” instead of “sexist” in combination with her comment about males and females being equally susceptible to sexual violence also reveals “gender-blinding” (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Scantlebury, 1995) in the discussion about sexual violence in schools.

Similar to how Shelly characterized a rape joke as “inappropriate,” Dawn also made a conscious choice to use “inappropriate” to describe sexual harassment or sexism instead of a term that was more specific. When defining sexual harassment, she stated that sexual harassment might not necessarily be “sexual, but of an *inappropriate* nature...” [emphasis mine].

Avoiding the terms, “sexual” and “sexism” when discussing sexual harassment also evokes Marie, Christine and Amelie’s stories about administrators, parents and teachers sometimes repressing conversations about sex to regulate teenage sex acts and female sexuality as a form of “protection”. For instance, as covered in the previous theme, Understanding sexual harassment outside of power relations, Marie recalled social

workers and police officers using fear tactics to discuss topics such as cyberbullying and sexting. She also stated that the word “inappropriate” was used to replace “sexual harassment” during this presentation.

Marie: I know that sexual harassment in a particular way was discussed, maybe not like *outwardly*, like if this was talking about sexual harassment, but like facets of that were definitely discussed.

Quinn: Ok, so just for clarification, do you mean they mentioned sexually harassing behaviours, but they didn't say the word, “sexual harassment?”

Marie: Yeah, yeah. Like, it wasn't a word or direct. It's not like they directly said, “well, now let's talk about sexual harassment,” but they were talking about like, *inappropriate behaviours* that are sexual harassment [emphasis mine].

In Marie's retelling of the workshop, she noted that the phrase, “inappropriate behaviours” was used as an umbrella term for “sexual harassment” indicating how the presenters used vague language. Such vagueness and lack of clarity leads to multiple questions. For example, did Marie and the presenters have the same interpretation of sexual harassment? Did the presenters intend to talk about sexual harassment? Since the presenters did not use explicit language, did they know that they were talking about sexual harassment? Did the presenters in fact talk about sexual harassment or was this merely Marie's interpretation? If the presenters intended to discuss sexual harassment, why would they choose to discuss sexual harassment so covertly?

The number of questions that I have raised about Marie's retelling of the presentation reveals how using vague and unclear language when speaking about sexual harassment can affect one's ability to fully understand the details about this kind of

violence. “Inappropriate behaviours” can include a wide scope of possible scenarios that might actually be quite distinct and even irrelevant to sexual harassment and sexism. For instance, Amelie used “inappropriate” to refer to clothing worn by a male student who was reprimanded by the principal:

Yeah, it was just a tank top, like nothing that I would think, “whoa that’s shockingly *inappropriate* to wear to school” [emphasis mine].

Although breaking the school dress code is entirely separate from sexual harassment, this quote shows how the word “inappropriate” can be used in multiple school contexts.

When teachers and administrators use vague language like “inappropriate behaviours” to describe a variety of incidences, including sexual harassment, how do students learn to distinguish sexual harassment from an array of other “inappropriate behaviours?”

Further, if adults at the school do not give students explicit language to describe sexual harassment, how do gendered subjects make sense of their role(s) in relation to the normalization of sexual harassment? I argue that such verbal distinctions are important to make clear when discussing sexism and acts of sexual violence — current language used by teachers when talking about sexual harassment generalizes and blurs the discussion.

“Inappropriate” versus “not appropriate.” I do not wish to imply that when participants described sexual harassment as “inappropriate,” they were deliberately downplaying sexual harassment or intending not to take it seriously. In fact, I noticed from my participants that describing something as “inappropriate” or “not appropriate” represented different levels of intensity depending on how each person used the terms. Dawn stressed that “fighting” sexual harassment was important as a teacher and was best

accomplished by opening up discussions with students to shed light on the problem. She stated:

it's better to kind of fight it by ya know, reinforcing with the other students this is *not appropriate* behaviour [emphasis mine].

In contrast, Amelie used “inappropriate” when discussing how her principal downplayed the seriousness of the online sexual harassment that she experienced from a student.

I was disturbed by it obviously and then my principal was just like, (*changes tone*) “well...these are inappropriate...”

To Amelie, the word “*inappropriate*” was insufficient to describe what had happened to her. Contextualizing the principal’s response to this incident, Amelie told me how the principal delayed sending an email for three days to inform other teachers about it and did little to determine who was responsible for posting the sexually violent comments.

Similarly to Shelly, Erica who made a point to imbed activities and readings on gender and sexism into her lessons, described sexual harassment as “*not... appropriate.*” In contrast to Amelie, however, she used this word while stressing the importance of connecting the issues of sexual harassment to larger discussions related to gender and social justice.

...you also want to address it with the class, saying like why that’s *not an appropriate* thing to say or why it’s a hurtful thing to say or how it’s linked to these other issues and (*pause*) how damaging that can be” [emphasis mine].

It is also noteworthy that placing these excerpts together reveals that “inappropriate” and “not appropriate” can also take on different meanings. Amelie used “*inappropriate*” to

emphasize that her principal failed to take sexual harassment seriously, when she changed her tone to “mock” his actions. In contrast, Dawn and Erica used “*not appropriate*” to describe how sexual harassment *should* be taken seriously. Although “not appropriate” might take on a more direct and serious connotation than “*inappropriate*”, I argue that this phrase is still vague and indirect in comparison to describing such experiences as “sexual harassment” or “sexist.”

Although I have found that vague, indirect language like “*inappropriate*” weakens and thins the conversation about sexual harassment drawing on the previous examples from Dawn, Amelie and Erica, we see how this language is also taken up and reinforced by teachers heavily invested in addressing sexual harassment and sexism. Even as a researcher who considers sexual harassment to be a serious problem for girls and women and who consciously resists the downplaying and normalization of sexual harassment, I also occasionally used “*inappropriate*” to describe sexual harassment. In one interview, I asked:

“if you see inappropriate behaviour—or I guess I should rephrase. If you’ve seen umm—if you were to see sexual harassment, do you feel you’d be prepared to intervene?” (Interview with Dawn)

When I became aware of the vagueness in my language I eventually altered my wording from “*inappropriate*” to “sexual harassment.” However, my mirroring of “*inappropriate*” indicates how I am also rooted in and take up discourses that thin the conversation about sexual harassment. Clearly using the word “*inappropriate*” to describe sexual harassment and sexism is not unique to my participants as such prevailing discourses are powerful

and continuously maintained in schools. However, as previously demonstrated, phrases that minimize the seriousness of sexual harassment can also be resisted and changed.

Self-silencing and self-censoring the discussion about sexual harassment. In comparison to participants using weak, vague language that generalized and softened the discussion about sexual harassment, they also told me about experiences where teachers and students self-censored discussions about sexual harassment and sexism in schools. Participants noted that relationships in the school could restrict or enable discussion about sex, sexual harassment and sexism. Roles of authority as supported by the school also influenced how teachers negotiated their ability to discuss sexism and sexual harassment within their relationships with colleagues, principals, students and parents.

Self-censoring with colleagues. First, some participants described feeling silenced because of colleagues or principals' sexist remarks. For instance, when another teacher at Dawn's school blamed a girl for getting raped by members of the city's local hockey team, Dawn explained how she wanted to address her comment, but felt like she needed to stay silent in order to avoid conflict with her colleague:

...it was really difficult to bite my tongue 'cause it was said in the lunchroom and it was kind of one of those things where (*short pause*) I didn't want to get into a big fight...but it was *very* hard to um let that comment slide and I don't know that I—I think I changed the subject.

Dawn also explained that it was more difficult to address sexism or sexual harassment when it came from a student instead of a colleague. Likewise, Erica stated:

If a staff member says something sexist or questionable, it's really hard to respond.

Although Dawn's decision not to address a colleague's rape myth⁸ reveals that teachers can be silenced from addressing sexism with other staff members, Erica and Amelie both indicated that hearing sexist remarks from their colleagues would not prevent them from addressing student-to-student sexual harassment or talking about sexism with students. This distinction made by Erica and Amelie reveals how teachers' authority over students impacts their ability to negotiate power within the discursive differently than with their colleagues when discussing sexism and sexual harassment. Similar to how Dawn compromised speaking up against sexism in order to avoid conflict with a fellow teacher, Ann also noted that her school administration faced a challenge in addressing a male student's sexually harassment because of the fear that it might sever ties with the parent of the boy who also happened to be her colleague:

I would say we all want to protect these girls that are involved and it's the parents of these boys, especially the one student whose parent we teach with. It's a really hard to know how to do—like, and then we ruin the relationship with her, potentially, ya know?

Interestingly, although Dawn and Ann both recalled experiences where they self-censored in response to a colleague, instead of addressing sexual harassment or sexism they also spoke quite highly of being able to openly address these subjects with their colleagues in school:

Ann: ...any topic is open for discussing it and things were addressed when needed. Our previous VP was not afraid to talk about *anything* or address any

⁸ "Rape myths" are pervasive within sexist and rape culture discourses that normalize sexual violence as they hold girls and women responsible (instead of the perpetrator) for experiencing sexual assault. Although I define "rape" differently than "sexual harassment," I acknowledge that "rape myths" also function to blame girls and women for experiencing sexual harassment.

situation, but I would say that really there was no—there's no one holding back on this subject if it were to come up.

Dawn: ...we have a really, really great staff that talks very freely and openly about this kind of thing and um we're, we're very open-minded, very tolerant, especially for a Catholic school...

Pairing these quotations with their stories about being prevented from speaking out about sexual harassment and sexism by colleagues suggests a contradiction in understanding and practice about having open spaces to discuss controversial topics like sexual harassment. It is important that teachers are fully supported to openly discuss sexism and sexual harassment with their colleagues and principal since the fear of not receiving support often renders teachers silent about their own experiences with sexual harassment in the classroom (Robinson, 2000).

Fear of parents. Echoing Ann's earlier comment about parents, participants also indicated that some teachers and administrators self-censored themselves from discussing and addressing sexual harassment and sex because they feared parents would disapprove or complain. Hesitancy to address student-to-student sexual harassment because of parental pressures is supported by the research of Meyer (2008b) whose interviews with teachers indicated that parents sometimes acted as a barrier toward the eradication of gendered harassment in schools.

Amelie and Ann both said that their administrations were fearful of parents, which could lend a hand in establishing a school environment that coaxes teachers into ignoring sexual harassment or censoring discussions about sex. As I address in more detail in the next theme, Racism and gendered Islamophobia, Amelie explained that her

and her students who were part of the GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) were consistently blocked from being able to promote a campaign that promoted healthy and safe sex. When I asked her if she thought her principal would be open to allowing campaigns that worked to address and combat sexual harassment at her school, she said:

I still don't think he'd allow—anything “sex” with the word, “sex” in it. I find that the principal is just too scared as to what parents would say...I don't think he wants phone calls from parents. I don't think he wants to deal with parents to be completely honest.

This comment from Amelie supports past research indicating how discussions about sex in schools are often suppressed because teachers and principals fear that parents will pose concerns that sex education will somehow encourage their children to have sex (Iyer & Aggleton, 2013, p. 41). Further, Marie mentioned she felt it was important to tread carefully when challenging sexism in schools if students said they were merely repeating sexist words and phrases that they heard from their parents.

[the students will] say things like, “well my *mom* says that or my *dad* says that,” right? So then you're like, you don't want to say anything bad about the parents, right?

This excerpt from Marie reveals that when teachers begin to address sexism with their students, they might feel the need to self-censor themselves in fear of insulting their parents for taking up these same sexist narratives. Although parents usually have less of a physical presence in schools than teachers, students and principals, these findings reveal that they take on a peripheral role of power that impacts how teachers are able address sexism and sexual harassment with their students.

Establishing personal relationships. While teachers sometimes censored themselves when discussing sexual harassment and sexism, participants noted that the establishment of comfortable, close and/or trustworthy relationships in the school helped establish more open dialogue for students and teachers in regards to topics like sexual harassment and sexism. Shelly said that students are more likely to express ideas about such topics when relationships have been built, viewing students as “people” instead of just students.

I think [being able to talk about sexual harassment] has a lot to do with the dynamic of the class. Umm, I don’t know how much you can speak of that in like a history class or a math class, but in English it’s a nice vehicle to kinda open those doors and create some sort of discussion...

Marie also noted that positive reinforcement and validation from her colleagues helped her feel supported after discussing a sexist comment made by a male student during a history lesson.

...we feel very comfortable around each other. When that incident happened, almost everyone was supportive and they were saying how I handled it appropriately and how that’s not right and how students need to be educated about why that’s wrong.

Participants also said that feeling supported by one’s principal was important to being able to address and talk freely about sexual harassment and sexism.

Dawn: I have a great relationship with my principal now. Um, I had a different principal a few years ago and I wouldn’t have felt comfortable talking to her about this sort of thing...

These comments from Marie and Dawn about the importance of having a supportive principal, evokes participants' comments from Meyer's (2008b) research on teachers' non-interventions into student-to-student sexual harassment who noted that their principal "set the tone" on how successfully and how often they felt they could address sexism and sexual harassment. While support from one's principal(s) might not necessarily have the same meaning as establishing a "personal relationship" as with colleagues due to the institutional authority principals are awarded over teachers, the key is whether teachers feel *comfortable* discussing these issues with their principal(s). Therefore, depending on how principals and teachers navigate their positions of authority likely impacts how teachers and students are able to construct knowledge about sexism and sexual harassment at their schools.

Anti-bullying as anti-sexual harassment. In addition to participants softening their language and self-censoring to discuss sexual harassment and sexism, some also considered sexual harassment and bullying as synonymous or used "bullying" as an umbrella term for sexual harassment, further generalizing and blurring the discussions about sexism and sexual harassment.

Further, some participants indicated that administrators and teachers labelled online sexual harassment as "cyberbullying," and therefore posed Internet restrictions as a solution to combatting sexual harassment. I discuss how using strategies from anti-bullying policies in order to combat sexual harassment removes the obligation to directly address complicated topics like gender inequity and sexual violence and limits teachers, students, administrators and parents from being able to dismantle dominant discourses that perpetuate sexual harassment. By replacing specific words with more general ones

like “anti-bullying,” “caring” and “behavioural problems” as used by some participants, sexual harassment becomes individualized, hence, glossing over the “sexual” and systemic power imbalances connected to sexual harassment (Ringrose & Renold, 2011). Similar to earlier research referenced in the theme, Understanding sexual harassment outside of power relations, teachers and administrators prevent and resist engaging in conversations about “sex” with students.

School boards’ responses to sexual harassment. Christine and Marie both referred to bullying and sexual harassment interchangeably and discussed how school board policies on bullying would also apply to sexual harassment. When I asked Christine about strategies to combat sexual harassment, she explained that most school boards “have very clear bullying programs laid out...” and noted that teachers in her school board are instructed to respond to sexual harassment and bullying in the same way.

...it’d be like any other kind of bullying, if you see kids bullying other kids, you have to walk up to them and stop it and talk about it and deal with it.

As a supply teacher, Christine taught at multiple schools within the same board, and therefore, her account on “bullying” stems from discourses within her school board and not just an individual school. This excerpt is also likely heavily influenced by dominant discourses in the Ontario Ministry of Education as their funded project at www.safeatschools.ca also conflates “bullying” with “sexual harassment.” Further, aligning with Christine’s comments, previous research has also shown that schools’ anti-bullying policies are often used to tackle issues of sexual harassment (Robinson, 2012; Meyer, 2008a; Ringrose & Renold, 2011) and homophobia (Walton, 2005; Meyer,

2008a).⁹ These policies have been critiqued by feminist poststructuralist researchers as anti-bullying frameworks apply a one-size-fits-all approach to ending student-to-student violence, simplifying the discussion and negating the complexities of how violence is constructed and perpetuated (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012). A passage from Christine's interview shows how an anti-bullying policy can generalize the conversation about sexual harassment:

[Our board] talk[s] about it all the time, there are services about it all the time. But they *never* focus *just* on sexual assault or *just* on robbery or just on bringing weapons to school—they're all mentioned, but it's sort of an overarching policy on how to deal with the issues (*short pause*) or the kinds of people that you need to get involved, the kinds of steps you need to take now that this has happened or if it's happened a second time, that sort of thing.

Framing sexual harassment under the guise of "bullying" is also problematic since such an approach ignores how systematic patterns shape inequality, negating how certain students are more particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment.

In addition to using an anti-bullying framework to understand and address student-to-student sexual harassment, Christine mentioned that her school board sometimes frames sexual harassment under topics like, "classroom management," "progressive discipline" and "student behaviour", which continues to focus on altering individual attitudes and actions to ending the sexual harassment of girls by boys. While I do not disagree that addressing all student violence is important, blurring them together in

⁹ Aside from the sexual harassment of girls by boys, using the term "bullying" has also been found to prevent constructive conversations about homophobia and discuss how derogatory words like "fag", 'queer', 'dyke' and 'gay' are powerful and operate to reinforce and maintain the subordinate positioning of marginalized subjects (Walton, 2005).

discussion and responding to sexual harassment the same as “robbery” or “bringing weapons to school” de-genders the conversation and depicts sexual harassment as a “discipline problem” instead of problems that lie within deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs rooted in culture, language and discourses about gender and power. As shown throughout my discussion with participants, sexual harassment can be perpetuated rather insidiously and therefore, it is important to unpack normalized beliefs about gender, sexuality and power in order to challenge prevailing attitudes and beliefs that lead to sexually harassing behaviour by boys. Without such a focus, we miss a valuable opportunity to seriously address the beliefs and attitudes that cause the sexual harassment of girls by boys in schools in the first place. As many other researchers have found, addressing sexual harassment with the same strategies as bullying and other forms of student-to-student violence, blurs, generalizes and depoliticizes the discussion about the causes of sexual harassment (Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Meyer, 2008a). Meyer (2008a) reminds us:

By using vague terms such as bullying and name calling, scholars and educators avoid examining the underlying power dynamics that such behaviours build and reinforce. When policies and interventions don’t name and explore systems of power and privilege, they effectively reinforce the status quo (p. 44).

Indeed, Marie shows how language within anti-bullying frameworks can weaken and pacify discussions about sexual harassment as it attempts to encompass all student-to-student violence. The conversation becomes vague and unclear and suggests that altering individual environments can stop sexual harassment:

Marie: Ya, it's not *just* sexual harassment, though just as a stipulation. Like, it's kind of everything. It's having more of a nurturing, and comfortable environment within the school regardless of who you are.

Quinn: Ok, so do they have the language, like, "sexual harassment?" in there when they—

Marie: They do, yup.

Quinn: Oh ok.

Marie: They talk about that, they also talk about—well, actually no, I guess they don't say "sexual harassment" per say, but I guess they say, "gender," "sexual orientation" um, disabilities, like you know what I mean? So it's not just sexual harassment, it's kind of everything.

Again, using such vague language from anti-bullying policies blurs the discussions about student-to-student violence by denying how inequalities are embedded within institutional structures and perpetuated by prevailing discourses about gender and power.

The problem is the Internet: The focus on cyber-bullying. Participants also discussed social media control and sometimes referred to "cyberbullying" interchangeably with "sexual harassment." For instance, Marie referred to the online distribution of sexually explicit photos as "cyber-bullying" and Christine stated that when she was in one of her placements in teachers' college, the school's policy on "cyberbullying" recognized that it "*is* harassment and it *is* bullying and schools are very, very serious about bullying." It is noteworthy that "cyberbullying" is a relatively broad category that encompasses a variety of online behaviours, and therefore, it is problematic to conflate this term with sexual harassment.

Although administrators and teachers likely want to take cyberbullying seriously, focusing on how to alter and restrict Internet practices will do little to resist the prevailing discourses that lead to sexual harassment. As mentioned earlier, when Amelie was sexually harassed by a student through her website, her principal warned the rest of the teachers about the risks of having a website as opposed to the sexually violent statements the student(s) had posted about her. Amelie explained that the principal did not take the situation as seriously as he should have, even delaying a few days until he informed other teachers about what had happened. According to Amelie:

Amelie: The principal *did* end up sending an email [to teachers]...a couple days after it happened, saying “if you have your own website be careful...Because something happened to someone in the school.”

Quinn: Ok. But they didn’t say, what the nature of it was.

Amelie: Correct. Correct.

While Amelie did not state whether the principal used the language of “sexual harassment” and “cyberbullying” interchangeably, it is significant that he focused on Amelie’s website instead of the sexually violent comments that were posted. Pascoe (2012) notes that the rise of the Internet has made acts of homophobia and sexual harassment amongst teens easier for adults to access, which has shifted the blame onto the use of technology instead of homophobia and sexism. Pascoe states:

the explosion of attention to [cyberbullying] makes it seem as if these behaviours were not occurring in offline environments, and it also tends to overlook the gendered and sexualized nature of some cyberbullying (p. x).

Holding the Internet responsible for student-to-student sexual harassment further perpetuates sexual harassment by rendering it invisible under the umbrella of “cyberbullying,” as shown from Amelie’s experience.

Removing “sex” to address sexual harassment. As recognized by Pascoe (2012), suggesting that sexual harassment and other forms of gendered violence is a new phenomena in the context of anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying discourses helps further remove any sort of references to “sexual” when discussing sexual harassment. As seen throughout the interviews with Marie and Amelie (which will be addressed in more detail in the next section of the findings, “I was just *joking*” – Minimizing the seriousness of sexual harassment, their understanding was that “sex” or “sexual” were removed from school discussions about sexual harassment. Shelly also seemed unsure about how to classify a sexist comment made by a student, but decided not to call it *sexual* harassment:

I don’t even know if I would necessarily classify it as *sexual* harassment, more so just harassment—I had one student in my class, a male, call another girl the “c” word.

This quote from Shelly connects to a trend in which teachers and administrators disguise the language of student-to-student sexual harassment by suppressing reference to anything “sexual.” “Anti-bullying” language might be a comfortable alternative for teachers and administrators who are unsure or unprepared to talk to students about topics that have sexual undertones; unfortunately this language also does very little to dismantle or resist the discourses that perpetuate sexism and sexual harassment.

Bullying and sexual harassment as distinct. Interestingly, although Christine treated sexual harassment and bullying as the same in some parts of the conversation, she

also treated them as distinct at other times. When I asked her if she had had any experiences talking with staff directly about sexual harassment she responded by saying:

Umm...not on the topic of sexual harassment, but on *other* topics like bullying or the curriculum... [emphasis mine].

In noticing these contradictions when analyzing the data, I wondered: what might these contradictions suggest about dominant school discourses regarding sexual harassment and bullying and what does it reveal about teachers' understanding of student-to-student violence including sexual harassment? Interestingly, paralleling Christine's understanding of sexual harassment and bullying, the Ontario ministry's website (www.safeatschool.ca) explicitly states "[r]acism, sexism and homophobia (and other equity issues) are distinct from bullying," and at the same time, lists resources to combat homophobia and sexism under "anti-bullying resources." The website provides numerous valuable books, articles and lesson plans for teachers, teacher candidates and principals, some which I provided to my participants following the interviews as compensation (see appendix G)—however, conflating bullying with homophobia and sexism while also recognizing it as separate is confusing and ambiguous as demonstrated from the interview with Christine.

In contrast to many previous comments made by participants about "bullying," Erica was clear that she viewed "bullying" distinct from "sexism" and "sexual harassment":

If it's a student sexually harassing another student, I find it easy to intervene, or bull—like or—not bul—not that bullying and sexism are the same thing, but in cases of students mistreating each other, I find it easier to intervene.

Making this distinction seemed important to Erica, especially since later in the interview she explained that her professors in teachers' college were "underprepared" to discuss sexual harassment and sexism because they could not articulate the difference between "bullying" and forms of sexual violence. When I asked her what the training was like in teachers' college to prepare her to discuss sexism and address sexual harassment when she became a teacher, she stated:

...through actual teachers' college...one of my professors referred to sexual assault as bullying. Umm... or equated them as being the same. I think he logically knew they weren't, but I think this was the only kind of language he had to describe it.

Therefore, this insight from Erica reveals that the discourses that blur "sexual harassment" and "bullying" are not only pervasive in schools and school boards, but also in teachers' education programs as well.

Conclusion. This theme of my findings discussed how language in school discourses normalizes sexual harassment when "soft" words like "inappropriate" are used to discuss sexism. I addressed how teachers sometimes self-censor in relation to the topic of sexual harassment and sexism, which is impacted by the relationships with colleagues, parents, principals and students. I also discussed how conversations about sexual harassment have been conflated with "bullying," which allows for the removal of the word "sex" from the discussion.

"I was just *joking*" – Minimizing the seriousness of sexual harassment

Introduction. My conversations with participants also indicated that sexual harassment is further normalized when sexism and sexual violence are minimized or taken lightly. I found that sexual harassment was minimized in a number of ways.

Patterns included sexism and sexual harassment presented and talked about as jokes; male perpetrators being excused and protected while female victims were blamed and held responsible for sexual harassment; administrators and teachers doing little or nothing to address and stop sexual harassment; and lastly, teachers' college and school board programs that dedicated little or no attention at all to sexual harassment training for teachers. However, for this section of my findings, I focus solely on how sexism and sexual harassment were delivered as "jokes," so that my findings section is not overly exhaustive.

First, I explore how sexist comments and sexual harassment are delivered and defended as merely being "jokes," and the relationship between sexual harassment and the construction of the gendered subject. I dedicate a brief section to identifying that sexual harassment is treated as a joke even amongst teachers who openly admit sexual harassment should be taken seriously. I then discuss reasons as to why those victimized by sexual harassment might also laugh at their own experiences of sexual harassment and conclude with how joking about sexual harassment further normalizes this violence in schools.

Packaging sexism and sexual harassment as "jokes". Several research studies about sexual harassment in schools confirm my findings that such violence is often played out as a "joke" (Berman, Izumi & Arnold, 2002; Larkin, 1995; Meyer, 2008a; Ringrose & Renold, 2007; Shute, Owens & Slee, 2007). Marie told me that a male student had referred to the 1950s as "the good old days" because women were confined to domestic spaces and "didn't really go into the workforce." After dedicating time in

class to address his comment more fully, she asked him if he understood why it was “inappropriate” to which he replied that he “was just joking.”

Marie’s student’s sexist joke indirectly mocked gender inequality, trivializing women and girls’ struggle for rights and access to power within male dominated spaces. This example demonstrates how sexist humour can also be considered to foster a “hostile environment harassment” (Thomae & Pina, 2015, p. 193); hearing such comments could cause girls to feel uncomfortable and perhaps unwelcome in the class. Marie mentioned, in fact, that many girls were “offended” by what the boy said even before they explored his comment in depth as a class.

In addition to *sexist* jokes creating hostile environments for girls and women, Erica’s example of a *sexual* joke reveals how sexist and sexual humour can operate as a form of sexual harassment:

A friend of mine told me that her student made a joke about his girlfriend being on her period...in front of the class while she was there. Like something to the effect of "she won't have sex with me because she's on her period ha ha, she's on the rag" or something like that.

This boy’s comment could be read as an attempt to control and contain female sexuality with humiliation and degradation. The discourses that girls’ bodies and sexuality need to be regulated have been a pervasive thread throughout my interviews as I mention in other sections of Chapter 4. Further, the regulation of female sexuality also aligns with Pascoe’s findings (2012) where teachers attempted to control adolescent sexuality by policing girls’ and boys’ dancing and also by monitoring girls’ clothing with a gendered specific dress code.

When this student mocked his girlfriend's right to consent to or refuse sexual activity, he also attested that when girls assert bodily autonomy, their bodies become sites for ridicule and laughter. Although boys learn that making sexist and sexual "jokes" about girls' bodies passive-aggressively affirms male dominance, in Robinson's (2005) study, she found that the boys did not view it as a form of violence, but a way to make the day "more interesting" (p. 25). Therefore, girls' bodies are also viewed as sites for laughter to fulfill male pleasure and enjoyment.

In addition to sexist jokes attempting to embarrass, dehumanize, degrade and disempower girls in order to assert male power and privilege, they are also used towards boys who do not "accurately" meet desired hegemonic gender expectations (Meyer, 2008a; Pascoe, 2012; Ringrose & Renold, 2011; Robinson, 2012) and used to affirm heterosexual masculinity where boys are obligated to laugh along, so that they are not called "gay" or "fag" (Meyer, 2008a; Pascoe, 2012). Shelly noted that she often heard boys "joke" amongst each other to not "be a pussy about it." The conventional use of this language evokes how regulating masculinity between boys is usually not just common, but required (Connell, 1996). Robinson (2005) reminds us that sexual harassment reinforces "male power within male groups" (p. 20) and making jokes that are sexist and sexual is a social act that helps shape the masculine identity (Pascoe, 2012).

The construction of male heterosexuality and the "fag discourse" (Pascoe, 2012) might also help to explain why Erica's colleague's male student stated this sexist comment loud enough for peers to hear. However, it is important to recognize from Shelly's example that although "don't be a pussy about it" was usually spoken by boys and directed to other boys, girls are also at the receiving end of such "jokes" even if they

are not said to them directly; the phrase “don’t be a pussy about it” ultimately implies “don’t be weak like a girl.”

Talking about sexual harassment as a “joke”. Participants’ interviews demonstrated that sexual harassment in schools is not only defended and masked as a joke, but is also talked about as a joke in itself. For instance, when I asked Dawn if she thought her colleagues would be open to learning about sexual harassment, she stated:

I am thinking of one particular woman and one particular man that I do think have sexist kind of tendencies...so that’s unfortunate to say that about your colleagues ...just from conversations that I’ve had with them, and things that they’ve said to me that I don’t know [indicate] that they would really take the sexual harassment training seriously...

Erica also questioned whether all teachers would treat discussions about sexual violence seriously. During a conversation she had about sexual assault and sexism in teachers’ college with a male colleague, he contributed to the conversation with a “joke,” stating, “don’t be a tease, bend at the knees.” Erica responded to his comment by explaining:

I just remember thinking "eewww" first of all...that's a pretty gross thing to say...after we're having this conversation about sexism and things like that in the classroom....But if he’s willing to make light of it, I don't know if he would *teach* it... I remember I was pretty, pretty shocked.

Dawn and Erica’s accounts of male colleagues not taking sexism and sexual harassment seriously, evokes research from Larkin (2006) who found that some male teachers were heavily invested in sexism as a way to “laugh...along with the guys” (p. 270) as well as Pascoe’s (2012) ethnographical study that found sexist and sexual jokes were ways male

teachers could “bond” with their male students. However, it is particularly jarring that this male colleague would tell this “joke” in the middle of a serious conversation about sexual harassment and sexism with his colleagues.

Women and girls laughing at sexual harassment. Men joking about sexism and sexual harassment is usually used to affirm male power and domination over women, but excerpts from participants indicate that female students and teachers also joked and laughed at sexual harassment even when relatively self-aware of such issues. Erica and Shelly, for example, stated throughout the interviews that sexual violence should not be taken lightly, yet both admitted to times when they had caught themselves laughing at colleagues’ sexual harassment. Shelly reported that when a male teacher who identified as gay told her that he had experienced sexual harassment from female students, she did not take it seriously at first because he identified as male.

I kind of laughed it off, and he’s like, it’s not any different. And I thought about it and I said, “you’re right.” He goes, so it *is* uncomfortable that he has to call people out on making comments too, because I think it’s generally thought of like, “oh, but you’re a guy, you can handle it...”

Shelly’s laughter at the sexual harassment that her colleague experienced likely functioned as an attempt to reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1996) through the male teachers’ positioning as a masculine subject, which is especially significant since the teacher identified as gay and might not meet the “desired” form of masculinity. It also affirms gender binaries that men and women are expected to uphold— if men can handle sexual harassment “better” than women, it implies that men are “naturally” strong and by default, women are “weak” and “too sensitive” to sexual harassment. Such binary

thinking about masculinity and femininity is further connected to sexual harassment being masked as a “joke” because girls and women are often blamed for taking sexual harassment too seriously when they challenge and resist it in some way (Robinson, 2005; 2010).

Erica also initially laughed with other teacher candidates when a female colleague was sexually harassed during her placement in teachers’ college, but reflected afterwards that it was problematic to treat sexual violence as a joke.

I remember there's this student at a school who repeatedly comments on female teachers' appearances, violates physical boundaries, touches them, not sexually, but like hand on the shoulder, just kind of inappropriate boundaries to be violating as a student [and] teacher relationship. And the first time I heard about it was a group of us (*short pause*) and all of our first reactions were to laugh and make a joke about it and it wasn't until I walked away and thought about it later that I went, "oh that's actually pretty serious..."...like this is not something to joke about. And that's even coming from like someone who's spent most of my life interested in gender and those relationships. Even then *I* in that moment laughed.

These examples from Erica and Shelly show how gendered subjects are deeply rooted in dominant discourses that reinforce the status quo and continue to marginalize girls and women. It takes deeper reflection sometimes to be able to resist these discourses and take up new ones. Their examples also demonstrate how gendered subjects are invested in upholding prevailing discourses even when they do not personally benefit from them (Weedon, 1987). As Erica mentioned, it was her initial “instinct” to joke about sexual harassment, which indicates the pervasiveness and naturalization of the sexual

harassment of girls by boys. Erica's example when she laughed along with colleagues about sexual harassment specifically highlights how sexism is reinforced and perpetuated within social groups (Barrett, 2005; Davies, 2006, St. Pierre, 2000). Further, women and girls sometimes participate in sexist jokes in order to "fit in" to masculine spaces and be accepted by males, which I will address more directly in the following section.

Laughing at one's own sexual harassment – why does the "victim" laugh? It is important to examine what is gained by laughing at sexual harassment, sexism and sexual violence and how people in dominant and marginalized positions might laugh for different reasons. While laughing about sexual harassment further normalizes such violence, it can also serve to benefit victims as they negotiate their power to sustain and improve their status in social groups (Robinson, 2012). For instance, when Marie saw a male student slap a female student's "behind" in class, she noted that the girl accepted his actions as a joke.

They called the girl in [to the office] to make sure that she was ok with it and she kept saying, "yeah, that's how we joke around" and because of that they didn't suspend...So, that's probably why it was only the detention and especially the girl herself was, she was basically consenting to it, right? She almost kinda didn't even see why it was wrong.

The response from Marie's student evokes Larkin's (2006) findings (p. 267) that found without validation that their experiences qualified as sexual harassment, girls attempted to adopt the perspective of the boys and felt obligated to laugh along with the group. However, research from Meyer (2008b), Rahimi and Liston (2011), Robinson (2012) and Larkin (1994; 2006) also indicated that girls who experienced sexual harassment often

suffered in silence because teachers and administrators downplayed and ignored it or provided the perpetrator(s) with little to no consequences. Therefore, it seemed puzzling to me that Marie's female student continued to defend the sexual harassment as a joke even though her teacher and principal were willing to suspend the male student that physically sexually harassed her.

Findings from Raby and Pomerantz's (2015) focus groups interviewing teenage girls who found themselves caught between feminism and post-feminism might offer an explanation. Their research found that girls were hesitant to identify with feminism and challenge sexist narratives because it would compromise their identity as powerful, independent beings who can "take care of themselves." In other words, to identify as "victim" meant aligning with "feminism," which relies on "the help of others in the form of collective political action, government intervention, or social support" (p. 93). Therefore, Marie's student might have been hesitant to ask for help from the teachers and principal because it would compromise her self-image as "powerful" and "independent" to "weak" and "needy."

Marie's assumption that the girl actively welcomed and "consented" to the physical, sexual harassment demonstrates that understanding sexual harassment can be confusing for teachers. Robinson (2012) reminds us that understanding girls' emotional responses to sexual harassment can be complex since they sometimes accept sexual harassment in specific contexts, specifically if the boy has social status (Ringrose & Renold, 2011). Laughing at sexual harassment and ignoring it themselves in order to minimize the internal effects of sexual harassment might also provide girls a temporary solution to dealing with the emotional responses to sexual harassment (Robinson, 2012),

especially if it is experienced continuously over time. Further, sometimes when girls do not laugh along with boys' sexist "jokes" and sexual harassment, boys accuse them of taking the harassment "too seriously," even though such comments and behaviour can be quite aggressive (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2008). As Shelly pointed out, there are sometimes added risks to admitting that experiencing sexual harassment is bothersome, making it difficult for teachers to know how a victim of sexual harassment genuinely feels.

[Sexual harassment has] become such a norm. That it's—sometimes when you reprimand it...it could be one party, it could be both parties, saying, "it was just a joke" or the victim—we'll call them the "victim"—saying, "oh but I don't really care"—but maybe they do, but maybe they don't want to look like "a rat" or look like "a sissy" if you want to call it that or end up having it come back to bite them.

When a person of status or authority *also* laughs, the person who has been sexually harassed might feel even more obligation to laugh along with the harassment. When Erica approached her female principal for guidance on what to do in response to male students sexually harassing her in class, she explained that she felt that she had to laugh along when her colleague and principal both laughed about it.

I went to my principal for advice, I was in the room with one of the other admin workers who was a female and she laughed and said, "well maybe if you didn't dress like such a slut..." So I laughed out of discomfort. I thought, "I don't even know how to address that." And then my principal said, "Oh yeah, ha ha" and laughed too. And I didn't really know what to do.

Erica laughing out of “discomfort” may have been her way to regain dignity in response to feeling embarrassment about a student who attempted to subvert her authority with sexual harassment– it might be easier to be “part” of the joke instead of the “brunt” of the joke. However, perhaps laughing at the sexual harassment was also a way to signal that she was not emotionally affected or embarrassed by the harassment in order to maintain social status amongst the group of females. For example, as Robinson (2010) noted from her research on sexual harassment by male students towards female teachers, showing seriousness or distress about the sexual harassment that Erica experienced might have led her to lose status as a “competent” teacher. If she expressed how the sexual harassment was emotionally affecting her ability to teach, she maybe feared she would be labelled as a teacher who “couldn’t handle” the boys (Robinson, 2010). Interestingly, Erica *did* mention in another part of the interview that female teachers at her school are expected to “be tougher than that.” Therefore, perhaps the admin assistant and principal laughing at the sexual harassment in this context attempted to enact dominance *between female teachers*. Such an analysis would be supported by Robinson’s (2010) findings where she found sexual harassment was often linked to a “discipline problem” and to be a “good teacher” meant being able to “control the classroom environment” (p. 85).

Racism and Gendered Islamophobia in Relation to Sexual Harassment and Sexism.

It is important to include a section on how the normalization of sexual harassment intersects with racism and Islamophobia because the act of sexual harassment not only reinforces the production of hegemonic masculinity and helps reaffirm male power over girls and women, it also reinforces the power of dominant racial and ethnic groups over others and affirms middle class values (Robinson, 2012). In the following section of my

findings, I discuss racism in the context of sexism and sexual harassment and explore how girls who the participants identified as “Muslim,” were discussed during the interviews. While I use feminist poststructuralism as my theoretical framework, I also rely on anti-racist (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994; Whitten & Sethna, 2014) and anti-racist feminist literature (Dua, 2000; hooks, 1984) as well as Edward Said’s research on Orientalism (1981; 1993) and “the other” as such concepts complement this chapter of my thesis project. I also use research on gendered Islamophobia in relation to the wearing of the hijab or “veil” (Garner & Selod, 2015; Perry, 2014; Rezai-Rashti, 2004; Ruby, 2005; Zine, 2006) to frame my findings. I compare and contrast how my participants presented their understandings of the hijab and end by discussing how dominant, Western discourses that perpetuate gendered Islamophobia, Orientalism and stereotypes about the hijab also intersect with the normalization of sexual harassment. In this discussion, I define Islamophobia as embedded in the hatred, distrust and/or fear of the religion of Islam and also in racist discourses that dehumanize Muslims especially in the context of the colonization of the Middle East (Grosfoguel, 2013). While I recognize that “race” and “religion” are separate terms, gendered Islamophobia and Islamophobia more generally are often paired with racism (Garner & Selod, 2015). I believe it is important to relate the mentioned concepts and theories to anti-racist research in this section, however, I am unable to provide an in-depth anti-racist, anti-colonialist analysis within the parameters of the thesis project; therefore, I recommend there be further research dedicated to investigating how discussions about Islam and the hijab are constructed within the Canadian education system in relation to sexism and sexual harassment by using an anti-racist, feminist framework.

Race, ethnicity, culture and religion. Significant research has been dedicated to the benefits of anti-racist education (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994; Whitten & Sethna, 2014) in order to challenge white supremacy (hooks, 1984; 2003) and gendered Islamophobia (Zine, 2006), and to examine whiteness and white privilege (Picower, 2009). Anti-racist theory “works to challenge society and social institutions to address persistent and pervasive effects of racism and interlocking social oppressions” while acknowledging that school discourses are not “neutral,” but actively shape an understanding of the construction of race, gender and class (Whitten & Sethna, 2014, p. 415). While Canada’s education system is often presented as more “progressive” than the system in the United States (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994), there have been multiple critiques of school discourses that focus on celebrating “multiculturalism” and “diversity” (Snider, 1996; Whitten & Sethna, 2014) since stereotypes and generalizations about racial and ethnic groups continue to be pervasive in mainstream, dominant discourses within schools (Whitten & Sethna, 2014; Raby, 2004; Zine, 2006).

Reflecting anti-racist literature, I acknowledge that ethnicity, culture, race, and religion are distinct terms and should be used separately in order to be specific and avoid stereotypes and generalizations. However, likely due to dominant, Western discourses entrenched in “Orientalism” (Said, 1981; 1993) and Islamophobia (Zine, 2006; Garner & Selod, 2015; Perry, 2014), my participants sometimes referred to these concepts interchangeably, as they used terms like, “Arab,” “Muslim,” and “Middle-Eastern.” During data analysis, I found the process of separating the terms messy and problematic since I as a researcher acknowledge these terms are distinct, but also want to have my discussion reflect the participants’ perceived understandings and uses of these terms.

Therefore, my discussion about sexual harassment in relation to the intersections of race with sexism and sexual harassment will also reflect how my participants used “culture”, “race” and “religion.” While I acknowledge that these terms are distinct and conflating “religion”, “race”, “ethnicity” and “culture” perpetuates racism and generalizations, I recognize that the conflation of these terms can also render racism further invisible by claiming racist thinking to cultural, religious and ideological differences (Sayyid, 2008). Furthermore, while Islam is the only religion I address in the following section, I acknowledge that members of several other religious groups (and non-religious groups in fact) have expressed concerns about discussing sex and sexuality in which has been interpreted as sexist (Franiuk & Shain, 2011; Edwards, Turchik, Dardis & Gidycz, 2011). However, my discussion on sexism and sexual harassment addresses Islam and not other religions because my participants specifically referenced Muslim students. Lastly, I did not directly ask participants about the intersections of race with regards to sexual harassment, but when I asked if there were “school cultures”¹⁰ that they thought may contribute to the perpetuation of sexual harassment at their school, they sometimes misinterpreted how I used the phrase, “school cultures” and responded as if I asked about race, ethnicity or family culture.

Racism in the context of sexism and sexual harassment. Previous studies (Pascoe, 2012; Rahimi & Liston, 2010; Robinson, 2000; Robinson, 2012) acknowledge that the race(s) of the victims often influences how teachers interpret acts of sexual harassment. Due to racial and ethnic stereotypes such as classifying girls and women of

¹⁰ I define “school cultures” as dominant policies, attitudes, beliefs, or practices within a school community. My definition aligns with (Maehr & Buck, 1993) as cited by Meyer (2008b) whom identifies “school cultures” as the “significant perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs held by individuals associated with the school” (p. 42). More specifically, I asked participants if they could identify any “school cultures” that might make sexual harassment more likely to occur or be ignored at their school.

colour as hypersexual, acts of sexual violence towards black and Latina girls, for example, are more likely to be overlooked than similar violations towards white girls (Rahimi & Liston, 2010). Further, girls and women of colour are more likely to experience sexual harassment than their white counterparts (Rahimi & Liston, 2010). Most research that I have engaged with that addresses how race intersects with sexual harassment has focused on girls who self-identify as black, Latina, Asian (Pascoe, 2012; Rahimi & Liston, 2010; Robinson, 2000; Robinson, 2012), and Aboriginal (Downe, 2006).¹¹ However, discussions with my participants centered primarily on girls and boys who they classified as “Muslim,” “Middle-Eastern” and/or “Arabic.”

Orientalism and dominant discourses about Islam. Edward Said (1981;1993) coined the term “Orientalism” to argue that the ways in which colonizers constructed discourses about the Middle East or “the Orient” as “other” created and reinforced “social hierarchy and hegemonic power over the colonized” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 182). Further, prevailing discourses about Islam rooted in Orientalism perpetuate generalizations and stereotypes about Muslim girls and women. Said (1981) noted that Western discourses have simplified the meaning of “Islam,” although its existence is made up of:

more than 800 million square miles of territory, principally in Africa and Asia, and its dozens of societies states, histories, geographies, and cultures... [and] is in fact... part fiction, part ideological, and part minimal designation of a religion called ‘Islam.’

¹¹ Aboriginal and Indigenous girls and women are especially vulnerable to sexual and gendered violence in Canada due to racist and colonial practices (Downe, 2006).

While participants' discussions about Islam were brief, what they *did* say about Islam, Muslim girls and/or the hijab revealed an entrenchment within Orientalist discourses that allow for Islam and Muslim experiences to be seen as monolithic. For instance, although many girls and women living in Canada who identify as Muslim do not wear the hijab, when participants referenced Muslim girls in relation to sexual harassment and sexism, they exclusively talked about girls who wore the hijab. Such a focus from participants might indicate that they were referencing a specific and limited version of Islam in the discussion about sexual harassment, as Said suggests.

Amelie, Dawn and Ann all stated that their schools had a "high Muslim population" and referenced the large number of Muslim students during our conversations about sexual harassment and sexist discourses at their schools. Amelie spoke about this topic the most out of all participants. The connections she made between Islam and sexist narratives, and her relationship to addressing them, is highly layered and complex. It should be noted that in contrast to Dawn and Ann, she did not verbally associate the religion of Islam with racial terms like, "Arab" or "Middle Eastern," but *did* occasionally perceive Islamic values as part of a "culture."

First, Amelie discussed how she observed Muslim girls at the school adhering to sexist and rape culture narratives through the dress traditionally worn by Muslim girls and women.

...at my school it is very culturally diverse and there's a high Muslim population...And last week there was a discussion in our class about the hijab...And one of my students was presenting about it and a student asked, "well why do you wear the hijab?" And she said, "for modesty" and then she said, "well

if there's a girl dressed like me and a girl with short shorts and a tank top, who do you think the rapist is going to attack?...And so I was pretty shocked by something like that. And I see that as just as a—not the same thing that you're mentioning, but (*short pause*) to me in this understanding of (*short pause*) the motivations of a rapist.

Amelie recognized that blaming girls and women for experiencing sexual violence due to their clothing is problematic. In response to being asked about sexual harassment, she provided an example of a student relying on a rape myth, which reveals that Amelie acknowledges that sexual harassment and rape are connected.

While I *do* agree that victim-blaming based on girls and women's clothing is highly problematic as Amelie pointed out, it is also important to consider how this account takes on additional meaning in the context of Orientalism (Said, 1981; 1993) and dominant Western narratives about Muslim girls and women who wear the hijab. Pervasive stereotypes in school and media discourses often depict Muslim girls and women who wear the hijab as “subjugated, veiled, secluded, and oppressed beings in need of rescue” (Rezai-Rashti, 2004, p. 147) and it is generalized that *all* Muslim girls and women are forced to wear a hijab by violent, abusive and oppressive men (Zine, 2006). In Orientalist discourses, Muslim girls and women are depicted as “others” and therefore constructed “not as freely choosing, autonomous individuals, but rather as homogenous, faceless people who are known by their commonality of values, emotions, and personality traits” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 182). Therefore, when I analyzed the research, I questioned how such discourses about girls and women wearing

the hijab might have influenced Amelie's retelling of the stories about Muslim girls in relation to sexism and sexual harassment.

Discourses about Muslim students. In addition to the pervasive discourses of "Orientalism" (Said, 1981; 1993) and Islamophobia (Garner & Selod, 2015; Perry, 2014 Zine, 2006), I also questioned how the principal's treatment of Muslim students as described by Amelie in other parts of the interview revealed how Muslim students were constructed within the school discourses. Amelie expressed frustration with her principal who told her she had to cancel a campaign organized by the students in the GSA (Gay Straight Alliance), which aimed to create awareness about safe sex because he argued, "Muslim students might be offended." I found it particularly striking that the principal blamed the Muslim students for censoring the discussion about safe sex at the school especially since past research from Pascoe (2012) and my interviews with Christine and Marie present multiple examples of teachers and administrators suppressing conversations about sex with adolescents.

In addition, similar to how the Muslim girl shamed other girls' for wearing a tank top and shorts, Amelie also mentioned in another part of the interview that some teachers at her school made comments about girls' "inappropriate" dancing during a pep rally, which indicates that they too attempted to regulate and control girls' bodies:

Amelie: ...teachers were like, "that was inappropriate" while I found that it was not a big deal. Umm... but and it was just individual dancers too, it wasn't like two people grinding against each other. Umm... (*short pause*) and like I said—I guess that it too much for some parents—for their kids to see. I don't know.

...

Quinn: Oh ok. And did you notice any differences with how maybe teachers, or students or the principal were talking about the girl dancers verses the boy dancers?

Amelie: Yes. The girl—female teachers—I only heard it from female teachers not administration—about the female dancers.

Quinn: Ok, but they didn't talk about the male dancers.

Amelie: No.

The link between the two excerpts is that the female Muslim student attempted to regulate girls' bodies by commenting on girls' clothing, while the teachers regulated girls' bodies by commenting about girls' dancing. Therefore, according to Amelie, the Muslim students *in addition* to the teachers¹² are entrenched in discourses that attempt to regulate girls' sexuality by the policing of their bodies, revealing that these sexist discourses cannot be classified solely as a “cultural” or “religious” problem amongst Muslim students.

Multiple meanings of the “hijab”. While there are likely Muslim students at Amelie's school who have expressed discomfort and even anger about discussing topics like sexuality, safe sex, sexism and/or sexual harassment and also Muslim students who make sexist comments, solely focusing on how Muslim students perpetuate sexism at the school negates how the regulation of teenage sexuality, censoring discussions about sexism and sexual harassment and taking up dominant sexist discourses are maintained by non-Muslim students, teachers, staff and principals as well as sexist policies and

¹² Amelie did not explicitly state whether the teachers in this situation identified as Muslim. However, since she directly identified sexist comments throughout the interview as being spoken by “Muslim” students and based on my knowledge about the teachers' demographics at Amelie's school, I do not believe the teachers here identified as Muslim. However, I cannot say for certain.

procedures inside and outside the Ontario education system. Amelie did not explicitly state whether the Muslim students are held responsible for all the sexism at her school, but based on comments from our interview, it seems that Muslim students are more likely to be critiqued for sexism than students and teachers who identify as non-Muslim.

As I have mentioned, it is problematic that Orientalism and Islamophobia often frame Islam as “sexist” and “oppressive,” but I also recognize that sexist discourses are not necessarily absent within Muslim majority groups. I further acknowledge that some interpretations of the Qu’ran have been critiqued as sexist particularly in regards to the “modesty” of dress for women. For example, in response to another scholar’s interpretation the veil for Muslim women is the “practical attempt to defeat sexual exploitation and harassment,” within British, Muslim patriarchy, Zine (2006) argues that this construal “places the burden of responsibility for avoiding sexual harassment upon women, who are expected to regulate their bodies to avoid eliciting the negative sexual attention of men, rather than placing the onus on men to regulate their behaviour toward women” (p. 243).

However, in addition to this interpretation, the wearing of the hijab, niqab and burka can take on multiple meanings for Muslim girls and women that often intersect such as the maintaining of their cultural and religion identities (Keddy, 2009; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006). Furthermore, some girls and women also recognize their hijab as a feminist tool to counter dominant sexist discourses imbedded within Western narratives. Zine (2006) states once again:

As an Islamic feminist construct, the veil represents a means of resisting and subverting dominant Euro-centric norms of femininity and the objectification of the female body and as a means of protection from the male gaze. (p. 243)

Therefore, it is important to recognize that dominant, Orientalist discourses pervasive in the West often depict religious and cultural practices associated with Islam as “oppressive” and “sexist,” while negating that the wearing of the “hijab” can take on a plethora of meanings for Muslim girls and women including ones that challenge Western ideals of feminine beauty.

Problems with making generalizations about the “hijab”. Despite the richness and multitude of meanings that the hijab can represent, such discourses about the veil are often overlooked or absent from mainstream, Western discussions. Problematizing this discussion further, the stereotype that wearing the veil is always a signal of “oppression” (Garner & Selod, 2015; Ruby, 2005) might actually prevent girls and women from being able to challenge the sexism and sexual violence that they do experience within their religious, cultural and/or ethnic communities out of fear that they will be helping to fulfill the stereotype that all Muslim men are “sexist” oppressors and all Muslim women are “victims that need saving” (Zine, 2006).

Furthermore, while some Muslim students will be offended by discussions about sexuality and safe sex, it is presumptuous to assume that *all* Muslim students would be offended and reveals once again an indication of Oriental discourses prevalent within Amelie’s school. Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006) note that according to Said, Orientalism also “has the pernicious effect of treating the colonized as if they were all the same” (p.182). In fact, such an Islamophobic and Orientalist discourse reduces these

students to their religious identity, implying that additional qualities (e.g. identifying as queer or feminist) or actions (e.g. being sexually active) cannot intersect with being Muslim since “Islamophobia [is] a set of ideas and practices that amalgamate all Muslims into one group” (Garner & Selod, 2015 p. 13). It also negates the likelihood of some non-Muslim students (perhaps Christians or atheists) being offended by discussions about safe sex at the school.

These discourses that represent all of “Islam” as repressive towards sex and sexuality, especially for girls and women, can also lead to the assumption that all discussions about sex, sexuality and even sexism are Islamophobic. This is highly problematic – as revealed through the following excerpt from Amelie. Amelie felt that she could not invite Muslim girls to challenge their own sexist discourses in fear that she would be accused of Islamophobia. She referred back to when her female, Muslim student presented about the hijab in class.

Quinn: Ok. So when you hear sexism or when you see sexism, these kinds of incidents that are occurring, do you feel prepared to intervene?

Amelie: Not necessarily. For example, that one discussion last week, I didn't really — like I disagree completely with what she said...but it's hard because too I, and this is — I feel awful saying this — I feel that if I say something, it's going to now offend her and it's going to come back to me like I did something against her religion.

Amelie expressed genuine concern and confusion as to how to address sexism while also respecting Muslim students' religious beliefs. As she explained, she chose not to address sexism in order to honour Muslim students' beliefs and avoid possible backlash from the

students and/or principal. Unfortunately, such an approach excludes Muslim girls from challenging sexist narratives and continues to perpetuate the marginalization of all girls at the school when sexist comments are not addressed.

The intersections of gendered Islamophobia with sexual harassment. It is further problematic that Amelie chose not to help the students unpack the rape myth in order to protect freedom of religion, since Muslim girls and women are vulnerable to gendered Islamophobia *in addition* to sexual harassment. I have mentioned the various problems with making generalizations about Islam, but it is also noteworthy that such discourses impacted participants' ability to recognize how racism and Islamophobia intersected with sexism and sexual harassment. While Amelie was heavily engaged with social justice initiatives with the Gay Straight Alliance at her school and conscious about ending forms of discrimination like sexism and homophobia, what I found to be particularly striking was that she voiced her concern and anger about these sexist narratives and rape myths, but did not explain how female, Muslim students *in addition to* non-Muslim female students could be harmed by such narratives. Further, discussions about how female Muslim students are more susceptible to sexual harassment and sexism because of racism and gendered Islamophobia (Garner & Selod, 2015; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006) were missing from our conversation. Amelie not mentioning that the female Muslim students are harmed by these sexist narratives themselves is significant since girls and women of colour are often less likely to be perceived as victims of sexual harassment than girls and women who are white (Rahimi & Liston, 2011).

In contrast to Amelie, Dawn *did* state that she considered racism to be an issue at her school:

I would say that racism is a bigger problem than sexism at our school... someone had an iPad stolen and they said something about Arabs and uh I remember [a teacher] said, ya know you can't make comments like that.

However, similar to Amelie, Dawn did not mention how racism and Islamophobia could intersect with sexism and sexual harassment and in fact, openly stated that Muslim girls at the school did not experience sexual harassment or gendered Islamophobia.

I don't see harassment by any means of girls that wear hijabs, but there is a kind of, like a, kids are really *fascinated* by other kids sometimes, or they're—less so now, more when I first started teaching I think or our, our kids mostly come from elementary schools where they've already seen hijabs, but there's a lot of questions, “why do you wear it?” “who—why does your family *make* you wear it?”

It is interesting as well that Dawn's perspective of the question, “why does your family *make* you wear it?” was not interpreted as gendered Islamophobia when it perpetuates the stereotype that the hijab is always a sign of “oppression,” assumes that Muslim girls are all “subservient,” and implies that they never have a choice wearing the hijab (Rezai-Rashti, 2004; Ruby, 2005; Zine, 2006). Further, in Dawn's recollection of how hijabs are discussed at her school, she focused primarily on the perspectives of non-Muslim students who have questions about the hijab. Some of the language Dawn used as well, positions Muslim students as “other” in comparison to non-Muslim students, evoking once again how discourses of Orientalism impact the way Muslim students are positioned within Canadian schools. The “othering” is most prominent in Dawn's wording of “our kids” since Muslim students are not included in this phrasing. Also, comparing the

language of “our kids” with “your families” makes the “othering” language even more salient. The “othering” of Muslim girls found within Dawn’s excerpt is significant to the discussion of sexual harassment since racial and ethnic stereotypes that “other” often lead teachers to dismiss the sexual harassment that girls and women of colour experience. (Rahimi & Liston, 2011).

Conclusion. The excerpts from participants reveal that the topic of gendered Islamophobia needs more attention in fields of qualitative research especially with the rise of gendered violence against Muslim women since terrorist attacks in places like Paris and Beirut (CBC News, 2015a). Amelie’s interview specifically poses questions as to how teachers can explore the topics of feminism, gender, sex and sexual harassment with Muslim students while also being entrenched in pervasive discourses about Islam that assume that Muslim girls must be shielded from such discussions. While the Ontario government recently updated the new sex education curriculum to incorporate discussions about “consent” as a challenge to sexism, incorporating anti-racist education as a challenge to racism and Islamophobia is also important, so that students, teachers, principals and parents can work to examine how such discrimination also intersects with normalization of sexual harassment (Whitten & Sethna, 2014). Further, it is essential to address racism in order to combat sexism and sexual harassment as an anti-racist feminist approach acknowledges that “[u]nderstanding gender and race relations is knowing about power and relations in society” (Dua, 2000, p. 12). The interviews with participants led to unexpected findings about gendered Islamophobia, revealing how combating sexism was compromised to protect religious freedoms and therefore, I argue that further research

must be done on such topics in the context of sexual harassment in the Canadian education system using an anti-racist, anti-feminist approach.

Pathways to Resistance

Introduction. In the concluding section of Chapter 4 that outlines my findings, I discuss how participants' conversations also evoked experiences of students and teachers resisting dominant discourses that normalize and perpetuate the sexual harassment of girls by boys. The term "resistance" can take on different meanings within modernist and post-modernist thought and therefore, can be ambiguous (Raby, 2002). In feminist poststructuralism, resistance can be understood as an example of a subject's agency and while subjects cannot exist outside the discursive, they *can* disrupt and dismantle dominant discourses that reinforce existing power relations (Davis, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Therefore, I define resistance as ways in which teachers and students take up subordinate discourses to challenge and resist prevailing discourses that perpetuate sexism and the sexual harassment of girls by boys. In addition, I also apply the concept of "resistance" to subjects' actions to end sexism and sexual harassment in terms of how they negotiate power relations within their positioning in the discursive. Teachers, often having greater authority than adolescent students, can also be limited in discourse, especially when taking into account how attributes like gender, race, sexual orientation and class influence subjects' ability to navigate power.

Students and teachers' resistance. Interviews revealed that sexual harassment is normalized in schools, but participants also spoke about ways in which students and teachers responded to acts of sexism and sexual harassment by finding ways to resist and disrupt dominant discourses. For example, Marie mentioned how a female teacher started

a construction club with students, challenging gender stereotypes. Dawn and Erica both said that they use flexibility within curriculum in courses like English as an opportunity to teach lessons that challenge gender stereotypes and in Erica's case, she also invites students to reflect on topics like sexism, racism and sexual violence.

In addition to using teaching opportunities to invite students to challenge sexist narratives, Amelie and Erica spoke about how they disrupted dominant discourses by challenging authority. For instance, Amelie went against her school board's dress code policy by only loosely enforcing the rules for female and male students.

[The school dress code policy] says no halter-tops either. I generally will not make the student change if she's wearing a halter-top.

When the principal applied the dress code differently for boys and girls, she expressed to the students that she disagreed with the policy by warning a particular student before he could get in trouble for what he was wearing.

[The student] actually came to my class first and I told him, I'm like, just a heads up it doesn't matter to me, but you might be told that's not allowed in school.

Amelie made it clear to her students that she challenged her principal's authority, but teachers in more vulnerable positions at the school might not be able to disagree so openly. For example, teachers who are marginalized due to race, gender, class, or sexual orientation might be more vulnerable to discrimination and teachers who lack status or seniority at the school or find themselves in precarious teaching positions might be less likely to go against their principal or school policies. This is not to say, however, that teachers who suspect the likelihood of receiving a backlash when resisting always remain silent. Erica recalled that when she was in teachers' college she often received ridicule

from professors and colleagues when she spoke out against sexism. In the follow-up interview, she recalled how she challenged her professor in front of other students when he presented an article that she perceived as sexist:

So the professor gave us an article about girls and selfies on Facebook. And the article to my recollection, was calling girls narcissist and from what I remember, blaming girls for selfies and not exploring other reasons why they would be taking selfies, for example, selfies as self-empowerment or we take selfies because society values the physical in girls and asking of this online. And he missed the mark I feel. The professor said something that was in the same vein as the article and I was annoyed. I said something to the effect that, (*changes tone*) ‘well as a woman who grew up in the selfie age, I think I’d have a better understanding of this experience.’

Erica used this experience as an example to show how she would not censor herself in teachers’ college despite sometimes being ostracized and being mocked like when her male adviser “jokingly” referred to her as a “real woman’s liber.” The backlash that Erica experienced reveals how some educators characterize resistance against sexism as disruptive, disobedient and annoying instead of a positive way to enact social change. Further, Erica’s experience of being mocked by her male adviser and labelled negatively by some of her colleagues in teachers’ college evokes Robinson’s (2000) research in which one female teacher was “jokingly” called ““a radical feminist”” and ““a man hater”” (p. 87) by her male colleagues after she mentioned that she was sexually harassed by her male students. Therefore, when dominant discourses are disrupted and challenged,

subjects sometimes push back by categorizing other subjects as “deviant” in order to maintain the status quo.

Discourses are so powerful that stories from a few of my participants in fact revealed that they were unable to acknowledge students’ acts of resistance against sexual harassment as legitimate forms to challenge sexism and improve the quality of education for girls. Marie mentioned a few times in the interview that it is important for teachers to be at the forefront of educating students about sexism, but did not frame adolescents as agents of change in the same way.

...in the education system...you are fighting different battles. Like, you’re fighting against what they learn at home, you’re fighting against the media, right? You’re fighting against what their friends say. So it’s kind of like, you’re the one element.

Marie’s reference to teachers being “the one element” to fight against sexist discourses and her following description about adolescents making sexist comments, reveals an inability to recognize how adolescent students could also fight against rape culture and sexist discourses that normalize and perpetuate sexual harassment.

So, they—it’s almost like you know it’s wrong, but like, they’re in that rebellious stage, right?... “Oh, I know it’s wrong, but I’m just going to do it anyways.” Or “I’m going to do it *because* it’s wrong.”

By framing sexist comments as an act of “rebellion” and a symptom of teenage years negates how sexism is connected to a larger system of gender marginalization and inequality in the education system and beyond. It also negates that some adolescents *do* recognize and challenge sexism and sexual harassment sometimes through acts of

resistance. However, Raby (2002) notes that adolescent “resistance” is often perceived negatively by adults and trivialized as “rebellion.”

Similar to Marie’s perception of adolescents, Ann also revealed an inability to perceive girls’ attempts to stop sexual harassment as forms of resistance. After adults in the school learned that a male student had physically sexually harassed female students more than one time, Ann describes how the girls responded during a “girls’ night” at the school.

I forget what we had put up, but we put up a sort of banner of some sort in our gym. We had all the girls from 7/8, so that’s about 50 girls or so?... they...had to write on this banner something that was bothering them—I can’t remember exactly how it was worded, but this student’s name appeared...So at that point, we knew it was an issue...and so this student’s name came up and uh yeah, so it was an understanding amongst the girls that yup, this kid’s a problem.

A number of aspects about Ann’s story are alarming. First, although she mentioned that teachers knew that this student had sexually harassed girls in the past, it did not seem to be clear that this sexual harassment was a problem until a girl(s) wrote his name on the banner. Secondly, while writing the boy’s name on the banner could be perceived as a “safe” and anonymous way to alert adults at the school of the sexual harassment, later in the interview, Ann blamed girls for not doing enough to stop harassment at the school.

I—but I’ve always been the type of girl even when I *was* in grade 8, I never would have stood for something like that, ya know? This is something that girls *willingly go through*, which is a whole other thing. It’s why we do girls night, right? [emphasis mine]

Ann did not directly negate or praise the girl(s) responsible for writing the boy's name on the banner. However, it was clear that she was unable to recognize that dominant discourses about gender place girls in marginal power positions when challenging sexual harassment and face risks when reporting it; yet, the girls at her school attempted to shed light on the sexual harassment anyway. When girls speak out against sexual harassment and sexism, their "gendered personhood" (Butler, 2004) may become compromised since girls are expected to be non-confrontational and well-behaved (Ringrose and Renold, 2011; Raby, 2010). In Pomerantz's (2007) research analyzing how girls are framed in the context of school dress codes, she notes that when a girl named Marcia challenged her school's sexist dress code policy, she was labelled as "devious, mischievous, and dangerous" (p. 383). Therefore, girls learn that they must navigate carefully when speaking up against sexual harassment and sexism.

Weedon (1987) reminds us that it is important to honour subjects' ways of resisting no matter how insignificant they may seem since "it may well take extreme and brave actions on the part of the agents of challenge to achieve even small shifts in the balance of power" (p. 108). Therefore, perhaps Ann's female student who tried "to kind of like push [the same male student] away and not draw attention to herself" when he grabbed her legs underneath her desk, could also be perceived as an agent of resistance.

Since acts of adolescent resistance are sometimes classified as "rebellious," I argue that it is important that teachers are able to challenge dominant discourses not just about gender but about teenagers, in order to recognize girls' resistance to sexual harassment. Resistance to sexual harassment and sexism might be played out covertly,

but still significant and powerful since it can be difficult to speak up against sexual harassment, especially as a young female.

Challenging dominant discourses /consciousness-raising. Almost all participants indicated that they had difficulty identifying student-to-student sexual harassment and did not always feel prepared to intervene when witnessing it. These findings support previous studies that examined teachers' perceptions of sexual harassment in which teachers were often unable to detect the sexual harassment of students (Rahimi & Liston, 2010; Meyer, 2008b). Participants suggested that it would be useful to help teachers better identify and intervene with student-to-student sexual harassment, and naturally, mostly through education. A few participants suggested that teachers should be provided with specific scenarios, so that they would learn to identify student-to-student sexual harassment more quickly. Erica mentioned that when sexual harassment or sexism occurs in the classroom, teachers can be caught off-guard and therefore, being provided with specific skills on how to intervene ahead of time would be useful.

However, as Amelie indicated after her school board brought in a man to educate teachers about sexual harassment when it was rumoured to occur in their workplace, not all education programs to teach about sexual harassment suffice.

Amelie: It was just basically a guy came in and went over a brochure with us.

Quinn: Ok. How helpful do you think that was?

Amelie: Not helpful at all. No one listens in P.D days anyways...

Quinn: (*Laughing*) Ok.

Amelie: ...to be honest. He didn't have a mic, we were all in the back of the cafeteria.

Therefore, if there *are* education programs to inform teachers about how to recognize and intervene when witnessing sexual harassment and sexism, there needs to be attention beyond basic definitions of sexual harassment, towards concrete and specific scenarios that they might encounter everyday but overlook because sexual harassment is so normalized.

Further, education for teachers to be able to recognize and challenge sexism and sexual harassment cannot merely be informational. Teachers' college programs and workshops outside of teachers' regular teaching practices must allow teachers to question their own personal privilege and power to assess their internalized beliefs about gender and sexual violence. Rahimi and Liston (2010) say it best:

Not simply confining such conversations to courses with 'diversity' in the title, we should prepare teachers to recognise and acknowledge sexual harassment. We should give teachers ample opportunity to address their own bias and to take seriously anti-bias as a professional disposition to be encouraged and fostered throughout their teacher preparation programs. (p. 808)

Being provided spaces for teachers to reflect on how the education system privileges some over others might also assist them to move towards consciousness-raising (Weedon, 1987) where subjects can recognize that we are not in a state of "fixed reality," and can reposition ourselves in discourses (Davies, 2000).

Although several participants affirmed that they believed education about sexual harassment would be helpful, as mentioned in Amelie's previous comment, teachers

might not always be open to learning about sexual harassment. There are likely multiple reasons why some teachers resist educational workshops from their school or school board, but one likely factor is that teachers are often overworked and therefore, feel that they do not have time to make sexual harassment education a priority (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013; Meyer, 2008b). Therefore, school boards must provide more support for teachers to be able to have time to learn about sexual harassment and sexism in schools, in order to take part in resisting and challenging the dominant narratives that normalize sexism and sexual harassment.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

The focus of this research was to identify teachers' experiences witnessing, addressing and hearing about student-to-student sexual harassment in Ontario schools. Through the analysis of my findings, my research supported previous studies of sexual harassment by Larkin, (1995), Robinson (2012), Shute, Owens and Slee (2008) and Rahimi and Liston (2011) that demonstrated that the sexual harassment of girls by boys is naturalized and normalized in schools. I organized my findings into five dominant themes—understanding sexual harassment outside of power relations, how using “soft” and indirect language to describe sexual harassment and sexism depoliticizes and mitigates the discussion, ignoring or minimizing the effects of sexual harassment, how prevalent discourses that reinforce gendered Islamophobia intersect with the normalization of sexual harassment and lastly, the resistance of dominant discourses that perpetuates sexism and sexual harassment.

While sexual harassment and sexism are connected to wider aspects of marginalization of girls and women inside and outside the education system, given the right support, teachers are in unique positions to be agents of change to disrupt dominant discourses that normalize and perpetuate the sexual harassment of girls by boys. When I asked Marie what she thought the role of a teacher should be, she took in a long sigh before answering.

The teacher is everything. Like, you are their parents, you are a friend, you are a psychologist, you are a lecturer, you are a disciplinarian, you're like, the shoulder to cry on, like, you are literally everything. Especially to some kids.

My conversation with Marie in particular reminded me of the incredible pressures that are put on teachers as they are often expected to be “everything.” I recognize that many teachers *do* want to address sexism and sexual harassment, but also feel overwhelmed and overworked with little time to dedicate outside fulfilling curriculum requirements (Meyer, 2008b; Charmaraman, Jones, Stein & Espelage, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial that teachers are provided with enough support to combat sexual harassment and sexism in schools. Further, teachers who *do* actively resist prevailing discourses that normalize the sexual harassment of girls by boys must be invited, encouraged and supported to challenge current anti-bullying discourses that individualize and pathologize student-to-student violence (Walton, 2008). A feminist, poststructural analysis can provide pathways for change and resistance. Davies (2000) reminds us:

By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist. (p. 180)

Therefore, although findings from this research project have indicated that dominant discourses continue to perpetuate the normalization of sexual harassment in schools, a feminist poststructural approach can assist teachers to explore the complexities and contradictions within the discursive as a way to subvert existing power relations.

Recommendations for future research. Considering that all of my participants stated in at least some way that their teachers’ education program was insufficient to prepare them to address and discuss sexism and sexual harassment, I recommend

conducting more studies that investigate how teachers are trained to understand, recognize and respond to sexual harassment and sexism. I would also stress the importance of research dedicated to teacher training since I was unable to find much information that examined this issue (as I mentioned in Chapter 1 of my literature review). Furthermore, Dawn, Erica and Amelie all mentioned how their colleagues as well as principals also perpetuated the normalization of sexual harassment and sexism and provided little support when experiencing sexual harassment themselves. Therefore, I propose further research into the training that provides principals the tools to support teachers to be able to understand and address sexism and sexual harassment in schools.

I did not anticipate discussions about gendered Islamophobia to arise during my interviews, but was struck by the complexities of its relationship to sexism and sexual harassment in schools. I propose that more research is needed to investigate how teachers and students can challenge and subvert discourses that normalize the sexual harassment of girls while also challenging the dominant discourses of gendered Islamophobia and Orientalism.

Dawn mentioned how online spaces are where adolescents go to socialize and that “cyber-bullying” is becoming a more pervasive and notable topic in mainstream discussion. Therefore, I also suggest that there needs to be further academic research dedicated to understanding the implications of cyber-bullying and how to dismantle the problematic narratives around consensual and non-consensual sexting that arose during my interviews.

Finally, the scope of my project was to examine “student-to-student” sexual harassment, but surprisingly, almost all of my participants shared stories about

experiencing sexual harassment themselves as teachers either from students or colleagues. Therefore, I argue that the academic literature would also benefit from more research into teachers' experiences with sexual harassment, especially from their male students.

Remembering Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd. As I come to concluding this thesis project, I return to Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd. Their deaths were incredibly tragic and they *should* be living today. The sexual violence and harassment that they experienced brought in support for “anti-bullying” policies and legislation, such as Bill C-13, which was proposed by the Conservative, Federal government and critiqued by Carol Todd (Amanda Todd’s mother) for compromising “privacy” over “safety” (Puzic, 2015). However, their experiences also sparked a wave of feminists, teachers, bloggers, parents, students, youth etc. across North America to use “the power of discourse” (Davis, 2000, p. 180) addressing how to resist the normalization of sexism and sexual harassment of girls and women. Discussions about “rape culture” have made their way into mainstream spaces as girls, parents and teachers in Canada and the United States speak up about the dress codes through protests, walkouts and Internet posts (CBC News, 2015c, Raby & Pomerantz, 2015). Female news reporters such as Shauna Hunt, have spoken up against the wave of sexual harassment targeted to women with men yelling “FHRIHP” while reporting the news on camera (CBC News, 2015b). These are merely a few examples of the powerful ways that women and/or feminists are resisting the dominant narratives that normalize acts of violence and subordinate girls and women.

We are in a conflicting time. It is challenging and frustrating as teachers, administrators, students and parents continue to take up sexist narratives about girls and

women that perpetuate the normalization of sexism and sexual harassment in schools. However, it is also exciting as it shapes room for possibilities, with the normalization of sexual violence and rape culture being challenged in several spaces. Today, Rehtaeh Parsons would be 20 years old and Amanda Todd would be 19. Although they might not be here today to write the blogs and participate in the walkouts, I hope that through continued feminist work like this thesis project, Rehtaeh and Amanda can be part of this resistance in some way symbolically. I hope that we can also continue to share their story and instead of merely viewing them as victims of sexual violence, acknowledge the ways in which they too resisted when they were still alive. We need to grasp these moments of conflict and continue to resist, so that girls who are victimized like Rehtaeh and Amanda can unite with others to take up subordinate discourses, challenge rape culture and help dismantle the normalization of sexism and sexual harassment.

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Appendix A: Letter of invitation

LETTER OF INVITATION

Teachers Invited to Participate in Research Study about Sexual Harassment

Date: February 2015

Thesis Title: The challenges addressing student-to-student sexual harassment in elementary and secondary schools: teachers' experiences

Student Principal Investigator: Lauren Quinn, Graduate Student in Social Justice and Equity Studies, Brock University

Thesis Advisor: Rebecca Raby, Chair and Professor, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Dear Fellow Teachers:

I, Lauren Quinn, Graduate Student Researcher in the Social Justice and Equity Studies Program at Brock University, invite you to participate in a masters' level research project under the supervision of Rebecca Raby. The purpose will be to assess teachers' experiences witnessing and/or addressing the sexual harassment of girls by boys while teaching grade 7-12 students in Ontario schools and to investigate the support that currently exists for teachers when addressing sexism and sexual harassment amongst students. The research question(s) are: what are teachers' experiences witnessing sexual harassment in schools and what challenges do teachers face when addressing sexual harassment? What support do they need to address sexual harassment in schools?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 1 hour. You will be asked to discuss your experiences witnessing and/or addressing the sexual harassment of girls by boys while teaching grades 7-12 students, and collaboratively reflect on how teachers' college (teacher education) or educational resources and workshops provided by your school or school board prepared you to address such issues. Part of the interview will also include how the roles of your principal and colleagues influenced your ability to address sexual harassment and discuss issues of sexism with students. Interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy by the researcher.

Participants will also be asked to fill out a participant information form and an application form, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes in total

Participants must have taught grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and/or 12 students in an elementary or secondary school in the past 7 years or less in Ontario. Teaching experience may include working as a supply teacher, part-time contract teacher or full-time teacher. You must have completed teachers' college within the past 7 years or less.

As compensation, each person will receive a \$10 gift certificate to Starbucks and educational materials on sexual harassment including lesson plans for participating in the study. You will be asked to provide a valid mailing address, so that you can receive your gift certificate. You will also have the option of picking up the gift certificate from Brock University upon request.

Benefits from this research include contributing to the field of academic research, reflecting on your experiences as a teacher candidate and as a teacher in a secondary or elementary school.

You will also have the opportunity to voice your opinion about the education system and sexual harassment.

The study is also designed to enact systematic change amongst the Niagara and Brock University community. The thesis will be submitted to local sexual assault crises centers including A Safer Brock and CARSA (Niagara Region for Sexual Assault Centre) to support the organizations with their initiatives to educate the community about sexual harassment and the cultural causes of sexual assault.

The identities of all participants will be kept confidential and participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms once the interviews are transcribed. Audio recordings will be stored in a secure place and will be destroyed immediately following transcription with pseudonyms added. The participant information forms and application forms will be stored in a secure place and destroyed at the end of the research project in October 2015. This research is a Social Justice and Equity Studies Master's Thesis Project and is a single-site project.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor (see below for our contact information).

Thank you,

Lauren Quinn
Graduate Student Researcher of
Social Justice and Equity Studies

LQ12DS@BROCKU.CA

Rebecca Raby
Chair, Professor of Child and
Youth Studies

RRABY@BROCKU.CA
(905) 688-5550, ext. 3172

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board File #14-083 - RABY.

Appendix B: Informed consent form

Date: March 2015

Thesis Title: **The challenges addressing student-to-student sexual harassment in elementary and secondary schools: teachers' experiences**

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Lauren Quinn, Graduate Student Researcher
Department of Social Justice and Equity Studies, Brock University
E-mail: lq12ds@brocku.ca

Thesis Supervisor: Rebecca Raby, Chair and Associate Professor of Child and Youth Studies
Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University
Phone: (905) 688-5550, ext. 3172. E-mail: rraby@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a research study that is aimed to assess teachers' challenges and experiences addressing sexual harassment while teaching grades 7-12 students in Ontario schools. This research study will focus specifically on the sexual harassment of girls by boys.

CRITERIA

You must have taught students in grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and/or 12 in an elementary or secondary school in Ontario within the past 7 years or less. The teaching experience may be working as a supply, long term occasional or full-time teacher. You must have completed a teachers' education program (teacher's college) within the past 7 years or less.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

You will be asked to participate in an interview with a student researcher that will last approximately 1 hour. There will be a participant information form and application form to fill out before the interview, which will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. These documents will be distributed by e-mail. The maximum time commitment for participating in the study is 1 hour and 15 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the researcher's accuracy.

You will be asked to reflect on your experiences witnessing or addressing student-to-student sexual harassment while teaching in an elementary or secondary school with grades 7-12 students. You will also be asked to discuss your experiences talking to students about sexism and sexual harassment and to reflect on the policies, attitudes and beliefs within the school(s) pertaining to gender, sexism and sexual harassment. You will also be asked to reflect on your experiences from teachers' college and possible resources and workshops provided to you by your school(s) or school board(s). In addition, you will be asked to reflect on the roles that your principals and colleagues played in your experiences of witnessing or addressing sexual harassment.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

As a participant, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a teacher candidate and a teacher of grades 7-12 students and voice your opinion about the education

system, sexual harassment and sexism. The study is also designed to enact systematic change amongst the Niagara and Brock University community. The thesis will be submitted to local sexual assault crises centers including A Safer Brock and CARSA (Niagara Region for Sexual Assault Centre) to support the organizations with their initiatives to educate the community about sexual harassment and the cultural causes of sexual assault. You will also receive educational materials on sexual harassment including lesson plans at the end of the interview.

A possible risk to participants is that due to the sensitivity of the research topic, participants might feel emotional discomfort during or after the interviews. Therefore, participants will be provided information for sexual assault crises centres and organizations to assist teachers on their professional roles if they need to use such services.

Participants may decline to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering in the interview or participant information form.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that participants feel safe to share in the interview while knowing that their confidentiality and privacy will be respected. If participants disclose names of students, teachers, principals, schools or school boards during the interviews or within the participant information form they will be replaced with pseudonyms in the thesis.

The interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and will be destroyed after transcribing the discussions. Your names will be made confidential and will be replaced with pseudonyms when transcribing your information. Documents and data collected during this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the home of the student researcher. Transcriptions, participant information forms and a master list with participants' pseudonyms linking to their real first names will be kept until the study is complete in October 2015 after which time it will be destroyed.

Please note that the participant information form will ask personal identification questions such as your socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. Information from the questionnaire will not be shared with other participants and will remain confidential. It is important to take into consideration participants' gender identities, socio-economic backgrounds, culture/race, and sexual orientations when conducting a study about sexual harassment because such factors may influence participants' experiences and views of this topic.

Access to this data will be restricted to Lauren Quinn (Masters Student), Rebecca Raby (Professor), Leanne Taylor (Professor) and Nancy Taber (Professor). Please note that all incidents of child abuse (under 16) whether physical, sexual, or emotional must be reported to the police if the child is currently in danger of this abuse.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you are currently a student, your decision to participate, not participate or withdraw from the study will not affect your academic standing at Brock University. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any

component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study up until one month after the interview has been conducted and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits in which you are entitled. If you choose to withdraw from the study completely, your comments from the interview will be removed from the results. The participant information form will also be destroyed and removed from the results.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences including anonymous quotations. Feedback about this study will be available by Lauren Quinn (LQ12DS@brocku.ca) or Rebecca Raby (RRABY@brocku.ca). If you are interested in feedback, a final copy of the thesis or a condensed description of the results can be sent to you by e-mail upon your request. The thesis and/or condensed version can be sent to you in October 2015 when the thesis has been defended. Please note that names of cities, school boards, schools, principals, teachers and/or students that may be mentioned by participants in the interviews or questionnaires will not be identified in publications and will be changed into pseudonyms upon transcription. General location signifiers will be used instead of specifics (e.g., a school board in southern Ontario).

COMPENSATION

Each participant will receive a \$10 gift certificate from Starbucks for participating in the study. You will still receive the gift card if you leave or end the interview before it is finished or if you withdraw from any portion(s) the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Lauren Quinn or Rebecca Raby by using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University File #14-083 - RABY. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Informed Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Application form for participants

APPLICATION FORM FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Thesis title: **The challenges addressing student-to-student sexual harassment in elementary and secondary schools: teachers' experiences**

The purpose of the research study is to explore teachers' experiences witnessing student-to-student sexual harassment while teaching grade 7-12 students and possible challenges they experienced addressing such behaviour. This research is a Social Justice and Equity Studies Master's Thesis Project and is a single-site project.

Name: _____

Gender identity: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please indicate the times when you ARE available to participate in an interview. The interviews will be approximately 1 hour in length. The interviews can take place at Brock University or over the phone. Please note that I am not available at all on Tuesdays.

Date	Time	Date	Time
Sat Feb 21		Sun March 1	
Sun Feb 22		Mon March 2	
Mon Feb 23		Wed March 4	
Wed Feb 25		Thurs March 5	
Thurs Feb 26		Fri March 6	
Fri Feb 27		Sat March 7	
Sat Feb 28		Sun March 8	

If you are unavailable for these dates, please let me know via email

Are you currently teaching students who are in either grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 in Ontario?
YES/NO

Have you taught students who are in either grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 in Ontario in the past 7 years or less? YES/NO

What grade(s) have you taught? _____

Did you complete a teachers' education program within the past 7 years or less? YES/NO
When? _____(eg., 2006)

Thank you for applying for the research study. If you have questions, please contact graduate student research, Lauren Quinn at LQ12DS@brocku.ca or thesis supervisor, Rebecca Raby at rraby@brocku.ca.

Appendix D: Participant information form

Your name: _____

Please answer how you self-identify:

Age:	Gender identity:
Sexual Orientation:	Culture(s)/Race(s):
Would you consider yourself to be from a <u>lower</u> , <u>middle</u> , <u>upper</u> , or <u>other class</u> background?	What did you complete your undergraduate degree(s) in?
Yearly income (approx.):	Have you taken a course(s) in social justice or diversity whether in your undergraduate or teacher's education classes? If so, which course(s)?
Yearly income of spouse/partner (if not applicable, put N/A):	

1. Would you like a copy of the thesis sent to you? YES/NO

2. Would you like a shortened description of the study's findings send to you? YES/NO
**Please note that both documents will be sent to the e-mail address that you provided at the beginning of the study*

3. Please provide a mailing address that you would like the gift card send to:

** Please note that the envelope and postage will have no signifiers to indicate that you have participated in a research study. You also have the option to pick up the gift card at Brock University upon request.*

Thank you for participating in this research project! :)

Appendix E: Ethics clearance granted

Brock University Research Ethics Office Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035 Email: reb@brocku.ca Social Science Research Ethics Board Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 12/11/2014 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: RABY, Rebecca - Child and Youth Studies
FILE: TYPE: 14-083 - RABY Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Lauren Quinn

TITLE: The challenges addressing student-to-student sexual harassment in secondary schools: teachers' experiences

SUPERVISOR: Rebecca Raby

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW Expiry Date: 12/31/2015

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 12/11/2014 to 12/31/2015.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 12/31/2015. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research. Approved: Jan Frijters, Chair Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable. If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

Appendix F: Additional Support for Participants:**CARSA (Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre)**

24 Hour Crises Phone Line and information: **905-682-4584**

Website: <http://www.sexualassaultniagara.org/>

A Safer Brock (Brock Student Sexual Violence Support Centre)

24-hr Email Support: Support@ASaferBrock.org

24-hr Text Support: **289-990-SAFE(7233)**

Website: <http://www.asaferbrock.org/>

E-mail: info@ASaferBrock.org

Phone: 905-397-7671

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crises Centres

E-mail: <http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/>

(To seek out a crises centre in your local area)

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)

General website: <https://www.oct.ca/>

Section on sexual misconduct and sexual abuse:

<https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/professional-misconduct-related-to-sexual-abuse-and-sexual-misconduct>

Ontario Human Rights Commission

General website: www.ohrc.on.ca/

Section on sexual harassment in education: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/sexual-harassment-education-brochure>

Appendix G: Educational resources for participants

Educational Resources on Sexual Harassment, Sexism, Sexual Assault and Consent

YouTube Videos:

1. Laci Green on “asking for it”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzwYptfRwTg>
2. Satire on catcalling/street harassment, “blow-up boyfriend”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14OaY87rJq4>
3. Laci Green on catcalling and street harassment *swearing*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peBddZQbWYk>
4. Manhattan Catcalling: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foER3v2iMZU>
5. Street harassment and debunking sexual harassment myths *swearing*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGiANjf94xc>
6. “Here me out:” Mini documentary of Stories for Schools about Equity and Inclusive Education for Educators. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2uNI6A8voE>
7. A powerful Tedtalk exploring “the man box” and violence within masculinities. Tony Porter’s A Call to Men. *mention of sexual assault*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td1PbsV6B80>

Responding to Sexual Harassment and Bullying:

1. Interrupting Inequity: Reactive Strategies: <http://www.safeatschool.ca/plm/equity-and-inclusion/strategies-for-positive-action/reactive-strategies>
2. How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in Three Minutes (From TDSB): <http://safeschools.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2013/06/How-To-Handle-Harassment-in-the-Hallways-in-Three-Minutes.pdf>

Documentaries:

1. MissRepresentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2UZZV3xU6Q/> / <http://therepresentationproject.org/films/miss-representation/> *sexual objectification*
2. The Mask You Live in: <http://therepresentationproject.org/films/the-mask-you-live-in/>
3. Lists documentaries including Tough Guise (boys, masculinities and violence) and Killing us Softly 4 (girls, violence and sexual objectification and exploitation) *sexual assault, violence*: <http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=211>

Cases in the Media:

1. Feminist blogger and video games commentator, Anita Sarkeesian online sexual harassment case: <http://feministfrequency.com/2012/12/05/tedxwomen-talk-on-sexist-harassment-cyber-mobs/>
2. Reporter, Shauna Hunt calls out men who yell FHRHHP, video: <http://www.citynews.ca/2015/05/15/raw-video-shauna-hunt-confronts-men-about-fhritp/>
3. Reporter, Shauna Hunt commentary: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/on-fhritp-and-how-shauna-hunt-became-my-new-hero-1.3076628>
4. Manhattan catcalling video goes viral: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HI4DC18wCg>
5. Rehtaeh Parsons’ sexual harassment, sexual assault and suicide: http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/04/12/rehtaeh_parsons_a_familys_tragedy_and_a_towns_shame.html

6. Rehtaeh Parsons' sexual harassment, sexual assault and suicide:
<http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/news/rehtaeh-parsons/>
7. Rebecca Raby and Shauna Pomerantz discuss the movement behind girls challenging school dress codes: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/taking-on-school-dress-codesteen-rebels-with-a-cause/article24704035/>
8. Critique on the sexual harassment, bullying and suicide of Amanda Todd:
<http://publicintellectualsproject.mcmaster.ca/education/exploring-misogyny-in-the-amanda-todd-case-how-prevention-education-can-better-address-sexual-assault/>
9. Critique of "bullying" in the case of Amanda Todd:
<https://www.sace.ab.ca/index.php/news/post/2361-amanda-todd-and-the-degendered-language-of-bullying>

Consent:

1. Teaching consent ages 0 to 21 *mentions molestation, abuse, sexual violence*:
<http://goodmenproject.com/families/the-healthy-sex-talk-teaching-kids-consent-ages-1-21/>
2. A comic examining the confusion between sexual objectification and sexual empowerment: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/04/empowered-vs-objectified/>
3. Consent compared to making a cup of tea: <http://www.theloop.ca/this-woman-just-explained-consent-with-the-most-perfect-metaphor/>
4. Sex as pizza, not baseball:
https://www.ted.com/talks/al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one?language=en
5. 4 ways parents teach kids that consent doesn't matter:
<http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/09/ways-parents-teach-consent-doesnt-matter/>
6. Interpreting the complexity of body language and therefore, the importance of using verbal consent: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/05/misinterpreting-smiles/>

General Websites on sexism and social justice:

1. The everyday sexism project allows people to post their everyday experiences of sexism that often go unnoticed: <http://everydaysexism.com/~everydr0/>
2. Articles and resources pertaining to social justice topics: <http://www.adiosbarbie.com/>
3. Provides various articles and comics explaining basic concepts through an intersectional feminist approach: <http://everydayfeminism.com/>

Books for children and teens:

1. Ballerino Nate by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5yAPNUi2jk>
2. My Body Belongs to Me by Starishevsky *mentions incest, sexual assault*:
<http://www.mybodybelongstome.com/>
3. Lists books targeted to young girls in elementary school to promote gender empowerment: <http://www.amightygirl.com/books>
4. Lists books targeted to adolescents pertaining to rape and sexual abuse *rape, sexual assault, incest, abuse, violence*:
http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/22136.Young_Adult_Books_About_Rape_Sexual_Abuse

PDF Resource Guides:

1. 2001 Sexual Harassment Prevention Facilitators' Manuel from the University of Pennsylvania: <http://www.ccasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Sexual-Harassment-Prevention-in-Schools-Curriculum-Manual.pdf>
2. OSSTF's 2010 Still Not Laughing Resource Package: <https://www.osstf.on.ca/adx.aspx/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=d20866c8-0f56-4fa1-9ff6-ed4f1530b7b2&MediaID=48e17a42-ac67-4b2d-8784-5ce2615a74b7&Filename=still-not-laughing-booklet-fr.pdf&l=French>
3. When discussing Equity issues with students guide: http://www.safeatschool.ca/sites/all/themes/safeatschool/files/SUGGESTIONS_Intro_page.pdf

Lesson Plans:

1. Gender advantages and disadvantages: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/for-professionals/lesson-plans-professionals/1248?task=view>
2. Representation of diversity in the Media: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/for-professionals/lesson-plans-professionals/1251?task=view>
3. Lesson plans on advertising and male violence: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Advertising_Male_Violence.pdf
4. Activities breaking down gender stereotypes including "the gender box:": http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Exposing_Gender_Stereotypes.pdf
5. Challenging gender stereotypes in media by looking at female action heroes: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Female_Action_Heroes.pdf
6. Gender messages and alcoholic advertising: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Gender_Messages_Alcohol_Advertising.pdf
7. Girls and boys on television: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Girls_Boys_Television.pdf
8. Half girl/half face facilitator guide: http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/half-girl-half-face_guide.pdf
9. Exercise Exploring Male Privilege: <http://organizingforpower.org/the-benefits-of-being-male-exercise/>
10. Sexual Harassment and Healthy Relationships from OISE: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist_Resources/Sexual_Harassment_and_Healthy_Relationships.html

Activity 1: Consent: Asking for Permission**Practicing Consent Statements**

- “I don’t like it when you _____ , but I love when you _____.”
- “Yes, I want to have sex with you.”
- “I’m really excited for us to _____. Let’s _____.”

Practicing Consent Questions

- “Do you want me to _____ ?”
- “Do you like it when I _____ ?”
- “Do you feel sober enough to consent?”
- “Can I touch your _____ ?”
- “Do you want to take off your _____ ?”

NOT Giving Consent

- “I’m tired and do not want to have sex with you.”
- “I don’t feel comfortable taking off my _____.”
- “I don’t want you to touch my _____.”
- I don’t want to touch your _____.”
- “Can we just cuddle?”
- “I’m really drunk.”
- “Even though we _____ before, I don’t want to _____ now.”

Activity 2: “You Will Know I Want To” Game

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

You will know I want to _____ when I _____
(sexual activity) (behaviour)

_____.

Question Box Time

Please write a comment or question in the space provided. A comment may be something like "I liked this presentation because..." or "I wish I could learn more about..." Your question can refer to anything you'd like, and will stay anonymous (no one will know it was you who asked the question).

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Activity 3: Terms (ESL Friendly)

What is “Safe Sex?”

Term	Definition
Genitals	Reproductive Organs.
Penis	Male genital.
Vagina	Female genital.
Sex	Sexual activity between people. For example: Vaginal Sex: Involving an erect penis entering a vagina. Anal Sex: Involving a penis entering the rectum. Oral Sex: Stimulation (touching, kissing, licking) of a man or woman's genitals.
Sexual Touching	Can refer to kissing, rubbing, hugging, hand-holding and other behaviours.
Protected Sex	Using condoms and other kinds of birth control to stop pregnancy and prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections.
Unprotected Sex	Not using condoms and other kinds of birth control. This can lead to pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections.
Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)	Illness resulting from unprotected sex (and sometimes even protected sex). You might notice redness of the genitals, burning, itching or bumps on your genitals.
Term	Definition
Condom	Latex (rubber) material put on male penis to stop pregnancy and prevent STIs.
Birth Control Pill	Pill (medicine) women take to stop pregnancy.

Sexual Assault/Sexual Violence	When someone forces someone else (usually women) to engage in a sexual act even though they did not consent (or give permission). Examples: Forced oral sex, forced kissing, forced to touch someone else's genitals, forced to take off your clothes.
Rape	When someone forces someone else

	(usually women) to have vaginal or anal sex when they did not give consent.
Perpetrator	The person who performed the sexual assault/rape.
Victim / Survivor	The person who was sexually assaulted/raped.
Consent	A way of showing through words or actions that someone wants to engage in a sexual activity.