Bullying, cyberbullying & sexuality: “Everyone needs a good friend”

Mary Spring, Hon. B.A

Department of Child and Youth Studies

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

Faculty of Social Science, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

Bullying is a pervasive social issue that occurs in numerous contexts and is particularly recognized in populations that are easily targeted. Individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning (LGBQ) are at an increased risk of victimization. Using mixed methodology involving 40 participants (N= 20) LGBQ and (N = 20) non-LGBQ and 10 subsequent in-depth interviews, this study examined prevalence rates of (cyber)bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. Results indicate a high frequency of direct and indirect bullying of LGBQ as compared to non-LGBQ youth. Ten interviews revealed themes that precipitate victimization such as the lack of understanding of LGBQ issues, educational shortfalls, societal and stereotypical beliefs. Results highlight the importance and need of formal and informal support (i.e. peer and online support).

Keywords: Bullying, Cyberbullying, Sexual Orientation Victimization, Support, LGBQ.
Acknowledgements

This learning journey has been both challenging and rewarding, and I owe thanks to many individuals for their constant support and encouraging words.

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Zopito Marini. Zopito your encouragement and support has been overwhelming. I cannot thank you enough for connecting me with so many great opportunities, for your positive outlook, and for allowing me to follow my interests in the realm of sexuality. Your encouraging words and your years of wisdom and expertise in academia have been the guiding force to the completion of my thesis.

I would also like to thank my supportive committee members, Dr. Anthony Volk & Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams, for your guidance, invaluable contributions and challenging me to think about bullying and sexuality from a different lens. I am truly thankful for all your time and efforts spent on my behalf.

Mom and Dad you have been so encouraging and supportive, you have made all things possible for me and I cannot begin to thank you both enough. Your endless support, feedback, encouragement and patience have been the reason I have been able to complete such a task. Your love of learning and persistence in pursuing your life dreams is truly inspirational. I believe the end of this document and school phase will result in significantly less tearful/frantic phone calls - however I cannot promise anything.

Family (Papa, Grandma, David, Holly O, Karen, Holly, Cam, Craig, Samantha and Karina) and friends – thank-you for your undying support and listening ears! I am so proud of each and every one of you. I could not ask for more supportive and amazing family and friends.

My kindest regards to my fellow classmates in the CHYS department. Thank-you to Amanda, Tamara, Melissa and Ashley for our many laughs, tears, one or six coffees, and various modes of procrastination and of course study sessions. Your companionship and friendship will never be forgotten and is truly cherished. I cannot help but smile thinking about all our great times together – even in stats. I cannot wait to celebrate the completion of all our theses and cheers to our future endeavors.

Thank-you Amanda MacDonald for teaching me to never be afraid to try new things and stand up for what you believe in. You have been in my thoughts every step of the way.

AJ and Nellie (my four legged companion) thank-you for putting up with me through the moans and groans of school. Thank-you for being more than supportive especially with your constant encouragement to keep going.

I owe a special thank-you to the CHYS department Instructors, and Professors. Dr. Rebecca Raby, your leadership and expertise are inspiring. As well, the lovely ladies Lora, Ellen, Jo-Anne, Alison and Carol - your hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank-you all, for our great conversations and your guidance over the years.
Last, but not least, to my participants - thank-you for sharing your stories with me. I think Harrison said it best – remember, “these conversations are possible and they do not have to be difficult”. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Thank-you.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Bullying is a pervasive social phenomenon that occurs in numerous contexts in childhood and adolescence and is particularly recognized in populations that are easily targeted (Olweus, 1993; Ma, Stewin, & Mah, 2001). Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig (2001) define bullying as “a form of aggressive behaviour in which the child who is bullying has more power than the victim and repeatedly uses this power aggressively to cause distress to the victim through physical and/or verbal behaviours” (p. 512). Wade and Beran (2011) describe the act of bullying as one that involves an individual who intentionally directs harm towards another individual who is perceived as less powerful. Bullying is further categorized on the basis of form (means of bullying) and function (motivation for causing distress). Building on the works of Olweus (1993) and Hawkins et al., (2001), recent research is proposing to redefine bullying by making it clear that it is predominantly a goal directed type of aggressions and to consider the importance and impact of single severe acts of aggression (Volk, Dane & Marini, under review).

Bullying is experienced by individuals through several mediums such as in face-to-face interactions, through technological sources, or through traditional correspondence media. However, cyberbullying is one type of harassment, which is becoming more prevalent due to the increased use of digital and information technology. Researchers have categorized and described subtypes of bullying in terms of form (direct versus indirect) (i.e., face to face versus spreading rumors, or cyberbullying) and function (reactive versus proactive) (Little, Brauner, Jones, Nock, & Hawley, 2003; Marini, Dane, & Kennedy, 2010).
Experiences of victimization can result in short-term and long-term consequences such as low academic achievement, depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide (Boulton, Chau, Whitehand, Amataya, & Murray, 2009). It is recognized that bullying increasingly manifests in various environments throughout the developmental stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Ma et al., 2001). Various forms of bullying occur in a variety of circumstances in which an individual who is perceived to have less power is victimized, based on a perceived vulnerable characteristic. These vulnerable characteristics include weight (overweight or underweight), academic ability, sexual orientation, family background, financial status and low self-worth, (Craig, Pepler & Blais, 2007; Olweus, 1993).

Researchers in the area of bullying have documented instances of harassment on the basis of sexual orientation. This form of bullying has been described and commonly referred to as homophobic bullying, “a form of prejudice…translated into words or actions” (Bekaert, 2010, p. 27), that targets individuals who do not identify as being heterosexual, as well others who are not perceived by peers as being heterosexual (Poteat & Rivers, 2010). Many studies have reported that people who are perceived to be non-heterosexual or identify with a non-heterosexual lifestyle are at significant risk of aggression and victimization (Bekaert, 2010), and that sexual orientation victimization has significant adverse effects on an individual’s psychosocial and physical overall well-being (Jewell & Morrison, 2010). In recent research, several serious outcomes have been associated with individuals who are victims of homophobic bullying such as violent behaviour, eating disorders and disordered eating habits, illicit substance abuse, alcoholism, suicidal ideation, and suicide as well as several other mental health issues.
(Rivers, 2004). The following discussion will outline the purpose of the study, review the recent literature pertaining to bullying, specifically cyberbullying as it relates to sexual orientation and report the findings.

**Purpose**

The present study aims to build upon existing literature and examine sexuality on a continuum, multidimensional model to help further understand and deconstruct the impact of historical, cultural and societal influence in relation to forms of bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. In addition, this project aims to examine bullying and cyber-bullying as well as the programs needed to support self-identified LGBTQ youth.

**Rationale**

In research involving minority youth groups, specifically lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning individuals, it is particularly important to provide these young adults with opportunities to share their personal experiences and stories with others. To date there is a significant gap in literature that focuses on instances of cyberbullying and victimization on the basis of sexual orientation. To this extreme, many persons in North America have committed suicide due to instances of cyber-bullying, harassment, embarrassment, and victimization. These have been reported in newspapers and on-line bulletins and blogs. In serious occurrences such as the Tyler Clementi\(^1\) and Amanda Todd\(^2\) cases, digital media and online social networking sites have been used to propagate

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\(^{1}\) Story of Tyler Clementi

\(^{2}\) Story of Amanda Todd
vindictive bullying messages and videos that have resulted in devastating consequences for the victims. Therefore, it is particularly important to prompt and encourage youth to come forward to tell their personal stories of their bullying experiences so that these incidences can be reported, documented and the perpetrators stopped. Furthermore, it is critically important that we find out from youth who are dealing with the after-effects of harassment in the form of bullying, cyber-bullying, and/or sexual orientation victimization, what types of services and to support systems may assist them in dealing with these incidences to make a difference in their lives.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions that are organized in tiers:

**Tier one: the scope of bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth.**

1.1 What are the predominant forms (direct vs. indirect) of bullying associated with sexual orientation?

1.1 (a) What is the prevalence rate of bullying and cyberbullying associated with sexual orientation?

1.2 How do the prevalence rates of cyberbullying and bullying compare?

**Tier two: the impact of bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth.**

2.1 Are youth likely to conceal their sexuality due to fear of victimization?

**Tier three: support and moving forward.**

3.1 What support would help an individual when he/she first declares his/her sexual orientation?

3.2 What prevention strategies can be implemented to stop (or reduce) bullying and cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation?
3.3 What types of support may assist victimized youth to cope with various forms of bullying based on sexual orientation?
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Scope of Bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth

What is bullying?. Bullying and victimization is a widespread social phenomenon that occurs across time, space, happens in many forms, and extends across all ages (Ma et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993). Craig et al., (2007) describe bullying “as repeated aggression in which there is a power differential” (465). Power is predominantly inflicted upon victims by bullies through “physical advantage such as size and strength but also through a social advantage such as dominant social role (for example – teacher compared to student), higher social status in a peer group (popular versus rejected students), strength in numbers (group of children bullying a solitary child) or through systemic power (racial or cultural groups, sexual minorities, economic disadvantage, disability)” (p. 465). In these scenarios, power is gained by the perpetrator who detects a perceived vulnerability such as stuttering, a learning disability, obesity, sexual orientation, family background or noting a perceived difference (Craig et al., 2007). As mentioned previously, bullying and this imbalance of perceived power is repeated and systematic, which in turn reinforces power imbalances (Craig et al., 2007). However, recent research is proposing to redefine bullying aims to make the definition more precise by focusing on three characteristics, namely; 1) bullying is goal oriented, 2) occurs in the presence of a power imbalance, and 3) with the intent to cause harm (Volk et al., under review). Furthermore, Volk and colleagues propose that single severe acts of aggression should also be included in the proposed redefinition of bullying (Volk et al., under
review). Figure 1 outlines the various characteristics of definitions of bullying utilized in this study.

Figure 1.

**Definitions of bullying**

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<tr>
<td>Goal directed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power relationship</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓/?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeated over time</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓/?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intentional harm</td>
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A bullying situation is characterized to include individuals who assume different roles in which there is an aggressor (the bully) and an individual who receives victimization (the victim). A bully can be characterized as a person who initiates an aggressive act(s) towards others (Olweus, 1993). Research suggests that bullying behaviour often occurs to assert or gain a higher social status in peer hierarchy (Salmivalli, 2010). A victim is typically described as an individual who is the target of an aggressive act, in which they feel unable to defend themselves and feel ‘weaker’ than the aggressor. Olweus (1997) describes a more complex power dynamic that surfaces when there may be one or more aggressors, and/or when an individual is excluded from a social situation. Research aiming to outline power dynamics that exists between a bully and victim also focuses on the integral role of the bystander. Bystanders in bullying relationships are ‘onlookers’. Research has characterized bystanders using three categories; 1) as intervening and ‘sticking up’ for the victim, 2) contributing to the bullying (laughing or smiling) or 3) as a passive bystander by failing to side with the
bully and/or the victim (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). The bystander plays a critical role in one of two ways; allowing the victimization to continue, which in turn encourages the bullying to persist (laughing alongside, actively watching and taunting etc.) or intervening in the bullying situation and defending the victim (Pöyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2012; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Research findings indicate that a bullying situation is likely to stop when a bystander intervenes (Hawkins et al., 2001). However research also indicates that bystanders are less likely to intervene depending on the type of harassment inflicted (physical or psychological), and size of the group. This is commonly referred to as the “bystander effect” (Darley & Latane, 1968; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003).

Bullying can take on several forms (direct versus indirect) and function (reactive versus proactive) (Little et al., 2003; Marini et al., 2010). Direct forms of bullying involve intentionally causing face-to-face harm such as; physical pain, hitting, punching, kicking etc. (Craig et al., 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). Indirect forms of bullying include instances of non-face-to-face bullying which include cyberbullying or spreading rumors (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012).

A study conducted by Sandstorm, Makover and Bartini (2013), with 446 fourth and eight graders in rural New England, examined school aged children’s perceptions of group norms and how this influenced their responses to bullying behaviour. The researchers adopted the premise that children’s actions and behaviours are shaped by group norms and children’s reactions to bullying are linked with pluralistic ignorance (Sandstorm et al., 2013). Pluralistic ignorance is the idea that within a bullying situation an individual bystander may be less inclined to intervene as their pro-social beliefs of
empathy towards the victim contradict those of other bystanders (i.e. group norms supporting the bully). The victim may be perceived as ‘different’ in some way; therefore he or she does not fit the ‘norm’. Findings suggest that failing to intervene, curtail or stop victimization was a more favourable option for classmates to choose, as it was considered a ‘safer’ option (Sandstorm et al., 2013). Findings indicate that although individuals recognize that bullying is not a pro-social behaviour, bystanders do not want to stand out and deviate from group norms for fear that this difference will make them a target of bullying themselves.

Bullying has long lasting and devastating effects on children and youth. Even though widespread intervention programs have been implemented, this social problem continues to exist in schools and outside of the educational context (Salmivalli, 2001). Bullying is typically a concept that is associated with school and school aged children, although research indicates that this is a social issue occurring across developmental stages, extends past child and adolescence and persists in the adulthood workplace (Ma et al., 2001; Monk & Smith, 2006).

In contrast, Monk and Smith (2006) discuss that research tends to show a decline in instances of bullying as children mature, providing a possible explanation that this decrease could be due to the type of bullying that children and adolescents experience, the reason why they are targets of bullying and how individuals perceive bullying themselves as they mature. Perhaps this is due to the fact that peer group associations become less important and maturity levels and educational guidance positively influences behaviours. However, bullying is typically discussed in regard to the educational context, as schools are the main sites of bullying for children and youth. It is therefore the ideal
context to conduct research.

Rose, Monda-Amaya and Espelage (2011) and O’Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) comment that bullying has been not been properly addressed and not taken seriously due to the belief that bullying is a normal part of a child’s development. Research has documented many short-term and long-term outcomes of victimization. These include an exhibit of anti-social behavior, withdrawal from social situations, avoidance tendencies (missing school, cautious of some social contexts), adverse effects on academic achievement, issues with school attendance, low self-esteem or low self-worth, substance abuse, anger, guilt, shame, aggression, depression, hyperactivity, suicide ideation and future externalizing behaviors such as delinquency (Boulton et al., 2009; Drabick & Baugh, 2009; Ma et al., 2001; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2010).

According to Ma et al., (2001), children and youth who are victims of bullying are often frustrated at home and are short-tempered toward their parents and parents are often unaware of the fact that their child is being victimized at school (Ma et al., 2001). This continuum and repeated nature of bullying suggests that youth who are marginalized take these feelings of distress outside of the context in which they are bullied and extend these into other aspects of life, translating effects of bullying on other facets of life (Ma et al., 2001). Former bullies have been associated with a greater tendency to use aggressive behaviour toward immediate family members (children, family, life partner), which in turn “encourages new generations of aggressive children” (Ma et al., 2001, p. 252).

**What is cyberbullying?** Cyberbullying is a unique form of aggression that has recently received greater attention due to youth and adolescents’ increased use of
information technology; instant messaging, social networking sites and cell phones (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). Cyberbullying is characterized as a form of indirect bullying in which non-face-to-face means are used to cause repeated purposeful harm on another individual through emerging technologies such as email, instant messaging, social networking sites, cell phones, websites and gaming sites (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Wade & Beran, 2011). Cyberbullying is discussed in recent literature and also referred to as cyber-harassment, online bullying, online harassment, online aggression, Internet harassment and electronic aggression (Beran & Li, 2005; Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross, 2009; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying occurs without confrontation or a physical location and has a level of perceived concealed identity for the bully (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008).

Other unique features are described by Wade and Beran (2011), who relate that cyberbullying happens throughout several contexts in which in one instance one may be a victim but one may be a bully in another instance. As previously discussed, this blurs the lines between the bully–victim relationship. Some research discusses cyberbullying in terms of the online bully as having holding power over their victim through technological abilities (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Further research by Dehue et al., (2008), Li (2007), and Baunman (2010) suggests that in certain contexts, the victim could perhaps use cyberbullying as a means to get back at a schoolyard bully. Other studies indicate otherwise, where in a survey of 2000 Canadian youth, participants indicated that 75% of individuals who bully online would not bully an individual using traditional methods of face-to-face bullying (Mishna, McFadden, Gadalla, Daciuk, Solomon &
This profile of the cyber bully is troubling because these two varying perspectives create a profile of an online cyberbully as being any anonymous individual, which makes it more difficult to identify them.

This type of bullying has been further characterized by Li (2007) as having several subsets in methods in which one could cyberbully through flaming, sending “angry, rude or vulgar” electronic messages repeatedly, harassment, denigration “(put downs – spreading untrue information to others)”, masquerade “(acting as someone else to spread information and cause harm)”, outing “(e.g. rumors, private information, cyber stalking, harm or intimidation)” (p. 23). As well, cyberbullying also encompasses sending or posting information/photos online that may be embarrassing to an individual (Li, 2010). Further dangers of cyberbullying include a potential endless audience, coupled with the inability of the perpetrator to be empathically tempered by the victims’ immediate reaction where an “altered balance of power, and the absence of time and space place constraints on bullying” (Bauman, 2010, p. 805). These features of cyberbullying create an atmosphere in which bullying cannot be properly recognized or stopped, resulting in a greater risk of potential harm. Unlike traditional forms of bullying that are typically associated with the educational context in which attempts of intervention and prevention are made, there is a great debate around issues of cyberbullying of whose responsibility it is to monitor, educate, inform and support youth.

In his research on cyberbullying, Smith (2012) reiterates some issues already mentioned above, however, he also describes some unique features of it and how cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying. The author outlines seven characteristics of cyberbullying, including: 1) Cyberbullying is dependent on the degree
of technological abilities of individuals who are involved, 2) This type of bullying can be anonymous, 3) Cyberbullying is traditionally indirect in which there is a perceived anonymity for the perpetrator, 4) Within cyberbullying acts, the online perpetrator is often unaware of the victim’s reaction to the harmful posts or messages. This creates a moral disengagement between the bully, and specifically the victim’s reactions, 5) Often the roles that bystanders assume in cyberbullying situations are very complex. They are based on the levels of involvement as compared to traditional bullying bystanders. Smith (2012) discusses three different profiles or situational descriptions of cyberbullying bystanders. A cyber-bystander could be with the perpetrator when the cyber harassment is sent or posted, the cyber-bystander is with the victim when the act is received, or a cyber-bystander also receives notice of the intended act or visits the online site, 6) Cyberbullying therefore differs from traditional forms of bullying that typically occur in front of a group, where the bully strives to assert dominance and gain power through hierarchical social status. Smith (2012) contends that this is often not the case in cyberbullying, unless there is intent to share the act digitally, and 7) In addition, cyberbullying can have a potential infinite audience and can translate into physical space, making it difficult for the victim to escape from cyberbullying, for it can be received on several different mediums (Smith, 2012).

Mark and Ratliffe (2011) further discuss this issue, as cyberbullying blurs the lines of jurisdiction of school officials and parents. School officials cannot be apprised of online activities that occur during and after school hours. The authors state, “school authorities have had a difficult time supervising online activities… and distinguishing first amendment rights of freedoms of expression from harassment” (Mark & Ratliffe,
Youth surveyed in a study conducted by Pellegrini (2002), revealed that they believe cyberbullying typically takes place in instances where teachers and parents are unaware of it occurring.

Prevalence rates of cyberbullying differ across age groups and given the increased use of information technology (IT), these results are subject to the cohort effect for the older generation who did not grow up with IT (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). There is a large range in prevalence rates in regard to cyberbullying – it was noted that 4.8% of 2215 Finnish middle school participants were victims of cyberbullying and 7.8% admitted to being cyberbullies in a population-based cross section study conducted by Sourander, Brunstein-Kломек, Ikonen, Lindroos, Lutamo, Koskelainen, Ristikari, & Helenius, (2010). In a study conducted by Mark and Ratliffe (2011) of 247 middle school children, 33% of female, and 20% of males reported that they were victimized online or were engaging in bullying behaviours or activities online. Comparatively, Beran and Li (2005), in their study conducted with Canadian children from grades 7 to 9, revealed that 21% of the study sample had been victimized online and 3% of participants disclosed they had bullied online. These occurrence rates suggest that cyberbullying is a common problem among adolescents.

Many studies have documented the effects of cyberbullying on victims. Much like ‘traditional’ forms of bullying, cyberbullying has caused symptoms of emotional distress, feelings of anger, producing low self-esteem and self-worth, guilt, sadness, depression, embarrassment, shame, and fear. Cyberbullying also lowers academic performance, produces truancy issues, and promotes substance abuse (Bauman, 2010; Beran & Li, 2005; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).
However further studies need to be completed, for to date, academic literature and research have merely focused on profiles of the bullies, their victims and prevalence rates (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Connections and investigation in terms of other aspects of cyberbullying, such as harassment on the basis of sexual orientation have yet to be examined due to the relatively new identification of cyberbullying. Researchers have indicated that future directions should pertain to these issues.

**What is sexual orientation victimization?** Increasingly, there is recognition that bullying can involve and occur in a variety of circumstances. Drawing on the study completed by Craig et al., (2007), the authors relate that bullying occurs in instances where an individual holds power over another to inflict distress. The perpetrator understands that the victim is vulnerable, and in the cases related to sexual orientation, individuals inflict suffering on another due to their sexual preference or a perceived sexual preference that deviates from the ‘norm’ (DePalma & Jennet, 2010). This is further described as the “social policing of hegemonic masculinity”, where sexuality and indicators of one’s sexual orientation is indicated through gender performance (i.e. actions and behaviours) that display one’s biological sex (DePalma & Jennet, 2010, p. 16). In addition, Athanases and Comar (2008) relate that youth experience negative stigma “whose identities or perceived sexuality fall outside assumed gender and sexual identity norms” (p. 11). Ultimately individuals who identify as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning) or those who are perceived as non-heterosexual are victimized using conventional forms of bullying, direct or indirect. Research however, has yet to connect sexual orientation victimization with cyberbullying
given the increased use of technology and the high rates of cyberbullying. This link needs to be further investigated and is the focus of this thesis.

Current academic literature reports that varying prevalence rates of sexual orientation victimization and rates of bullying amongst youth with different sexual orientations are alarmingly high as compared to ‘normative’ bullying. For instance, Poteat and Espelage (2007) state that 91% of participants surveyed reported hearing homophobic comments/terms during the school day, and 39% of participants surveyed reported being bullied. In a study conducted in the U.K regarding bullying targeted at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth, Rivers (2004) found that 82% of youth who were surveyed experienced some type of verbal bullying. Similarly, Hershberger and D’Augelli (1995) found that in of their sample of 142 non-heterosexual young women, 42% had attempted suicide at least one time as a result of being victims of homophobic bullying. Moreover, a retrospective study conducted by D’Augelli and Grossman (2001) found that 65% of participants who had identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual have experienced some form of victimization or bullying. In terms of sexuality and dominant views of heterosexuality, many other factors and variables must be noted and taken into account due to historical, cultural and societal influences, which could account for the varying range in prevalence rates (Savin-Williams, 2009). Athanases and Comar (2008) examined the use of homophobic language (name calling by referring to an individual as gay, or using statements such as, ‘that’s so gay’), for many youth do not recognize the implications of using this language. Numerous individuals remain insensitive to homophobic bullying as a result of the stigma that has been historically and culturally reproduced. According to academic literature, these heteronormative beliefs and ideals
are found particularly in the educational context, where peers in school harass LGBTQ youth. These students feel extremely vulnerable and suffer from repeated, tolerated victimization. In addition they are not afforded the opportunities to discuss or learn about various sexualities and safe sex practices.

In terms of education, Grace and Wells (2009) critique the present education system, commenting that sexual bullying has remained unaddressed and tolerated. DePalma and Jennet (2010) discuss this tolerance and perpetuation of homophobic bullying due to the general inequality of LGBTQ population and reinforced norms of heteronormativity that pervade the dominant culture. Youth who identify as being LGBTQ have been silenced and oppressed, leaving them without support and protection from the perpetrators. The bullies often continue to harass in the school context and go unchallenged and unpunished. Bullying on the basis of sexual orientation has therefore been tolerated and not addressed in many contexts within society.

Several variables have played a role in the inattention to this issue. Zacko-Smith and Smith (2010) highlight a concern. They discuss that to address issues of sexuality one would have to initiate a detailed conversation regarding someone’s sex life, which is considered a silent issue. Likewise, Bekaert (2010) comment that schools and school administration are reluctant to address bullying on the basis of sexual orientation due to the sensitivity of the topic and the generally held belief that addressing homophobic bullying would be embarrassing and too personal a topic for discussion. Consequently there is a fair amount of resistance in engaging this subject because in some cases, addressing sexual orientation can result in facing controversial issues related to religion and strongly held belief systems (Bekaert, 2010). Others critique issues of sexuality in
terms of religious ideals, for religious groups believe that living a lifestyle outside of heterosexuality is a moral concern which infringes on their strong traditional religious belief systems. As a result, strict societal expectations have been placed on youth and adolescents about developing a heterosexual lifestyle as found in several discourses, social institutions, and dominate beliefs systems to reinforce sexual norms (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett & Koenig, 2008; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008).

Even though many social institutions publish literature (such as school curriculum documents and educational policy reports and studies) asserting that bullying behaviours are not tolerated, certain types of bullying and victimization still occurs. If children do not conform to societal norms they are often bullied in the school setting. Oftentimes those students who are ‘different’ are therefore left to fend for themselves against the perpetrators. Victimization is therefore prevalent in the educational context and how it is addressed is often dependent upon the beliefs of individual teachers. Seeing that teachers and administrators are also dependent on educational policy makers to affect positive change in curriculum to address the perceived norms and change these archaic belief systems, they are often left to make individual judgments as to how to handle bullying (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008). Where the educational context should be a safe and caring space, it continues to be one of the most perilous environments where bullying occurs.

**Impact of Bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ Youth**

**The educational context: Sexual orientation victimization.** “When I was in high school there was no way that I would have gone to my counselor to get information about being gay. There wasn’t even a poster to suggest that I could talk openly about it. But if I had seen a gay-positive poster or something outside the counselor’s door, then I
might have had the courage to go in” (Grace & Wells, 2009, p. 35). These authors examine the importance of providing LGBTQ students a safe space within schools to promote the inclusion of all sexualities. Similarly, King (2008) comments on the importance of offering support to LGBTQ students in school and combating issues of bullying where students can have a safe space in which they can free themselves from heteronormative ideals. Espelage et al., (2008) relate that few students have the opportunity of a safe space within schools and are often attempting to develop their sexual identities without various support systems in place from families, peers and educational contexts. Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl and Malik (2010) examine social support for lesbian, gay and bisexual youth and conclude that social support for LGB youth is critical for them to develop positive support systems that combating negative stigmas around their sexuality. O’Higgins-Norman (2008) further qualify this issue, suggesting that LGBTQ students are the most voiceless populations in schools. Busto and Hart (2001) remark that an open-minded attitude towards sexualities in schools and the education system in general is greatly needed to create a safe space around sexuality. The authors also highlight the importance of dispelling the belief that there is only one normative sexuality and that heteronormative ideals must be challenged to gain equality for LGBTQ students (Busto & Hart, 2001). If these directions are not taken and school policies fail to give LGBTQ youth a normative positioning, they will continue to be victims of bullying and isolation – leaving these students feeling like they do not belong and are abnormal (Busto & Hart, 2001).

Ferfolja (2007) discusses heterosexism as the belief and general assumption that heterosexuality is the only sexuality, that it is ‘natural’, and ‘normal’ and any other
sexuality that is not heterosexual lies within the realm of ‘abnormal’ (Ferfolja, 2007). Scholars attribute this heterosexism ideal as learned, both covertly and overtly through institutional and societal levels (Case & Stewart, 2010; Buston & Hart, 2001; Ferfolja, 2007; O’Higgins-Norman, 2008). This belief has been achieved through silencing and oppressing individuals who identify as the ‘other’ sexuality (Buston & Hart, 2001; Ferfolja, 2007). Furthermore, ideologies of heterosexism are “fuelled by mythologies, misinformation and stereotypes historically constructed and perpetuated through dominant socio-political and cultural institutions such as the law, media, psychiatry, religion, the family, and education” (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 148). Thus, ideals of heteronormativity find ways into educational institutions through recycled and reprocessed dominant societal beliefs (Jewell & Morrison, 2010). Espelage et al., (2008) cite many areas in which ideologies of heterosexual lifestyle are reinforced within society naming “classrooms as the most homophobic of all social institutions” (p. 203). Moreover, alarming statistics in a retrospective study conducted by D’Augelli and Grossman (2001) found that 65% of participants who had identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, have experienced some form of victimization and bullying while at school. This suggests that by reinforcing heterosexual ideals, LGBTQ individuals continue to be targets of victimization and are still characterized as abnormal. Buston and Hart (2001) discuss that, “gay and lesbian identities are marginalized within the classroom, as well as the playground, [where] a presumption of heterosexuality dominates” (p. 95), leaving LGBTQ students at risk of victimization.

Consequently it is recognized that the educational system is the best place in which negative connotations regarding LGBTQ students can be combated (Case &
Case and Stewart (2010) implemented a sexuality course as part of a study to examine how students’ perceptions are altered when they receive inclusive education regarding sexuality. The authors report a greater acceptance of LGBTQ issues after completion of this course, for students demonstrated less prejudiced beliefs where, before taking these lessons, believed “homosexuality as a sin and an inferior form of sexuality” (p. 6.). These traditional beliefs changed somewhat after the program was completed. Yet further revision of current courses and planning for inclusive curriculum must occur, for our current approach to education “does not encourage diversity issues but reinforces dominant power structures, hence non-heterosexualized identities and learning about difference is increasingly relegated to the margins and eventually to invisibility” (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008, p. 851). A proactive approach to curriculum implementation and additional courses and ongoing education, such as the course utilized in Case and Stewart (2010) is therefore needed to change these herteronormative beliefs and actions of bullies who dwell on these misconceptions.

**Teacher beliefs.** O’Higgins-Norman (2008) conducted a study regarding sexual education and the recently issued curriculum and how teachers chose to implement the curriculum in regard to sexuality. Teacher participants stated that they were aware of the problem of homophobic bullying within their associate schools. Yet only 52% of the teacher participants actually taught lessons that dealt with sexualities outside of the herteronormative (O’Higgins-Norman, 2008). Yet, Case and Stewart (2010) found that sexuality programs within the classroom setting were effective in promoting student beliefs in regard to accepting other sexualities. This is a vital piece of information as teachers are key elements of implementing social justice issues (Ferfolja, 2007).
Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) also discuss the importance of teachers evaluating their own biases when it comes to teaching sexual diversity before stepping into the classroom setting. However, Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) also relate how teaching issues around sexualities can also lead to further discrimination. The way in which teachers teach their lessons influence students’ perceptions regarding victimization. If a teacher does not address the issue effectively, the teacher may unknowingly influence the continuation of victimization behaviours (Ferfolja, 2007). On the other hand, a teacher may also effect positive change to eradicate victimization by challenging heterosexism and homophobia. Therefore, schools are key sites to confront dominant paradigms that marginalize youth who are victimized because of their sexual orientation (Ferfolja, 2007).

Vavrus (2009) discusses the intent of teachers who want what is best for their students and how some teachers believe that heteronormativity is the favoured sexuality. The author (citing Epstein, O’Flynn, & Telford, 2001) discusses this subliminal indoctrination of the preferential route students should follow. They remark that, “heterosexuality in one form or another is the pervasive imagined future for children…” These expectations are routinely confirmed by teachers, even well-meaning ones, whose intensions are not heterosexist” (p. 138). Even though teachers often teach with best of intentions, they are perpetuating an overarching societal assumption that heterosexuality is normative and is preferred. Ferfolja (2007) discusses a similar issue, describing teachers as “bringing their own prejudices in relation to diverse identities into staffrooms, classrooms and may perpetuate explicitly or implicitly discrimination and/or marginalization of difference” (p. 152).

Omission of sexuality education cannot be merely attributed to the influx of
teachers’ own ideologies. Recent research has discussed this omission of sexuality lessons in staff training, professional development, and in teacher education programs (Vavrus, 2009). O’Higgins-Norman (2008) discusses a similar finding, concluding that teachers identify themselves as being inexperienced in dealing with sexuality education. Some teachers discover that they do not feel comfortable dealing with the topic. They also stress how policy is lacking in educating not only students, but teachers in these issues. As well, teachers who taught lessons regarding sexuality, found they faced complaints from parents, hindering the continuation of the lessons (O’Higgins-Norman, 2008).

Ferfolja (2007) also discusses how the implementation of sexuality education has in some instances brought to light issues of sexual orientation victimization for teachers themselves, when teaching students about LGBTQ issues. Ferfolja (2007) comments on the heterosexual and homosexual binary, and how it impacts all social agents in an educational context. A discussion of sexual education can bring the teacher’s sexuality into question. The author also contends that some teachers, who have stressed the importance of discussing sexuality and LGBTQ issues, have been silenced for fear of repercussions or criticism. Ferfolja (2007), comments on teachers’ reluctance to support sexuality discussions, as individuals who encourage or initiate these discussions may fear that they will be labeled as LGBQ and therefore victimized. As a result, conversations discussing sexual orientation are often avoided. All of the above situations thus hinder teachers’ willingness and desire to initiate class discussions about sexuality. This further perpetuates the normative as being heterosexual and the abnormal as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer (Ferfolja, 2007).
Robinson and Ferfolja (2008) and O’Higgins-Norman (2008) investigate teachers who resist these external pressures and do in fact initiate social change in their classrooms through continued dialogue about sexuality. The authors provide data which demonstrates that teachers can and do make a small a difference within their classroom setting, yet they stress that initiatives must extend beyond the individual classroom and be part of an all encompassing social issue, addressed by each school and school board. Efforts to deconstruct heteronormative ideals must come from a much higher structure and be worked into the curriculum on a daily basis, not merely within the confines of limited classroom time (O’Higgins-Norman, 2008).

A prevalent theme in literature pertaining to sexual orientation victimization is concealment of sexuality and disclosure of ‘other’ (sexualities that fall outside of heterosexuality). This theme is commonly referred to as the coming-out process in which youth ‘move’ towards acceptance and recognition of non-heterosexuality (Anhalt & Morris 1998; Worthington, Savoy, Dilon, & Vernaglia, 2002) and is linked to sexual identity development in non-heterosexual youth. The following will review the developmental process and dominant models of lesbian, gay and bisexual sexual identity development.

**Sexual identity development: Concealment and disclosure.** Sexual identity is a complex construct that is difficult to define (Yarhouse, 2001). Horowitz and Newcomb (2002), describe this issue most effectively as being “more complex than merely a label attached to a series of behaviours. Neither behaviours, nor desires, nor social context alone can account for the diversity in human sexual experience” (p. 15). As well, societies’ obsession with labeling and defining terms complicates and forces individuals
to fit into constructed categories of sexual identity that may not represent their experience (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). Given the complexity of sexual identity, there is an extensive inconsistency in definitions that have been formulated. Not all definitions have been measured using the same construct. In addition, many studies and scales of measurement draw on different aspects of sexual identity and the association with various variables. The situation is further complicated by the relationships that studies are designed to examine (Meezan & Martin, 2009). Terms such as sexual orientation and sexual identity are used interchangeably, even though some scholars stress the importance of viewing these two concepts as being distinct, complex and different (Worthington et al., 2002). The issue of variability is further complicated in regard to issues of gender and sex roles and sexual behaviour, as many of these aspects are part of larger concepts, such as gender identity, gender roles and sexual orientation (Kroger, 2007). Review of definitions used in research illustrates the complexity of sexual identity further.

Kroger (2007) defines sexual identity as an individual’s feeling of relating as feminine, masculine, androgynous or indifferent, which is ultimately expressed in an individual’s behaviour and personality. It is also a construct in which youth can self-define in broader terms as a sexual individual (Worthington et al., 2002). Sexual identity is best described as the coming out process in non-heterosexual youth as they move from non-recognition of homosexuality to recognition of sexual orientation (Anhalt & Morris 1998; Worthington et al., 2002).

Glover, Galliher, and Lamere (2009) discuss sexual orientation and sexual identity as shaping one another. The authors relate specifically to sexual orientation as
defined by culture. Some individuals maintain and choose their sexual identity as learned, defined and influenced by their culture, rather than merely defining through their sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is also constructed in terms of attraction, where an individual has intimate and/or erotic feelings of attraction toward another being (male or female) (Kroger, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2009). In addition, sexual orientation is not discussed as being distinct from sexual identity as many scholars believe that disclosure and expression of one’s sexual orientation would indicate that an individual has become aware and comfortable with their identity. Therefore one must become cognizant of his or her attraction preference to identify their sexual identity (Anhlat & Morris, 1998).

Research on sexual orientation is most commonly gathered from individuals using retrospective accounts that describe sexual arousal and behaviour (Savin-Williams, 2009). This further complicates an understanding of the difference in the two terms; orientation and identity, as individuals may recognize or suppress (due to negative stigma) their attraction to same-sex partners and will not disclose their preference until a later time, when they are more comfortable with sexual feelings (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Savin-Williams, 2009). However, a commonality in research regarding sexuality identity exists where research on this construct is in flux based on changes in historical, cultural and societal influences specifically as ideologies change or (Anhlat & Morris, 1998). Speaking to this, Savin-Williams (2009) present a further limitation to understanding, due to cultural and historical influences, as most research has been completed on young adults and adolescents from the past two decades where ideologies regarding sexuality held great stigma, as ‘homosexuality’ was considered as disorder under DSM-II (Telingator & Woyewodzic, 2011; Zucker & Spitzer, 2005). Therefore current research findings may
reveal a somewhat improved and forward thinking attitude (Savin-Williams, 2009).

For the purpose of this current discussion, and drawing on works from Anhalt and Morris (1998), Kroger (2007), and Worthington et al., (2002), sexual identity is conceptualized as a broader process in which individuals formulate their own feelings, beliefs, and behaviours about their sexual selves, and may relate or adopt aspects of feminine, masculine, androgynous or indifferent gender identities. According to the work by Glover et al., (2009), Kroger (2007), and Savin-Williams (2009), sexual orientation can have characteristics that are not as rigid as usually conceived but rather it may have a more fluid nature where an individual is attracted to another individual sexually and emotionally. This emotional and sexual attraction could be toward another individual of the same gender (lesbian, gay), opposite gender (heterosexual /straight), attracted to both genders (bisexual), or not attracted to either gender (asexual) (American Physiological Association, 2011).

Although gender identities are not the focus of this current thesis, it is important to recognize the integral role of gender identities and culturally negotiated gender roles, specifically the interconnected nature of sexual orientation with gender identities and how non-conforming gender behaviours or gendered expressions (failure to conform to proper behaviour, activities or expression of one’s biological sex), can put individuals at an increased risk for victimization (Gerouki, 2010). Gender identities are defined as an individual’s internal feelings of being male, female or transgendered (American Physiological Association, 2011). Gender expression is defined as a means of expressing one’s gender identity to others; this could be expressing or displaying gender through societal traits of what it means to be masculine or feminine (American Physiological
Although gender identities and gender expression are distinct concepts from sexual orientation, they are often linked with sexual orientation. For example, when individuals are labeled as being ‘normal’, this infers they will properly perform their gender and will have a sexual orientation that fits with their biological sex.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight the importance of self-concept, although this is beyond the focus of this current thesis. Highlighting concepts such as self-concept are significant when trying to examine the dynamic and multifaceted nature of exploring sexuality. Campbell (1990) refers to self-concept as a person’s inner thoughts about self, and specifically how an individual categorizes and understands this. In a study conducted by Feinstein, Davila, and Yoneda (2012), the authors highlight the importance of understanding interacting variables such as self-concept, sexual identity development and stigma towards lesbian and gay sexualities. Feinstein et al., (2012), in their study of 125 gay men and 163 lesbians completed online questionnaires examining self-stigma, self-concept and depressive symptoms. Results indicated that participants who questioned their sexual identity tended to show a lack of sense of self and often held negatives views about themselves (Feinstein et al., 2012).

**History of sexual identity developmental models.** Freud introduced early theories of sexuality; these constitute some of the pioneering ideals aimed at describing sexual identity. Freud described sexuality as being the drive that individuals experience toward people, animals or other objects (Worthington et al., 2002). Attitudes regarding same-sex sexual interactions and attractions have experienced a shift due to the deletion of homosexuality as a disorder in the DSM-II (Telingator & Woyewodzic, 2011; Zucker & Spitzer, 2005). Since the 1970s, many studies have been conducted to investigate and
describe the development of gay relationships, where research has focused on middle class white male associations (Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000). Lesbian and bisexual theories were not explored until later, as a result of further interest in gender roles and stereotypical beliefs that were directed toward specific gender roles, as it was considered to be socially acceptable for women to have close friendships (Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000). Many close relationships with women have been documented even though relationships may not have been sexual, and such notions of lesbians were not known to exist until lesbians were defined and accepted as a unique group separate from gay men (Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000). Developmental models are considered to be hypotheses, as it is apparent that gay males are developing strategies that are different from heterosexual individuals for identity formation (Collins, 2000). In these cases, adolescents become aware of their and recognize their understanding that they are ‘different’ (Striepe & Toman, 2003).

Given the historical and cultural changes in political movements and the rise in interest and numbers of these groups such as gay rights and the feminist movements, theories and further studies that aim to examine relationships of lesbian and gay adults have increased significantly (Collins, 2000; Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000). Several models of identity development for both gay and lesbian individuals were proposed with a particular interest to cite gender differences (McDonald, 1982; Sophie, 1986; Troiden, 1989). Although there is a lack of a developmental stage model that applies to all individuals, popular developmental models of sexual development developed by Cass (1984), Troiden, (1979), and Coleman (1982) provide great insight into general sexual identity formation and development.
Developmental models of sexual identity development.

**Cass 1984: Homosexual identity development model.** The model of homosexual identity formation as developed by Cass (1984) is a popular ‘inclusive’ model used to describe both lesbian, and gay sexuality development. This theoretically grounded and tested model proposes a six stage linear framework to explore sexual identity development and is one of the more popular models (Adams & Phillips, 2009; Collins, 2000). The Cass (1984) model describes six stages: 1) *identity confusion* 2) *identity comparison* 3) *identity tolerance*, 4) *identity acceptance*, 5) *identity pride*, and 6) *identity synthesis*. This representation is based on two prevalent assumptions “that identity is acquired through a developmental process and that locus for stability of and change in behavior lies in the interaction process that occurs between individuals and their environments” (Cass, 1984, p. 219). In the first stage of *identity confusion*, individuals recognize that their “behavior, actions, feeling, thoughts” (p. 147) differ from heterosexual feelings, and they question their sexual orientation. In this instance, Cass (1984) examined individuals and found a prevalence of lower self-esteem in participants due to lack of support, lack of self-acceptance, a denial of feelings of homosexuality, and foreclosure of feelings, noting several cognitive, behavioural and affective changes. In stage 2: *Identity comparison*, the individual is experiencing accepted feelings of homosexuality as he or she compares this identity to that of a heterosexual identity. The difference becomes apparent and is recognized. This stage focuses on the individual’s self-perception where he or she becomes increasingly aware of the negative stigma and attitudes surrounding homosexuality in which further produces alienation. Stage 3: *Identity tolerance* is characterized by the development of networks for emotional, sexual,
and social fulfillment. There is a focus in this stage on the importance of social communities and networks in developing a positive or negative identity. Adams and Phillips (2009) discuss this period as being a key stage when youth progress as they build and accept their self-image. They become positively involved in lesbian and gay communities, leading to an increased commitment to these communities. If an adolescent experiences negative interactions, these actions reconfirm societal stigmas, leaving the individual with a devalued sense of self that could create a self-hatred environment. Stage 4: Identity acceptance is characterized by individuals negotiating their identity in day-to-day activities, whether it is public or private. Building on the third stage, individuals continue to construct their identity and become active in “homosexual subculture” (Cass, 1984, p. 151). Within this culture, adolescents delineate between their homosexual identity and maintain a “passing” identity. Cass (1984) discusses this notion where youth are pretending to be heterosexual at significant times when individuals may experience negative attitudes towards their sexuality. Selective disclosure is then practiced around issues of sexuality to friends and family. Stage 5: Identity Pride is characterized by feelings of pride, where an individual is proud of himself or herself. He or she has confident feelings towards homosexual subculture to which the individual remains loyal and feelings of disbelief arise around some heterosexual individuals, due to previous stigmatization of alternative sexualities. With a strong commitment and pride felt toward lesbian and gay communities, practices of selective disclosure are no longer utilized; negative responses felt from heterosexual counterparts reinforce individuals to see sexuality as dichotomous, homosexual - heterosexual. When positive responses are received by heterosexual counterparts toward sexuality, this dichotomous view is
dissolved and the individual moves towards the final stage. Stage 6: *Identity synthesis* is characterized as a harmonizing stage in which individuals abandon the dichotomous view of sexuality and start to integrate their new homosexual identity into all aspects of life.

Critics of the Cass (1984) developmental framework suggest that a developmental linear model is not applicable for a universal concept of sexual identity development as sexual identity development is a process that is individualistic and dependent on many different variables (Worthington et al., 2002). In addition, adolescents may go through many of the changes and developmental trajectories in this proposed model at different times and may achieve other aspects of different stages while not some in others (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001; Shapiro, Rois, & Stewart, 2010). Other models built on this framework include a deconstruction and modification of these six stages to describe the individuals’ coming out process to self as well as the social processes that affect sexual identity development (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). McCarn and Fassinger (1996) revise this approach, proposing a four-phase model of *awareness, exploration, deepening and commitment, and internalization and synthesis*. However this representation considers each individual as similar in development and does not necessarily account for differences between individuals. In addition, common critiques of the Cass (1984) model highlight the issue of divergence that may occur in terms of experiences of lesbian women and gay men, stating that lesbian and gay sexual identity development is unique to gender. Also an overarching stage model discredits the unique development of each, thus it is important to examine each unique group separately (Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000; Telingator & Woyewodzic, 2011). For example, Troiden and Goode (1980) suggest that gay men develop an identity around the ages of 19 to 21.
On the other hand, Gonsiorek and Ruldolph (1991) suggest that lesbian women begin to self-label and identify as lesbian in childhood and late adolescence. However Telingator and Woyewodzic (2011) suggest that as society becomes more sexually liberal and educated around LGBTQ issues, self-identification as such becomes more prevalent at earlier ages for both males and females. Adams and Phillips (2009) further critique the Cass model by suggesting that it makes a general assumption and relies on the basis that all societies and “cultures are heterosexist or homophobic” (p. 961). A similar issue is discussed by Darby-Mullins and Murdock (2007), where they observe the re-developmental stage models, which suggest linear identity development such as Cass (1984). In their opinion, these undermine the role of parental and family support. In Darby-Mullins & Murdock (2007) they report that family support and family environment plays a significantly large role in the positive identity development and the acceptance of youth’s own sexual identity, stressing that developmental models need to incorporate various influences such as family support in relation to the theories proposed. Specifically, how high family support may be related to low rates of concealment and low family support may be related to instances of high rates of concealment.

**Troiden (1989): Theory of sexual identity development.** The Troiden (1989) theory of sexual identity development is a model that was proposed as a combination of several other theories summarized. Troiden’s (1979) earlier research used 150 male participants who identified as being ‘gay’. The resulting data led him to later summarize other models and incorporate his own findings to propose a four stage age-specific model. This is a general sexual identity developmental model. Troiden’s four stages are as follows: 1) *sensation*, 2) *dissociation and signification*, 3) *coming out*, 4) *commitment*.
which adolescents typically go through between the ages of 13 to 17. The first stage
* sensation* is characterized by the childhood and later adolescence period when an
individual consciously recognizes a difference in attraction as compared to other children
before the age of 13 (p. 363). In *dissociation and signification*, the individual recognizes
that he may be homosexual and recognizes a distinct difference. This is characterized by
examining feelings in which individuals seek to attach meaning to. In the third stage of
*coming out* individuals begin to self-identify as homosexual and start to give meaning to
feelings of intimacy geared toward same sex individuals. At this time, individuals start to
become involved in the ‘gay community’ and begin to re-label notions of homosexuality
as a positive ‘alternative’ lifestyle. The last stage *commitment* is characterized by “the
fusion of gay sexuality and emotionality into a meaningful whole” (p. 370). Individuals
confirm and assert their sexuality to others and self-label as such. Other notable
developmental models have adopted frameworks similar to Troiden (1979) to conduct
studies to test various developmental models. An example is the model utilized by
McDonald (1982), which examines milestone events in the lives of gay men. These
studies suggest the importance of moving beyond developmental models, as there are
many significant changes that cannot be captured in one particular model. McDonald
(1982) suggests that it is difficult to confine sexual identity development into a
developmental model, as there are multiple compounding factors; definitions of
constructs, cohort, age, and limitations to retrospective data as well as historical and
cultural events that all affect self-sexuality identification.

*Coleman (1982) developmental stages of the coming-out process.* Coleman’s
(1982) developmental stages of the coming-out process are arranged in five stages. These
stages are aimed to address and focus on “what happens to the person who becomes aware of [same sex] interest” (p 470). Coleman (1982) describes this is simply one in which individuals will advance differently. Individuals will all proceed through these stages at different times, given other factors in cognitive and behavioural developments. In addition, he relates that development cannot be categorized and is less unsystematic than his model describes, but it is useful generally to understand sexual identity development. The five stages are: pre-coming out, coming out, exploration, first relationships, and the final stage of integration. The first stage of pre-coming out is characterized by the early awareness of same sex feelings. In this stage Coleman (1982) notes that pre-coming out “refers to the process of preconscious awareness of same sex identity” (p. 471). This is a crucial period in which adolescents experience great turmoil. The second stage: coming out is characterized by self-admission, when an individual must identify their feelings and acknowledge them and to “make peace with their sexuality” (p. 471). This phase stresses that individuals’ acceptance or rejection can have profound positive or negative effects on the person. The third period of exploration refers to individual “experimenting and exploring with their sexuality identity” (Coleman, 1982, p. 475). In this stage individuals make contact and connections with gay communities for social support and experimentation. Coleman (1982) notes that experimentation will differ between males and females, unlike other developmental models. The fourth stage: first relationships is characterized by individuals conceptualizing themselves as a loving being who can love, and can be loved and “eligible for a relationship” (Coleman, 1982, p. 477). In this period it is noted that first relationships can be disastrous due to questioning sexualities, and uncertainties regarding self-image. After the first relationship has been
experienced “they recognize that mature relationships are based on mutual trust and freedom” (Coleman, 1982, p. 479), in which the desire to fulfill intimacy and relationships becomes stronger. The final stage: integration is characterized by individuals are “more capable of maintaining long term relationships” (p. 479) as individuals experience a great positive sense of self and their identity has become more integrated into their day-to-day life.

**Critiques of developmental models.** Kroger (2007) suggest that research and developmental models have not addressed developmental changes in sexual identity as youth transition into puberty, stressing that this is alarming due to the significance of the importance of developing a positive sexual identity. Furthermore developmental models, although they provide great insight into developmental aspects to help support youth overlook the importance of social relationships and development within the ‘gay’ community (Shapiro et al., 2010). In addition, research conducted by Glover et al., (2009) discusses sexual identity and sexual orientation not as dichotomous concepts. They believe that sexual identity and sexual orientation are found on a continuum and must be examined as such given the fluidity of sexuality. The authors urge that a shift must occur in examining issues of sexual identity to move away from stage models so as to avoid labels of identity and move towards a continuum, multidimensional model. The importance of a fluid and comprehensible model of sexual identity that integrates the influence of cultural, historical, societal views as well as sexual behaviors, desires, attractions, and lived individual experiences must be taken into account (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001).

Ott, Corliss, Wypij, Rosario, and Austin (2011) examined stability and change in
sexual identity formation and found that there were gender differences in regard to sexual orientation fluidity for females rather than males, and advocate for this link to be explored further in longitudinal research. Kroger, Martinussen and Marcia (2010), present a similar finding that suggests that fluidity of sexual orientation fluctuates in young adolescents and early adulthood. Many scholars have spoken out in light of this need for a shift in the production of stage models and suggest a move to a more individualized focused framework to highlight the variability of experiences.

Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2008), found in their study of 156 lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals that development of sexual identity is continuous and variability is somewhat undermined with empirical data. In addition a more recent study conducted by Rosario, Schrimshaw and Hunter (2011), further illustrates that identity development of LGB youth follow multiple pathways that are unique to each individual. A similar finding is noted in Russell, Clarke, and Clary (2009) who sought to investigate if labels of sexual identity are still applicable to youth of today. Findings document that non-heterosexual youth when asked how they identified, preferred alternative labels. As a result, the researcher suggested the use of terms such as resistance and ambivalence to categorization and the limiting of labels (Russell et al., 2009).

Another finding by Archer and Grey (2009) investigating sexual identity formation, decision making and coping styles in the identity process, suggest that self-identification of sexuality labels is a strong predictor of a positive overall identity, where adolescents must identify with their sexuality first, regardless of a label for healthy sexual identity development. Calzo, Antonucci, Mays, and Cochran (2011) examined contemporary sexual minorities and the sexual identification process. They further
advocate for a life span and life course developmental perspective to investigate issues of non-heterosexual students. They also stress the importance of including all ages and perhaps further demonstrating issues of maturation and cohort effects. As well, Calzo et al., (2011) advocate for further research that pertains to aspects of gendered differences and sexual orientation development.

Support and Moving Forward

Another prevalent theme discussed in literature is the issue of support for LGBTQ youth, given the high rates of victimization and severe negative impacts of bullying. Support for individuals who identify as LGBTQ is therefore increasingly important. Studies conducted on adolescents demonstrate that parental support is a strong protective factor and is a predictor of higher levels of psychological wellbeing and self-acceptance (Helsen, Vollebergh & Meeus, 2000; Needham & Austin, 2010). Doty et al., (2010) investigated social support among LGBTQ individuals and found that stress and emotional wellbeing of LGBTQ students depends on the amount and quality of social encouragement and assistance that was offered. Doty et al., (2010), state, “unfortunately, sexuality support may be less available than support for other types of problems, particularly from friends, family members and heterosexual friends” (p. 1144). Similarly Needham and Austin (2010) found in the investigation of the relationship between parental support and sexual orientation, that sexual minorities report low family connectedness and low family support. They also speculate as to why poor health is an issue on average for sexual minority individuals.

King (2008) conducted a qualitative study to explore the role of support for LGBTQ students in the education system. The author discusses how the role of
educational support provided by system workers (school, counselors, nurses etc.) plays a significant role in an individual’s acceptance and disclosure of their sexual identity to others. King (2008) considers the importance of combating homophobia and heterosexism in the school system to bring equality to all students. The author also comments on the importance of providing teachers, administration, and school officials with pertinent professional development as well as involving the whole school population with LGBTQ issues, bringing these to the forefront at school presentations and activities. By doing so, LGBTQ students will receive much needed support and will feel accepted by the staff and student body. Similarly Robinson and Ferolja (2008) discuss the significance of being proactive and providing this support. They also remark, “application of avoidance of addressing these issues is a result of their positioning in discourse of personal investment and social justice” (p. 846), highlighting the value of safe-space posters and diversity awareness. However, many challenges and barriers are noted in research for youth who try to access services and seek help, due to stigmas around sexual orientation and the influx of teacher/educator perceptions. (Doty et al., 2010; King, 2008; Robinson & Ferolja, 2008). Mahan, Varjas, Dew, Meyers, Singth, Marshall and Graybill (2006) also make an important point, that it is not up to non-heterosexual students to provide themselves with a safe-space at school in order to feel safe. The authors stress that this is a greater societal issue in which individuals need to become more educated and aware of LGBTQ struggles, and it must be a priority of school administration to provide a safe inclusive environment.

Researchers also suggest how having Internet and print resources for LGBTQ individuals is imperative to developing a sense of community, social competency, and
self-esteem for those who do not receive support at home or at school. King (2008) and Witten (2009) examine challenges of aging transgendered individuals and the impact of social support, family and peer support of individuals who identify as being transgendered. Witten (2009) discusses how support for transgendered individuals is still greatly needed in many aspects such as “community, biological, biomedical, psychological, and social aspects” (p. 54). The author also considers the importance of education of all individuals regarding issues experienced by sexual minorities to combat stigmas and enhance support.

**Summary**

Bullying and cyberbullying are pervasive social phenomenon that exists throughout society and are experienced by many individuals from childhood to adulthood. This discussion has reviewed the literature related to many aspects of bullying: defined the terms and issues related to bullying and cyberbullying and outlined sexual identity development, the history of sexual identity development models, and the trends of emerging developmental models. A discussion of the issues that LGBTQ youth face as they interact with their peers in an educational context and outside of school also provides evidence. As research recommends, a more proactive approach is needed to deliver educational and peer support for these individuals as well as for the general public. As these issues are on the increase and are targeting a vulnerable population, it is paramount that social and educational institutions take a positive stance to combat and alleviate bullying. Continued research and academic literature in this area is therefore essential to inform educators, government and community support groups as well as policy makers.
Recruitment and Participants

Participants were recruited using a convenient sample at Brock University targeting individuals who identify as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning. Initial recruitment was made through a general call for participants of all sexualities. Given the nature of this study and the intention of looking at minority sexualities, additional efforts were made to recruit enough sexual minorities at Brock community events to boost participation. Participants were recruited using posters and flyers that were circulated at social justice events on campus (Appendix A). The poster advertised for participation in a study regarding sexuality and bullying.

This study used a mixed methodological approach and had two stages of involvement for participants. Individuals who wished to participate in the quantitative measures only are labeled as stage one participants. Participation in the qualitative interviews (Stage Two) was up to the discretion of the individual. Participants indicated in Stage One whether they wished to be contacted to participate in the second stage (interviews). Individuals who participated in the initial quantitative measures had the opportunity to win a $100 gift card to the Brock University Bookstore. Individuals who were involved in the interview process received a $10 cash honorarium.

Characteristics of participants. A total of 40 participants participated in Stage One of this study, with a mean age of 22.60 (SD = 2.82), and an age range from 18 – 29. From this sample, 12 participants self-identified as male and 28 self-identified as female. Participants self-identified their sexual orientation - 20 as straight (50%), 6 as gay (15%),
6 as lesbian (15%), 5 as bisexual (12.5 %), 2 as questioning (5.0%) and 1 as asexual (2.5%). In non-LGBQ with a mean age of 22.35 (SD=2.43), participants’ ages ranged from 19 - 26, and LGBQ with a mean age of 22.85 (SD=3.2), LGBQ participants’ ages ranged from 18 – 29. Participants of all genders and sexualities were included in this study.

Measures

Measures for this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A mixed methods approach was selected as it was reasoned that this approach would permit the researcher to capture the nature and frequency of the behaviours as well as the richness of the responses as it pertains to sexual orientation and bullying (Creswell, 2013).

Stage one: Quantitative measures. This portion of the research study examined and compared differences across various sexualities and experiences of victimization. Measurement scales were utilized. They are as follows:

General demographic scale. Each participant provided demographic information, including current geographical location (rural vs. urban), age, and level of education, relationship status, self-declared gender and self-declared sexual orientation. The questionnaire included open-ended queries relating to participants’ concealment and disclosure of sexual orientation to friends, family and others. This scale included an open-ended component, which allowed participants to share information that they deemed important to them in regard to their experience of sexuality, experiences of support and concerns of bullying. For example Have you ever had to conceal your sexual orientation...
due to fear of harassment or victimization? In your opinion is being called “gay” an insult? See appendix E.

**Victimization and bullying.** An adapted version of the Marini (1998; 2006) instrument to assess victimization and bullying was utilized to measure experiences of these behaviours. This instrument has been adapted to gain a greater understanding of bullying and victimization that occurs on the basis of sexual orientation as well as adapted to be age appropriate 17 – 29. For example *How often have these acts been done to you during the last year?* (Never/A few times a year/ A few times a month/ A few times a week/ Everyday) *Excluded from a social event or activity.* See appendix F.

**Cyberbullying and cyber-victimization.** A modified version of the Marini (1998; 2006) instrument to assess cyber-victimization and cyberbullying was utilized to measure experiences of these behaviours. This instrument has been adapted to gain a greater understanding of cyberbullying and cyber-victimization that occurs and adapted to be age appropriate 17 – 29. For example: *How often have these acts been done to you during the last year?* (Never/A few times a year/ A few times a month/ A few times a week/ Everyday) *Excluded from a social event or activity.* See appendix G.

**Support from friends and family.** A slightly modified version of Procidano and Heller (1983) scale of perceived support from Friends and Family – PSS-fr & PSS-fa was used to assess perceived support from family and friends. This scale was adapted to include a 1 – 5 likert scale (1 – disagree and 5 – agree). *My friends give me the moral support that I need. When I confide in the members of my family who are closest to me, I feel that it makes them uncomfortable.* See Appendix F.
Stage two: Qualitative interviews. Qualitative responses were collected from individuals who agreed to participate in one to one confidential interviews. These interviews were semi-structured, open-ended interviews and lasted from 30 – 60 minutes. Interviews were audio taped for accuracy and transcribed. The researcher met with participants in a relaxed environment that was both semi-public and semi-private to ensure a comfortable environment for the participant. In the beginning portion of the interviews, a general conversation was initiated with participants, however was not recorded. Interview questions were semi-structured that began with general questions; additional follow-up questions were asked as the interview progressed, based on the participant's response.

The following general questions were used as prompts within the open-ended interviews.

1. In which environment do you think bullying occurs? Can you describe these for me?
2. Describe a situation where you have been involved in or witnessed a bullying experience/situation(s)? In your opinion why was this bullying happening?
3. Can you tell me about cyberbullying? What is your opinion of cyberbullying?
4. Describe a situation where you believe you have been bullied on the basis of sexual orientation or your sexuality?
5. In your opinion why are comments (negative or positive) regarding someone’s sexuality such a big deal? (i.e. hurtful, pride etc).
6. Describe support services that you believe are available for youth who have been bullied on the basis of sexual orientation.
7. In your opinion what types of support may assist victimized youth to cope with various forms of bullying based on sexual orientation?

8. In your opinion do you think youth are likely to hide their sexual orientation for fear of not being accepted by others or victimized?

9. In your opinion, what prevention strategies can be implemented to stop (or reduce) bullying and cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation?

10. What support would help an individual when he/she first declares his/her sexual orientation? Can you describe for me some support services or ideas that you believe could assist youth?

11. In your opinion what prevention strategies would help youth in the digital/technological age with bullying on the basis of sexuality?

**Consent and other ethical issues.** Each participant was given an informed consent form (Appendix E) that outlined the purpose and the process of the study. Participants were required to read and sign the form prior to any data collection for both stages of the research project. Participants were reminded throughout data collection in both stages that they could take a break, did not have to answer any questions that they were uncomfortable with, and could withdrawal from the study at any point during the data collection process. Signing the informed consent form indicated the participant understood the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, potential benefits and risks, confidentially of the study and data collection, contact information and publication of results for follow-up. Further clarification was given as needed to each individual participant to ensure participants fully understood the study and their rights as a participant.
Due to the fact that participants in this study were asked to discuss issues regarding personal experiences with sexuality and various forms of victimization, certain ethical issues may have arisen. Instances of bullying and victimization are typically negative social experiences and in some cases can provoke some anxiety. Furthermore, youth who identify as LGBTQ experience negative stigma from others (Athanses & Coman, 2008). It was of particular importance for the researcher to foster a supportive comfortable environment as well as build a strong rapport with the participants to ensure confidentiality. The researcher reassured participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher provided all participants with a support packages containing information for local LGBTQ support groups, online and telephone support services and free local counseling services.

Procedure

This research study utilized a mixed methodological approach to gain a greater understanding of victimization and bullying on the basis of sexual orientation as well as support services and the perceived need for support services for LBGQT youth. This study consisted of two stages.

Stage one. This stage commenced immediately after the participant agreed to participate in the study. The researcher and participant met at an agreed upon time to collect the first stage in a comfortable and confidential environment. After consent was obtained and the participant understood the scope of the study the participant was made aware of the two stages in the study. At this time participants were asked if they wished to sign up for stage two of the research study. The request for participation in stage two (Appendix J) were handed out with other documents. Participants who indicated that they
would like to participate in qualitative interviews were given the choice to take part in the interview following completion of questionnaires or to be contacted at another time with the contact information provided (phone or email). At this time participants were given the questionnaire to complete as well as a copy of their signed consent forms (Please see appendix E - I). This phase provided the researcher with general demographic information as well as prevalence rates of bullying and cyberbullying, and perceived levels of support.

**Stage two.** This stage began after the participant completed stage one. Participants completed the interview prior to finishing stage one or were contacted within a week of completing stage one to arrange a one-to-one interview. Participants were read a pre-interview script (Appendix L) reminding them that they may withdraw from the study at any point and conclude the interview at their request. Interviews were semi-structured open-ended interviews and lasted for approximately 30 – 60 minutes. Interviews took place in a semi-private environment that was agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. The researcher used question prompts to guide discussion. Following completion of the interview and question prompts, participants debriefed and given a support package (Appendix M) outlining local support services, and counseling services available. Interviews provided the researcher with insight into support services youth perceived to be available and LGBTQ perception of accessible support.

**Justification of Sample Size**

**Stage one.** Originally, it was the goal of the researcher to optimally obtain 30 participants for each group. However, only 20 participants were obtained for LGBQ and 20 participants for non-LGBQ.
Stage two. It was the goal of the researcher to obtain 3-5 participants from the varying groups (Individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning). The researcher obtained 10 interview participants, which provided her with a wealth of qualitative data. The researcher acquired a greater understanding of participants’ experiences of bullying and access to support services. All participants (10) who expressed an interest in participating in the interviews were included.

Data Analysis: Results

Stage one. Quantitative data responses, compiled from questionnaires, were analyzed using statistical analysis, initially utilizing descriptive statistical measures to gain a greater understanding of the data. Data from each group was used to compare victimization, cyber-bullying, and levels of support across difference sexualities. Composite variables were complied for alike grouping questions. Additionally, statistical analysis was completed to describe the association between family, support, sexual orientation and rates of victimization.

Stage two. Qualitative interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Transcription of the interviews promptly began after all ten interviews had been conducted. Transcription were then checked and re-checked for accuracy and validated with audio recordings. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Coding followed a two-cycle process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). First cycle coding consisted of individual interviews that were coded using global themes that emerged from all interviews and were documented in current literature. Interviews were additionally reviewed for second cycle coding to further narrow global themes into sub-themes. Interview data was then coded for recurring emergent themes. It worth reiterating that
while a number of themes were identified using themes identified in the literature review, other themes organically emerged from the interview data.
Chapter Four: Results

The overall goal of this study was to explore various types of bullying and the lived experiences of LGBQ youth, rates of victimization and various types of support available to assist those who have been victimized.

A mixed method design was utilized to reveal rates of victimization on the basis of sexual orientation as well as lived experiences of LGBQ youth in relation to support and need for support. For the purpose of this study, quantitative data was categorized on the basis of LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups. For statistical purposes, groups were divided into LGBQ (n=20) and non-LGBQ (n=20). Composite variables were composed using questionnaires to test for prevalence rates of direct and indirect forms of cyberbullying. This comparison was made with hesitation, however given the limitations with LGBQ participant recruitment; this comparison was adopted to maximize statistical procedures and highlight the needs and lived experiences of LGBQ youth. It is noteworthy that it is recognized that bullying is experienced differently by different individuals and in this instance is experienced differently by various sexualities.

Quantitative analysis was conducted using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Ten qualitative analyses were conducted using 10 interviews that were coded for emergent themes and from open-ended answers on questionnaires. It should be noted once again that participants who are represented in the qualitative data were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.
Demographic information

Participants. As previously mentioned in the methods, a total of 40 participants participated in Stage One of this study, with a mean age of 22.60 (SD = 2.82), and an age range from 18 – 29. From this sample, 12 participants self-identified as male and 28 self-identified as female. Participants declared high levels of education. Thirty-four participants (85%) had completed or are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program, and 6 (15%) had completed or are currently enrolled in a Masters or professional school program. Most participants live in urban centers (n = 26, 65%) some in rural (n = 12, 30%), and other described their geographical living situation as other (n = 2, 5%). Most participants declared owning a cell phone (n = 37, 92.5%), and some as not owning a cell phone (n = 3, 7.5%). Participants declared the time they spent online in hours for emailing, social networking, web posting and blogging etc. n = 7 (17.5%) spent 1 - 5 hours, n = 8 (20%) 6 – 10 hours, n = 6 (15%) 11 - 15 hours, n = 7 (17.5%) 16 – 20 hours, n = 12 (30%) 20 plus hours online. A large percentage of participants identified that they predominately use the Internet to connect and communicate with others: n = 24 (60 %) said yes, with a remainder n = 16 (40 %) said no.

Tier One: Scope of Bullying for LGBQ and non-LGBQ Youth

Frequency rates were collected in regard to how often within the last school year, participants had experienced some type of general (cyber) bullying i.e. direct/indirect. Table 1 below describes the frequencies of forms of bullying and cyberbullying sorted by LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups. As you can see from the frequency chart below, bullying for the LGBQ group and non-LGBQ group remains similar frequency of general bullying regardless of sexual orientation.
Table 1

*Frequency of general forms of bullying and cyberbullying sorted by LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups*

| Form of Bullying | LGBQ | | | non-LGBQ | |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
|                 | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Bullying        | (n) | (%) | (n) | (%) |
| Direct          | 19 | 95 | 19 | 95 |
| Indirect        | 14 | 70 | 16 | 80 |
| Cyberbullying   |     |     |     |     |
| Direct          | 6  | 30 | 8  | 40 |
| Indirect        | 13 | 65 | 15 | 75 |

*Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.*

A Chi square test was performed, and the proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups do not differ across rates of direct bullying (regardless of sexual orientation), with $\chi^2(1) = .00, p = 1.00$.

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ do not differ across rates of indirect bullying (regardless of sexual orientation), with $\chi^2(1) = .533, p = .716$

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ do not differ across rates of direct cyberbullying (regardless of sexual orientation), with $\chi^2(1) = .440, p = .741$.

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ do not differ across rates of indirect cyberbullying (regardless of sexual orientation), with $\chi^2(1) = .476, p = .731$.

Table 2 below displays the means and standard deviations of general bullying as sorted by groups (LGBQ and non-LGBQ).
Table 2

*Table of means and standard deviations of general forms of (cyber)bullying sorted by groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Cyberbullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBQ</td>
<td>1.67 (.43)</td>
<td>1.45 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-LGBQ</td>
<td>1.65 (.50)</td>
<td>1.52 (.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of general direct bullying (regardless of sexual orientation) this difference was not statistically significant, \[ t (38) = -1.35, p > .05 \].

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of general indirect bullying (regardless of sexual orientation). This difference was not statistically significant, \[ t (38) = .605, p > .05 \].

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of general direct cyberbullying (regardless of sexual orientation). This difference was statistically significant, \[ t (38) = -2.13, p < .05 \].

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of general indirect cyberbullying (regardless of sexual orientation). This difference was not statistically significant, \[ t (38) = .126, p > .05 \].

Table 3 describes the frequencies of sexual orientation bullying and cyberbullying within the last school year sorted by LGBQ and non-LGBQ group. Given the potential for confusion, the following results display the frequency of (cyber)bullying (direct/indirect) occurred on the basis of an individuals sexual orientation. In short, did a given individual experience (direct/indirect) victimization solely on the basis of their sexual orientation or
perceived sexual orientation. For example *Within the last school year, in your opinion how many of these acts AGAINST YOU have been based on your sexual orientation?*

Table 3

*Frequency of sexual orientation bullying and cyberbullying sorted by LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form on Bullying</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>Non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.*

A Chi square test was performed, and the proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ differed across rates of direct bullying based on sexual orientation, with LGBQ reporting higher rates of victimization, $X^2(1) = 15.00, p = .00$.

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ differ across rates of indirect bullying based on sexual orientation, with LGBQ reporting higher rates of victimization, $X^2(1) = 6.14, p = .03$.

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ differ across rates of direct cyberbullying based on sexual orientation, with LGBQ reporting higher rates of victimization, $X^2(1) = 5.62, p = .04$.

The proportion of LGBQ and non-LGBQ did not differ across rates of indirect cyberbullying based on sexual orientation, with LGBQ reporting higher rates of victimization, $X^2(1) = 3.14, p = .18$. 
Table 4 describes the means and standard deviations of cyber(bullying) within the last year based on sexual orientation.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Cyberbullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBQ</td>
<td>1.91 (.37)</td>
<td>2.00 (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-LGBQ</td>
<td>2.02 (.14)</td>
<td>1.96 (.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of direct bullying based on sexual orientation. This difference was not statistically significant, \( t(38) = 1.26, p > .05 \).

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of indirect bullying based on sexual orientation. This difference was not statistically significant, \( t(38) = .308, p > .05 \).

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of direct cyber-victimization based on sexual orientation. This difference was statistically significant, \( t(38) = .00, p < .05 \).

An independent samples t-test was computed to compare the differences of indirect cyberbullying based on sexual orientation. This difference was not statistically significant, \( t(38) = .017, p > .05 \).

**Participants’ conceptualizations of bullying.** The 10 interviews and open-ended questions provided an extensive amount of rich, pertinent data. The following discourse outlines salient comments.
Perceptions of bullying. One participant remarked, “Bullying is not always an easy topic to talk about. Who wants to tell someone that they are not liked, or that there are things about them that people hate?” (Participant #40). In this sample, the participant described bullying as a large-scale social issue that is multi-leveled, extending across contexts and is influenced by several social factors. Bullying is understood differently, and is subject to individuals’ varying experiences. One participant also described how bullying is dependant upon the individual and how each person has their own interpretation of what bullying means to them. “Everyone has different definitions of bullying” (Craig).

Defining bullying. Throughout the interviews, participants recounted instances where bullying occurred. They either witnessed bullying incidents or were the victims of the acts. Definitions of bullying varied and were directly associated and focused on the context in which they occurred. However participants described bullying through experiences as a unique power relationship between the person(s) bullying and the person being victimized. As Natasha stated “he was very unsure about himself and I guess the other kids pick up on that weakness and would use that against him”.

Contexts where bullying occurs. One participant explained the complexity of bullying situations and discussed the environment where these occur. She remarked,

Any environment where you can’t remove yourself, you feel like you are unable to remove yourself from an uncomfortable situation. It could count as an act that you are unable to physically remove yourself or you don’t feel like you can, because people are going to be mad at you. You could [remove yourself] but you would be cutting yourself from something too. (Kitty).
Another stated, “Any sort of environment, I mean, it could be over the Internet; it could be at a school, it could be in a religious community - any sort of community where there are different groups of people” (Carolyn). Or as another participant stated “What environment has more than two people in it? (Kitty). A recurring theme therefore appeared throughout the interview data that bullying could happen everywhere, or at any time. As one participant described,

   Everywhere… as soon as people that… have nothing better to do for whatever reason, think that they have the right to put somebody down for whatever reason. As soon as they get a hold of your email address, blog, ah, cell phone number, Facebook, know where you like… um … know which desk you are in elementary school, know what basically… anything ... know where you are… they [bullies] are going to find you and they are going to get what they want….There’s so many, like I said everywhere… it can be anywhere, anytime” (Dane)

Dane elaborated, describing several instances of bullying that involved defacing his personal belongings, where he was physically and verbally victimized and how he had received hate mail. He also discussed how the perpetrators had started vicious rumors in regard to his perceived sexual orientation. Dane commented that he had repeatedly been verbally emotionally and psychologically abused.

   One participant in particular commented on environments in which bullying occurs, “It can happen everywhere ... I think it can happen in high school, it can happen in grade school and it can happen in the workplace, or above that! Politics.” (Craig). Craig discusses how bullying even happens in politics and how bullying behaviors are demonstrated in and somewhat rewarded in our current society structure. This participant
also discussed how bullying behavior takes place and is witnessed by others, yet it goes unrecognized and is not addressed. Bystanders view the acts and note the lack of consequences, which in turn teaches individuals that bullying is an acceptable behaviour. In other words, social acceptance of victimization encourages and teaches individuals to treat others in a similar, unacceptable manner.

The majority of interview participants commented on key environments in which victimization occurs; family settings, social situations, in religious communities, online cyberspace, elementary and high school, special interest clubs and university settings. One participant remarked that bullying occurs in settings that should be safe places. He related, “sometimes in places where it shouldn’t happen. I have seen it happen a couple of times in classrooms here at the school [university setting], during seminars with people who really ought to know better but they don’t” (Harrison).

**Cyberbullying – participants’ conceptualizations.** Cyberbullying was more clearly defined by individuals as

“any sort of victimization of other people where it is through some sort of social media through Facebook or text message or emailing or nowadays Twitter - any sort of Internet - well not even necessarily Internet but cyber… excluding them or victimizing them through an electronic device or through any Internet - based technology” (Natasha).

Sam stated,

“Any kind of bullying that happens on Facebook newsfeeds. Anything that really targets and singles someone out, and then it turns into using the Internet to
devalue a person, to harass them to threaten them to make them feel uncomfortable in any way, I think” (Sam).

Some participants discussed cyberbullying as a ‘new’ form of bullying and in particular one participant commented “I feel it’s probably one of the top forms today at least … because everyone is on the Internet” (Dane). Another participant counteracted this view point by stating, “it’s the exact same as any other form of bullying except that it goes through different mediums” (Natasha). Another participant comments further, discussing why he believes cyberbullying is the same as bullying.

I think [cyberbullying] is pretty similar in what goes on [with bullying]. It’s just the place that it happens is different and is harder to address… because they are sitting on the other end of the screen and they don’t see the person getting upset so if they have that recognizer of being a jerk – oh I should stop it … there is no opportunity for them to see that (Harrison).

Participants also commented on the multi-leveled nature of cyberbullying, describing online spaces in terms of a tool of support but also a vehicle that can be used to harm and embarrass individuals. After commenting on the ability to harm others through an online medium, Dane discusses the supportive nature of online conversations.

People who are introverts - like I spend a lot of time there because I don’t have to put up with people and I can be who I want to be. Because there is always somebody who is going to accept you more or less … Umm … mind you there is a hell of a lot of people who don’t accept you, but you know it you…you learn how to deal with it you can just avoid it” (Dane)

Another participant further expanded on this sentiment stating,
I know that other kids tear apart other kids on the Internet because it is a free space where you can’t really be identified. It’s not physically in front of you so it seems easier. I think there [are] several levels of it. There is like - direct cyberbullying. But I think there is also on the Internet we have a free range of whatever we want, there is like these subtle comments that come up. Say I was on a Youtube video and someone calls Justin Beiber gay. I think that is cyberbullying because that is victimizing Justin Beiber but as well as the actual gay community” (Janet)

This participant raised the point of the multi-level nature of cyberbullying, specifically how cyberbullying in the form of negative comments posted on online social media sites are interruptive, and are subject to individual interpretation.

Other participants also described the interruptive nature of cyberbullying and how sometimes people may not be aware of cyber-victimization or may or may not interpret it to be such.

Well with technology and stuff, sometimes the bullies … are cyberbullying - saying mean things or spreading rumors … Sometimes the victim either is completely [aware], doesn’t even realize it is happening until later. When they are shown or they come across it by accident or they say post that people have been saying, or commenting on pictures or just seeing like different status or, just sometimes it, it’s umm … websites. Or sometimes they don’t realize that it was even, or it could of even been an implicit message saying like “oh I don’t like when, when people wear such and such to school” and the message is actually directed at this person but without actually saying the name and sometimes just
flat out [saying] just I don’t like this person or people make groups and like join this group if you don’t like so and so - things like that! So sometimes the victim is aware of it and they don’t [know] coming to school because they have seen this stuff that has happened online. OR they might even realize it is happening (Samantha)

This participant highlighted an important aspect of cyberbullying. Oftentimes people are victims of bullying online are unaware of it.

**Why does bullying happen?-participants’ conceptualizations.** As participants shared their stories regarding bullying and cyberbullying, many offered suggestions as to why they believed bullying was occurring. Participants named several characteristics that would make easy targets to encourage perpetrators to bully such as physical appearance, lack of social skills, a person’s choice of a social circle, not having a friend group, academic ability, being ‘weird’, having a disability, being ‘sluty’, a lack of sexual relations with the opposite sex, not being ‘straight’ and participating in activities that fall outside of a person’s gender norm (i.e. boys choosing knitting as a past-time (Dane). In particular one participant commented, “People go out and people get bullied for the way they look, how they act, who they are with, how they look like that” (Karina). Other participants discussed bullying as being an aspect of human nature, inferring that humans are cruel beings and this is why bullying occurs. Dane noted that people do not accept ‘difference’ and are reluctant to change their beliefs and attitudes. He stated,

There [is] never going to be a utopia, where everyone is accepted because I feel as though by nature we are drawn to reject change. We are drawn to reject something new. We don’t … not everyone’s overly accepting! People fall into this rut of
black and white and they don’t have a grey area … it will always be hard for small minorities (Dane)

Interview data revealed two major themes as to why bullying occurs in general. Four further sub-themes were identified that were specific to LGBQ youth as to why they believed bullying was happening. Figure 2 below is a representation of themes revealed in qualitative data regarding the scope of bullying for LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth.

Figure 2. Representation of themes within Tier 1

_theme one: Don’t stand out!.

“Difference almost [is] never a good thing … people hate different” (Dane)

Interview participants made several suggestions and described successful strategies to avoid being a victim of bullying. “You know if you stand out you are going to get taken down” (Aron). Participants suggested that victims often minimize the occurrences of bullying by staying with the masses, trying to fit in, making sure you have
a friend group, and trying to avoid being the ‘weird’ friend. They cautioned strongly against being ‘different’ as this is an indicator that you do not follow the perceived norms. They clearly stated that victims cannot ‘stand out’. Consequently, ‘don’t stand out’ was a recurring theme in the interview data. The participants contended that, to ‘stand out’ means that one does not have a community to belong to or a peer group to rely on for support. One participant believed that a victim who does not belong to a peer group is an easy target for exclusion and bullying. She stated,

Wanting to exclude other people and only include certain types of people to really try and it so they have a more solid idea of - yeah we are a part of this group - we know that we are apart of this group because they aren’t! And then if they take it to an extreme that the people who are excluded from the group then they become victimized and they get bullied…. Because something is wrong with them”

(Natasha)

Another participant commented,

If someone stands out or bothers them or if someone is different or an easy target it is easy to go after them. It is easier to put someone down to lift themselves up. Especially when you are going through stuff (Aron).

One participant discussed this more at length, and admitted to bullying others for this reason.

I did also bully some of the other kids that … were more …hmmm … easy to pick on I guess, because I was trying to build myself up in that way. Umm a situation, I suppose - just because I saw that they were weaker than me - that I wanted to be able to put them down to build myself up and I suppose it was
probably similar for something like that why kids would bully me and my siblings. And then also in high school, it just seemed that sort of thing again, where people wanted just to build themselves up (Natasha).

Natasha also discussed instances of bullying and how she believes that bullying is a natural thing that people do. She pointed out the fact that people’s perceived weaknesses encourage others to pick on them. The perpetrator bullies for a reason. According to Natasha perpetrators bully others so that they feel stronger about themselves. The acts of bullying provide some type of security to the perpetrator.

The theme ‘don’t stand out’ refers to the notion that individuals must fit into a societal norm to be accepted. If persons do not fit the norm, then they must be careful to not draw attention to themselves. One participant related this to gender expression. He described how he refrained from participating in certain activities that did not fit the gender norm, so he would not ‘stand out’. He explained “I stopped doing [things] because I mean it would draw attention towards me and you know when you are a victim of bullying you do everything to avoid it…. Attention” (Dane)

Theme two: Easy target-powerless. As participants shared their stories regarding bullying and cyberbullying many offered suggestions as to why they believe bullying was happening. Participants named several attributes that would make them an easy target such as physical appearance, body type, lack of social skills, membership in an unaccepted social circle, being a loner and not having friends, academic ability, being ‘weird’ and not fitting into a societal norm, having a disability, being promiscuous, not indulging in sexual relations with the opposite sex, not being perceived as being ‘straight’ and participating in activities that fall outside of gender norms. Therefore possessing one
or more of these particular characteristics and/or being involved in activities or having an unacceptable attitude that did not fit peer ‘norms’, were reasons for perpetrators to bully. One participant described an instance when he was bullied and how he stood out in his friend group. His body type and social behaviour made him an easy target.

I was - you know - fat and ugly and annoying! I [he laughs] I - like I never had a girl friend. So people just kind of assumed that I was gay. I was friends with girls but even sort of - they started to hit a point where like - they knew I wasn’t gay but they … hmm … how did they put this? They didn’t want to be friends with me because I was a guy, and but because they were my only friends they sort of turned that into a power relation where they kind of like capitalized on other peoples’ bullying so.. There were these girls that they were friends with and they liked to pick on me and they sort of enabled it, and then they wanted to stop being friends with me and I sort of had no one. So I lost my support network and then everyone in the school hated me in general (Aron).

Aron therefore was a target due to the fact that he possesses some of the characteristics that participants believe to be attributes that encourage perpetrators to bully. His group of girlfriends shunned him, which made him a stronger target for negative attention as he no longer had a friend group. Aron self-identified with the following characteristics during the interview. He related afterwards that his physical appearance, social skills and sexual orientation made him an easier target for bullying. Victims like Aron often provided understanding for the reasons why they are bullied, yet either do not have the skills, power or understanding as to how to change their positions!
Specific themes related to LGBQ victimization.

“Gay is synonymous with the lesser”
( Participant #29)

Instances of bullying related to sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation were discussed at length during interviews. Participants contended that being anything other than straight was not a good thing, as it was viewed as unnatural. They discussed this as further creating a divide between which groups they were a part of and which groups they were excluded from. Thus, participants identified that sexual orientation is a significant attribute to be targeted for. If people do not ‘fit’ the historical and current societal gender norm as being heterosexual, or ‘being straight’ then they will be victims of bullying. Four themes related to LGBTQ victimization emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data 1) Gender roles, 2) Ignorance 3) Religion 4) Hidden lessons of default

**Theme one: Gender roles.** Participants discussed the issue of gender roles and how this notion is related to the victimization of those identified as LGBQ. They described how ‘falling outside of your prescribed gender role (i.e. participating in activities that does not identify with your gender, or does not represent roles perceived to be related to hegemonic masculinity) makes a person a target for ridicule. Furthermore, some participants made reference to the fact that people often relate sexuality to societal gender roles. For example, a man who enjoys knitting as a past time may be teased because knitting is perceived to be a role associated to being female. One participant commented that because he enjoyed knitting, he was teased that he is gay. According to those who were tantalizing him, he was not participating in a gender appropriate activity. Participants therefore discussed how such conclusions about gender roles and perceived
sexual orientation leads to victimization. The following dialogue outlines Dane’s perspective about societal gender roles and how people are bullied due to their activity and play choices.

D: But we also get thrown into it… now for me.. one of my pet peeves are gender roles. I feel as though from a very young age we are thrown into this gender roles thing. In fact Toys Are Us did this amazing ad for this past Christmas where they had boys playing with Barbies and girls playing with Nerf guns.

M: Um hmm.

D: Like they had a mix of everyone playing with everything.

M: Yes.

D: And I thought that was the best thing ever because you get thrown into this gender role… boys are like this… girls are like this …. So… we tell our kids … we tell our girls stories of the prince that’s going to save them, not the princess that’s going to save them

M: Um hmm.

D: We tell our sons that one day you are going to marry the girl of your dreams… and I mean… it’s not, it’s not even that direct [as saying] … being gay is bad but we hint that you should be this way [straight]. And all of a sudden when things get different, people have these fears of people that are different. So if you tell a kid from a very young age, you don’t even have to tell him that being gay is wrong, you can just say, “Bobbie, you have to marry a girl like Jane because boys and girls go together”.

M: Yes
D: That’s the way it works. Like Bobbie gets older and he’s going to be one of the people whose going to turn into a bully and he has been told all his life that boys go with girls and all of a sudden he meets Tim and he likes boys. It’s different, you know…

M: Um hmm.

D: Difference …. almost never a good thing. People hate different. But you know, I mean it just seems to be such a thing because we force the gender role, the religion plays a part in it… I think it is just North America so much because you can go to other countries and it is more accepted but the world in general doesn’t seem in general - doesn’t have a great accepting of it yet. (Dane)

The participant discussed how gender roles are concepts that children are introduced to at such a young age, and only to the concept of heterosexuality and the normative roles that represent heterosexuality. Anything ‘different’ is perceived as wrong and unacceptable. This notion leads to discrimination toward others who are different.

Another participant related how he was bullied because he did not properly fit into the male model of hegemonic masculinity.

So I am bi-sexual now, so about until I was 18, I self-identified as straight because I didn’t genuinely have an attraction to guys. I loved girls. I still do, but I know when I was in junior high, I was chubby. I was top of my class - nerdy, I hadn’t hit puberty yet and I was really an awkward kid. I was friends with mostly girls and because of that I sort of didn’t really fit the male model of like what you are supposed to be. I was attracted to girls but I wasn’t actively hitting on them.
Also because I wasn’t the most attractive guy, I was repetitively told this [that I was gay] and I didn’t have the confidence to even ask someone out (Aron).

Aron further discussed gender roles and how this is concept is understood, “that people are sort of born into heternormativity”, and how these gender roles are taken to be accurate. He related,

You are not exposed to anything else… you are drawn to your own conclusions because we live in a heternormative world - something that is like ‘that’s so gay’ it become a term, a derogatory term because it is seen as abnormal. But the truth is it is just as normal as any other sexuality (Aron).

Another participant reached the same conclusion, recounting an instance he had at work. He discussed the belief that if a person deviates behaviourally from a dominant male model norm, they are victimized for being perceived as gay. He stated,

At work it happens! In the kitchen there is one guy that’s like as soon as you don’t want to talk about girls and fucking them, it’s like are you a faggot. You don’t want to have sex with a girl? Like I have told him to go fuck himself at work and like I have got into trouble at work. Like so why am I getting into trouble and he’s not (Dane).

Dane raised an interesting point that since he is not portraying a normalized highly sexual straight male he is victimized and reprimanded for his retaliation. However his co-worker, who is the perpetrator is not reprimanded for his slanderous and inappropriate comments. Yet Dane is disciplined for taking offence at the co-worker’s innuendoes.

Dane concluded how practices such as these and unacceptable behaviour, reinforces gender roles, tolerates victimization and marginalization of LGBQ youth.
Theme two: Ignorance-subtle ignorance and complete disregard. Sam discussed the issue of ignorance in regard to bullying. “Ignorance is where all this fear and bullying comes from. Bullying comes from where another one doesn’t understand and bullying starts with ignorance and ignorant opinion” (Sam)

Participants recounted many instances where they believed ignorance plays a role in victimization. Many described ignorance as an unwillingness to recognize or be aware of LGBQ and transgendered issues. They discussed this reluctance as a blatant example of disregard to anyone who is not considered straight. Many participants also linked ignorance to the lack of education and dialogue in regard to LGBTQ issues. One participant recounted a dialogue he had with a family member online regarding a profile picture he had posted on his Facebook page.

C: Ok. I don’t know if I would call this bullying, as this was only one instance. My cousin - he is like 25 or something and so I had my profile picture. [A caption read – “Some dudes marry dudes - get over it” It was that t-shirt!]

M: Hmm

C: So he messaged me and was like – “you should take that off, your Nanna doesn’t ... (Nanna is my grandma) … Nanna doesn’t like to see that, you shouldn’t let her see that”. And so basically I had this - like 30 minute - like back and forth thing with him over the fact she already knows [I’m gay], mind your own business, get out of my life, like that sort of thing. Umm, I don’t know if it counts as bullying as it only happened once and right after that I blocked him.

Hmm, so… what was the question again?

M: The question was: Can you describe a situation where you have been bullied
on the basis of your sexual orientation or someone you know?

C: Oh so yeah, so basically it was just that … hmm that is he like, how are you going to get married and I was like, a lot of it, a lot of it and I am like … I can get married, it’s Canada! Do you not know these things? So I am like a guess a lot of it was put towards ignorance. He didn’t know my grandma already knew … that my grandma knew and was fine with it. He didn’t know I could get married. He was assuming and making all these assumptions about what … like being gay is going to do anything for my life. Meanwhile he doesn’t know what he is talking about so it is like arrogance and ignorance (Craig)

As Craig discussed his encounter with a family member, he described how his cousin’s lack of awareness regarding marriage laws and rules demonstrates an ignorance and intolerance towards his sexuality. Craig’s cousin related that “being gay isn’t going to do anything” for his life, depicts a disregard for Craig’s sexuality and inferred that Craig being gay is bad.

Throughout the interviews, many participants demonstrated an ignorance of language associated with LGBTQ issues as well as an ignorance of LGBTQ rights and being LGBTQ in general. A few participants were unaware of terminology, and at points were hesitant to discuss LGBTQ issues or utter the phrase. Some participants who self identified as being ‘straight’ made reference to being either ‘straight’ or ‘gay’, creating a dualism - a group mentality – straight versus gay, or right versus wrong – us and them. This creates the notion of ‘othering’ According to Borrero, Cruz and Susa (2012) ‘othering’ is a way in which groups of individuals identify globally with a group of like individuals, excluding those who have been marginalized (i.e. do not fit group norms),
labeled as different. The process of ‘othering’ is also connected directly influenced by power dynamics (Borrero et al., 2012).

And as far as a thing of pride, it’s hard to be in .. a kid in school.. it’s hard to be in university, the first 20 years there is so much going on, if there is anything they can grab that makes it you know a little bit easier, make it you know, I am apart of the ‘in-crowd’ – oh sweet! There is one there! And using that to create an ‘other’ that it not a part of us. Oh I am not the coolest kid but I am straight! So I am not them! Awesome (Harrison)

One participant demonstrated this dualistic attitude when asked if she had experienced or witnessed bullying on the basis of an individual’s sexual orientation.

S: I have never really been exposed to hmm or been aware of anyone who identified with being…..L…..

M: LGBTQ?

S: Yah! [laughs] I don’t even know the saying, which is probably bad because it was probably prominent that there was at least an individual [in high school] or afterwards [that] I have found out through my high school that have since has come out or identified” (Samantha).

Samantha felt she did not know how to properly discuss or understand the acronym in regard to sexuality She also seemed to be reluctant to discuss the issue and demonstrated a general ignorance of the topic and the issues surrounding sexuality. Samantha is not alone, for many people are ignorant of LGBTQ issues in general, due to either lack of education, interest or personal biases.
Another participant discussed this general ignorance towards LGBTQ stating, “you don’t even get exposed to it. I think the reason why my friends either didn’t think about coming out or were afraid to was kind of like there is not space to come out. If you do, you are opening yourself up to become a target” (Aron). Aron addressed an important point. Society in general does not demonstrate an acceptance of LGBTQ youth or give space, understanding or acceptance to ‘come out’. Interview participants therefore discussed ‘ignorance’ and the different levels of ignorance as the lack of an individual wanting to understanding or recognize LGBTQ issues, the lack of education provided that deals with inclusive sexual practices and the lack of space for individuals to learn about LGBTQ, to the issue of homophobia, a term that blatantly reinforces a disregard for LGBTQ matters.

Participants who completed the questionnaires also demonstrated a lack of knowledge toward understanding sexualities or proper identification that is used. Some did not understand the LGBTQ acronym or simply thought it was an organization of some type. One participant stated,

“‘I don’t know much about their organization [LGBTQ] but I have heard about them before. Correct me if I am wrong I am pretty sure it is something kind of like a club or an organization where people are able to connect and say … I don’t really even know what they do’” (Natasha).

On the demographic questionnaire (see appendix E) participants were asked in question three to self identify their sexual orientation. They were given the choice of straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning or other. Some participants selected ‘other’ and noted “attracted to the opposite sex?? (heterosexual) – don’t know what that is
called?)” (Participant # 24). Some participants showed a complete disregard for sexuality as a topic of conversation, or of recognizing the sexuality continuum. They demonstrated this through their lack of attention to LGBTQ matters, to simply not knowing or recognizing LGBTQ sexuality continuum.

Several participants discussed how aligning with the LGBTQ community made a person a target for bullying, regardless of their sexual orientation. One participant discussed how some students did not want to participate in gay straight alliance groups for fear of retaliation.

That’s why I didn’t [stick up for others] in high school because it made things worse. And it really sucks because for the other person you know -they need a friend just as much as you do  (Dane).

Other participants discussed that people demonstrated ignorance about gay- straight alliance groups, even though they would normally want to support LGBTQ issues. An association in any way may cause them to be bullied as well.

**Theme three: Religion.** Religion emerged as a common theme throughout the interview transcripts; participants discussed religion in general and how religious views cause a sense of victimization for LGBTQ youth. Two sub-themes emerged 1) Religion: setting societal views 2) Religion in the family unit.

*Religion: Setting societal views.* Religion was commonly discussed as dictating and sustaining viewpoints that discriminate against same sex couples as legitimate relationships. Participants commented on religious victimization towards LGBQ as
unwarranted discrimination. They related discrimination to biblical roots, and to Christianized society in general.

D: Um you mean we live in a western society that has never gotten around to accepting homosexuality. Um we have a lot of biblical backgrounds that has to do with a lot of hate toward specific groups. Um as soon as you are different it’s a bad thing and you are going to go to hell for it. I grew up in a catholic school.
M: Um hmm.

D: I grew up in a catholic family… I mean I see the dis… discr.. like unwarranted discrimination because they have just simply been born into it.
M: Um hmm.
D: It’s just the way that they are and for the sexuality thing, I mean some countries are different. North America… the States is… maybe worse because I mean even though they are not technically a Christian country they act like it.

This participant continued to discuss how religion highly influences views on gender roles and how this indoctrination is detrimental. Others also commented that it is well known that Catholic Church philosophy does not accept sexual diversity. Dane said, “I also grew up in a catholic school so being gay was definitely a bad thing” (Dane). He also discussed how people did not want to associate with those who were considered ‘outcasts’, for they would also be ostracized.

Participants also related how bullying on the basis of sexual orientation is a much larger issue and is a topic that is hidden and taught within several systems in our society (Religion, school, daily rituals). It is implied that it is acceptable to bully someone for something that is ‘different’, according to participants. Negativity toward those who
deviate from the societal heterosexual norm is not accepted. Not only does the church blatantly and/or subliminally model this, it is also found in family life values. Aron stated,

It’s not just religion but its ideology, when people grow up with traditions, traditional sexuality, masculinity, gender roles etc., the idea that you can blur that … I think people find it threatening…. Maybe it is because they have the indoctrinated that gay is wrong or LGBTQ etc. (Aron)

_Religion in the family unit._ Participants described how religion in the family unit plays a key role in allowing for a sense of discrimination or shame within their family, either after a family member’s ‘coming out’ or their family asking them to confirm their sexual orientation.

One participant in particular discussed the issue of his ‘coming out process’ as he announced this to his family. He described how ashamed he felt, for his parents’ religious beliefs and practices do not allow for sexual diversity. Sam discussed how this ideal of heternormativity in relation to his parents’ religious beliefs left him excluded from conversations. It also forced his parents’ to rethink their spiritual beliefs. He stated,

It was also for myself it was a little weird because my parents well my mom was very Christian and well still is. But she is not like [stick noise up in the air] wonky, if you will. … well I mean salvation army, she was use to hearing well that is wrong [to be gay] … she said [that she] had to re-evaluate that. [My mother] clearly had to go back and rethink that. I can’t think that now. It did come up….I know around every now and again my sister was going out on a date and I
couldn’t bring it up without getting a scowl and those were the things I was afraid of before coming out” (Sam)

Sam commented how his mother was forced to re-evaluate her spiritual beliefs regarding same sex couples. He also related how he was omitted from family conversations regarding relationships and how his family’s spiritual beliefs did not provide the space for him to openly discuss any matters in regard to relationships. He also felt that he could not openly discuss any of his personal intimate relationships with his family.

**Theme four: Hidden lessons of default.** Hidden lessons of default emerged as a subtle theme in interview data. Participants discussed how issues of gender roles and the automatic nature of individuals to assume that everyone is straight, sets LGBQ youth up for failure and victimization. They remarked how these lessons are not something that is obvious, and how this default nature is subtly implied through societal practices, yet absent in educational teachings and discourses. Kitty commented, “It’s like they just assume something because it is a default” (Kitty). Aron related, “A lot of people just think, what they are thinking without thinking about what they are thinking about, or actually thinking about why they hate gay people” (Aron). The participants also spoke about the nature of how people automatically assume, adopt and believe in traditional ways of living, without critically thinking about what they believe. A lack of questioning normative beliefs becomes a default setting and perpetuates the societal belief that everyone is the same, “Because the default setting and the default assumption is everyone is straight” (Harrison).

Some participants described how such practices and hidden lessons of what you should be further torment youth. One person commented about how difficult it is to
forget things that were said to him in the past regarding sexuality. He stated, “it's the world around me” that discriminates, specifically the subtle practices of exclusion and the subtle norms that marginalize LGBTQ youth.

Another participant remarked that heterosexuality is something that is popularized and celebrated which accounts for the default assumption. Karina explained, “You see the norm being accepted and popularized and supported… it is sort of funny because there is not specific ways of dressing straight but then again there is. It’s like a double standard…because you make assumptions about people all the time” (Karina).

Participants discussed how the default nature of sexuality is unfair, and sets individuals up to have to conceal who they are for fear of victimization. One participant discussed this in terms of concealment and how sexuality is something that is assumed. It forces individuals to deny themselves. Janet stated,

I can’t tell you how many people I know who have just come out now …they are in university in 4th year graduating and they finally came out. I think that kind of sucks because the past eight years of your life when you are amongst your peers and you are growing personally, you have been denying yourself the whole time. I think that is really unfair and it goes to show that definitely [people] do hide their orientation for whatever reason - from friends and family (Janet).

Another person commented on the hidden lessons of default in teaching sexual education, and specifically how current sexual education programs only teach one perspective on sexual intercourse and intimacy. He described how this one-sided curriculum leaves LGBTQ youth out of the conversations around sexual intimacy, and safe sexual practices. Aron stated,
We take sex ed, or most people take sex ed, and you learn about you know how your bodies changing and you know what is involved, it is a very heterosexual model. They will touch on queer identities but not in the same way that normalize them too to their heterosexual counterparts. I mean using myself as an example again I think a lot of people and myself included sort of subscribed to the straight and gay camp – you are either one or the other. Um so I think if I showed any umm, you know, possible ugh, if it looked I could possibly be on the other side, if I wasn’t 100% heterosexual, dominate male then I was automatically gay. And people don’t realize that there is all these shades of grey in between. Just knowing that whatever identity you are. There is list and list of possible sexual identities, even like I would say, you can’t even really technically but a label … It’s a continuum, exactly. But just to show there is a continuum and not everyone is completely one sided. Even if you have those resources it is a good start. Other stuff like … ok say you are a gay teen or something and you are going … I mean as a teen you are going to be exploring your sexuality and if there no sort of umm, you know legitimate education system for stuff like safe sex, you know that is increasing your chance of having risky sex. I mean you can have safe gay sex, but you have to know what to do and I think schools are scared to…. I mean you look at something at Catholic school that speaks to abstinence, so people are going to have sex but they are not going to be prepared for it. But if you take the public school model they teach heterosexual sex so then when students have gay sex, they are not going to be as prepared. They are just going to be following that progression … You know it you are not ok with yourself because your not even
present in the education system, how are you expected to live a happy and fulfilling life. People do it, but it is … sets us [LGBQ youth] up at a disadvantage (Aron).

In summary, participants discussed bulling as a multi-leveled social issue that occurs in multiple contexts and is experienced in different ways, depending on the individual. Bullying and cyberbullying happens in the presence of difference, where one may stand out. Simply possessing an arbitrary factor can make a person an easy target for bullying or cyberbullying. Bullying on the basis of sexual orientation is experienced differently from other forms of bullying, where themes of gender roles, ignorance towards LGBQ matters, religions and hidden lessons of default are prevalent.
Tier Two: Impact of Bullying on LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth

Table 5 describes the frequencies of concealment of one’s sexual orientation from family and friends.

Table 5

Frequencies of concealment of sexual orientation from Family, Friends sorted by groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (n)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.

Table 6 below describes the frequencies of an individual’s need to reveal their sexual orientation to various support systems (family friends and others). ‘Others’ are qualified as individuals that a person meets on a day-to-day basis, yet are not considered acquaintances.

Table 6

Frequencies of an individual’s need to reveal their sexual orientation to various support systems (Family, Friends and Others)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (n)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.
Table 6

Frequencies of revealment of sexual orientation to Family, Friends and Others sorted by groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.

Table 7 below describes the frequencies of concealment of sexual orientation due to fear of victimization and harassment.

Table 7

Frequency of concealment of sexual orientation due to fear of vicimization and harassment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.
Table 8 below describes the frequencies of participants’ needs to conceal their sexual orientation due to fear of various types of victimization.

Table 8

*Frequency of participant responses: Have you ever had to conceal your sexual orientation due to fear of victimization, what types of harassment?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (n)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Verbal Harassment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, Cyberbullying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Verbal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.*
Table 9 below describes the frequencies of participants’ responses if they perceived being called gay as an insult or not.

Table 9

*Frequency of participant responses: Is being called gay an insult?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Negative historical meaning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Regardless of context</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No - depends on context</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No- It's a sexual orientation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.*

**Impact of Bullying on LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth**

Victimization on the basis of sexual orientation for some individuals who participated in this sample has made long lasting negative impacts on their memories, lives and states of emotional well being. Many participants described acts of victimization committed against them, due to their sexual orientation, as causing them to change their patterns of behaviour, alter places they visit, who they reveal their sexual orientation to, and with whom they associate. Many participants discussed how this type of victimization is not something that they have been able to escape. One participant remarked, “Yeah past is past but it still sucks” (Dane). Some also described how sexual orientation victimization is something that is an ongoing battle as each new social situation they join, is a new opportunity for victimization. Furthermore, participants
described the impact of this type of victimization and how it stays with them. One participant remarked,

Well I have had it [bullied] happen several times throughout school. Just based in almost predominately on my perceived sexuality. It constantly came across, as a problem for other people so it tends to… it just kind of happens in your life, but does … it’s very much - oh my goodness this is happening and then its happened and then it’s done. Sometimes you are left a little disoriented, you’re nervous. You are not completely sure what was just taking place, because it is like I can’t believe this happened almost (Sam).

As Sam described the victimization as “something that just happens”, he also related that these acts often leave him bothered and nervous.

Participants described the impact of bullying situations and how these have played a large role in their daily lives. Sam described instances of how he ducked behind shelves at the grocery store to hide from someone who has bullied him on the basis of his sexual orientation (Sam). He discussed how it made him feel worthless. Aron commented how bullying incidences lowers one’s self worth. He explained,

I mean it is now like its like 6/7 years later I know I am not that same person and that the people around me care about me and love me but I… If… If I’m down I kind of revert [to] thinking about what I have been told when I was 13 years old that I am worthless and I am nothing but that was kind of the biggest thing … I was lower than nothing (Aron).
Other participants described instances where they inflicted pain and mutilation upon themselves, to the extreme of carving letters into their body, after being told so many times that they are a ‘failure’ and a ‘faggot’.

Three major themes therefore emerged from the interview data regarding the impact of bullying on LGBQ youth: coping, trust and safety. Figure 3 below is a representation of themes revealed in qualitative data regarding the impact of bullying for LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth.

Figure 3. Representation of themes within Tier 2

Theme one: Coping. Participants described the emotional and physical impact of bullying and how they adopted methodologies for coping ‘in the moment’ and for the long term. This theme recurred frequently throughout the interview data. Participants described several instances when they had been bullied and how they handled them. Some described their method of coping as trying to forget and erase their memories “I have pretty much wipe most of my memory as much as I can of grade school and high school and also most of all summer camps. So yeah it is hard to remember specifics, because I have done my best to forget them. (Kitty). Other participants discussed
instances of coping by ‘building stock replies’ as ‘comeback’ remarks. Sam described his instances with bullying and how he would try to cope.

Multiple times, by complete strangers … kids I don’t know in school. Just going about ... I don’t know, you look ‘faggy’ today and they go and they push and then they shove and it’s you know … Maybe you should try not to look so gay. So I mean you eventually build a few stock replies. Well at least I am not false advertising and things like that. Not that is helps but it is kind of like [sticks up middle finger]… it always left me rattled (Sam).

One coping mechanism used by participants was employing a phrase like, ‘I was lucky, it could have been worse’. They discussed mild to extreme instances of bullying where they have been left out of education contexts, excluded from social settings, felt uncomfortable and were victimized and bullied, based on sexuality. However participants often commented positively, saying, that things could have been a lot worse. One participant remarked, “It think I have been very lucky! It hasn’t been a perfect path from start to finish. There are bumps – but for the most part I have lucked out pretty much …, which I know is a big privilege. A lot of people go through a lot worse. And so I have been lucky!” (Harrison). Participants used phrases similar to the above to remind themselves that victimization - “it just kind of happens” (Sam) as if being victimized is par for the course of being an LGBQ youth. In addition, some participants also described other methods of coping such as spending time and finding comfort in companion animals. It is important to note that even thought participants described their coping mechanisms at times in a light-hearted manner, they also discussed how these instances have left long-lasting scars.
Theme two: Trust. Trust is a prevalent theme that emerged from the interview data and is divided into two sub themes: concealment and revealment. Concealment relates to a notion in which individuals feel they do not trust others with information related to sexual orientation due to fear of victimization. As a result, they conceal their sexual identity. Participants discussed concealment as a form of control, i.e. controlling what information they wanted others to know and how much they were willing to disclose. The second theme of revealment – revealing their sexual orientation to friends, family and others, is directly connected with the overarching theme of power and was discussed by participants as being both powerful and powerless. They believe that once you reveal your sexuality to others you no longer have the power to control how much information everyone else is aware of, regarding sexual orientation. However they also have the power to reveal their true selves. Regardless, the participants indicated that concealing or revealing their sexual orientation is a process that is very individualized. One participant described the process, “I mean my coming out process was very slow” (Aron). Another participant commented, “First I realized that I … heterosexual was like the normal thing and then I realized I wasn’t really into guys and I thought I was lesbian then I realized I wasn’t really into girls and more than into guys and I was bisexual and then realized I wasn’t into either” (Kitty). Other participants described their own individualized coming out processes.

Sub-theme one: Concealment. Concealment is a theme that recurred throughout the interview data. Hiding behind the guise of being ‘straight’ was discussed as being a ‘safe’ coping mechanism in many instances and the notion of ‘Straightness’ was something that was default, assumed and celebrated. Participants remarked that they
conceal their sexual orientation for various reasons; to avoid negative attention, victimization and to maintain control over how much information others know about their sexual orientation. As one participant commented,

It was, it’s nerve racking. I mean you barely [are] dealing with yourself - you don’t want other people dealing with you. I couldn’t for myself I couldn’t figure out. I wasn’t even comfortable admitting to myself that I was gay. So I couldn’t really tell anyone else. I was not even remotely comfortable at the same time, [to tell] other people. I … again its all about the control. I can keep control over how I am going to react to it at the end if I pretend it doesn’t exist, it is not there (Sam)

Other participants such as Craig described that they concealed their sexual orientation for reasons as they were unsure how others would accept or react to them.

C: But like for some I know there were some friends who like, I was trying not to tell about, but like everyone else knows. I didn’t want them to know because I didn’t know how they were going to react.

M: So the question was in your opinion do you think youth are likely to hide their sexual orientation for fear of not being accepted for fear of being victimized?

C: Ok, so yeah. For not being accepted definitely or for certain people there would be certain people that you wouldn’t want to know. I haven’t told my father yet, because I don’t know how he would react. I am not going to tell him until I am ready, which I don’t know when that will be.

M: When you’re ready you’re ready?

C: Yeah you will know. (Craig)
This participant discussed how concealing sexuality sometimes happens instantaneously, as she may not feel comfortable with a particular individual knowing her sexual orientation. One person will know, but the other will not. Revealing sexual orientation also happens when a person is ready. This is an individualized process and one which occurs when it is deemed ‘safe’. One participant commented how she believes some people conceal their sexual orientation until they have a strong support system. “I feel as if people would be, or from my community or from where I grew up people were more … more likely to hide the fact unless they knew they had some sort of strong support behind them” (Natasha)

**Sub-theme two: Revealing.** The theme of ‘revealing’ relates to trust – to trust others and trust themselves. Participants discussed how revealing their sexual orientation was very important to them; to be able to reveal their true selves and participate in intimate relationships. As one participant described, revealing became something that they were now actively engaging in. “As I was active, I was engaging in whatever I was trying to hide” (Sam). However most participants revealed this as being a traumatic life event. Yet all participants agreed that revealing their sexual orientation was a milestone and liberating experience. Participants’ moments of revealing their sexual orientation to friends and family were diverse experiences yet they described these processes as occurring on different levels. One participant noted importance of ‘coming out’ and how the context changes with each social situation.

H: Because the default setting and default assumption is everyone is straight so if you are not, then you have to make an effort to announce that and clarify that for everyone. There is a sort of… I guess analogy for it - everyone sent in their books
to the publisher and all of the people who are now identifying as not straight have
to rush in and say “oh wait, wait, wait I have to make this big change”. And so
just the .. speaking from me personally, the first few times to do that… oh this..
how do I say this… this is weird, this is awkward.. And it got easier each time as I
sort of decided who was worth telling and who wasn’t worth the effort to tell! But
then each time the situation changes going from say your high school friends,
telling your family, coming to university, do you tell them here? Do you talk to
professors about it, is that a topic that ever comes up? Every new social setting, is
this going to be a topic? I don’t know if that answers the question!
M: Yes, actually it offers a context for different types of social situations that as
you move through it’s kind a new thing in each social situation.
H: And I think it is an assumption that gets made sometimes is, you know whenever
someone comes out of the closet or identify or be public about their private life, they do
it, they are done, they move on. Everyone’s happy.
M: Um hmm.
H: But that only works if they never change their context if they stay where they
are with the same people for the rest of their life – which doesn’t happen at all.
M: Yes!
H: It’s sort of the same way that every time you go to a new dinner party you have
to introduce yourself to 50 new people except that in every introduction there is
the potential for them to go, “oh” and then walk away.
M: Um hmm.
H: And that would make the dinner party a lot crapier.
Harrison related the difficulties of ‘coming out’ which is an ongoing process as he meets new friends and joins new activities in different contexts. He commented that sometimes he was reluctant to share his sexual orientation, depending on the group he was with. He remarked that in some contexts he wants to conceal his sexual identity, and others he is willing to reveal it. Yet he commented that he never knows how it will be received and accepted.

Some participants discussed how revealing their sexual orientation to their friends and family is a very traumatic event. One participant described his coming out. “Coming out - it was like exposing the worst of yourself, it feels like.” (Sam). This particular participant explained how he found revealing his sexual orientation to his friends was much easier in some respects than revealing to his family. He related how he could choose his friends, and be a part of their lives. Yet revealing his identity to his family was more difficult. However Sam commented that, although he felt revealing to his family was difficult and humiliating, it gave him a great sense of empowerment to disclose his sexual orientation.

I said to a friend afterwards because for a week I felt really, really … it almost became a little more stressful afterwards when I told my family. Only because I felt like I had been scrubbed raw. It was kind of like saying something terrible at a funeral, taking off my clothes and then someone had burned them and I was walking around naked at a funeral after saying something terrible about the dead person. There’s … was no way to come back from that. That was who I was…It’s … and it takes a while to navigate that kind of, there is a freedom that comes with it. It’s this weirdness that comes with, that takes a while to get used to. It’s like treading the deep end for the first time. You’ve lost every wall around you because again hiding that sexuality was all about the control
- you know where you stand now, and its, its open for everyone to see - what they do with it after that. I can’t control what someone else thinks. (Sam)

Participants described different levels of revealing and different venues in which they revealed their identity. They also discussed that each time they did so, it was a practice session for future times that might be more difficult. Many discussed online venues as being secret spots where they could participate in an LGBTQ community without having to reveal themselves in their personal physical worlds. One participant commented,

I think … online is definitely an option for a lot of people. I personally never did. I just … I preferred to be very passive in it, because again it was more as soon as I was active, I was engaging in whatever I was trying to hide. Hmm, and so I immediately felt worse” (Sam)

Sam discussed at length how he first revealed his sexual orientation to his friends. He described the process.

Telling friends first … it was kind of like testing and it allows you to build up the … if telling people is like treading the deep end. Telling friends is like treading the deep end with water wings you are kind of getting used to it, which is handy. And again if they want to go off and do whatever, it is no different than the ridicule you have already been facing. Sure it will get a little larger … it is easier to compartmentalize that loss I think. So telling friends was definitely And also I guess family feels it is their right to pass judgment on you. Friends on the other hand tend to have more of a, at least in my own experience, tend to have more a kind of like - all right you take me as I am, and I will take you as you are. I might
Another participant shared a similar instance of revealing to his friends first, however for a different reason. Craig said, “I have a feeling that the younger population is more accepting” (Craig) than his family for they have traditional values. Another participant described his coming out to his friends, and why he believes coming out is very important not only individuals but to create awareness for LGBTQ youth in general. He noted however, why an individual may not feel as comfortable.

Every single friend I told I knew I was taking a risk. The very first friend I told, she is my lesbian friend … I had no idea she was gay. I remember telling her and I was on the phone with her and she was very quiet and I had a feeling she like, that she was secretly homophobic and that our relationship would change. But the truth was, she was trying to find a way to tell me herself, which is kind of funny and kind of lucky. Umm. But I think there is always that fear because even stuff like LGBTQ people are - you know - often the butt of jokes, even sort of in normal subtle ways too. I think it is important to come out and stop people in their tracks and call people out when they are doing stuff like that. I know, but that takes a lot of guts. I mean I understand if someone is not comfortable with that. Especially when you are like a teenager, and you know if you stand out you are going to get taken down. I feel like there is a [saying] for that; the person that rises to the top gets picked first. You know if you are a teen at a school that is out and proud, I think that is very great. I can see how people will … and will see you as that target and other people might see that person and will think that - yes -
they’re so proud and I want to be like them, but you know I just heard someone say something bad about them behind their back and I don’t want that to be me (Aron).

**Theme three: Safety.** Safety is also a recurring theme in the interview data, although ‘safety’ was at times connected with ‘trust’. The theme is also related to concealment and revealment. In terms of the theme of religion, participants noted how bullying on the basis of sexual orientation, given current societal religious herteronormative or ‘heterosexist’ views, impacted the safety of some LGBQ youth. Participants discussed safety in terms of the right to feel physically safe and secure in environments such as school, at church and at home. LGBQ youth indicated that safety was not always something they could rely on in the educational context. They feel LGBQ rights are not taken seriously in light of other rights such as free speech. Sam discussed what supports he thought might be helpful. He commented,

> At the same time condemning the actions of others against them [LGBQ youth] - I think too much leeway is given to the whole [heterosexuality] - well they are just expressing their opinion, but yeah ok, but we wouldn’t let them express an opinion in such a fashion in terms of condemning based on an arbitrary feature. We wouldn’t but it is because someone associates [LGBTQ] it with, not making a dig at the religious here but if someone claims that - oh well - you are getting on that, it is a whole can of worms for administration that schools and teachers don’t want to get into. So they don’t get involved, kids die… Kind of need to realize what’s worth more, someone having their right to be a dick or someone’s safety and security of a healthy body – in-tack. I think its obviously the latter not the former!
Sam related how something as important as safety is not often available to LGBTQ youth. In regard to concealing and revealing their sexual orientation to others, each new social situation is a new setting that can be unsafe. LGBTQ youth can potentially be victimized and their safety can be compromised at any time.

Another participant commented on a different aspect of safety in terms of religion. Due to his sexual orientation, in the eyes and preaching of the church, he is a sinner. He commented that his safety would be compromised in his after-life; he was not protected after death since he was perceived to be gay. He commented on how his after-life security was used as a scare tactic, which made him feel unsafe and frightened. Dane commented, “When I am threatened [to] hell by a Christian, it used to scare me! Just in general. The things that they would say to me would make me feel bad about that” (Dane). Dane described how these instances made him not only feel unsafe but sometimes he would fight back when he didn’t want to. He was forced to protect himself for his safety. He commented however on the emotional strain that he felt as he did not want to fight back because he knew how it felt to be physically bullied and hurt.

In summary, bullying and cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation impacts the lives of LGBTQ youth in multiple ways. In this sample, LGBTQ youth described ways of coping with victimization, issues they experienced that related to trusting individuals with knowledge of their sexual orientation (ie concealing and revealing) and how victimization compromises their safety.
Tier Three: Support & Moving Forward

I mean, a lot of people think they can be independent and you need to, when you are going through something as tough as dealing with your sexuality in this world, in this society that we are living in right now, you can’t do it alone (Aron).

Table 10. described the frequencies of types of support accessed for LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth for informational or social support services.

Table 10

*Have you accessed support for LGBQ youth?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th></th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.*
Table 11 described the frequencies of types of online support accessed for LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth for informational or social support services.

Table 11

*Have you access online support for LGBQ youth?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>LGBQ</th>
<th></th>
<th>non-LGBQ</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (n)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>Frequency (n)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* n = frequency count; % percentage of participants who fall into that category.

In this sample, participants were asked if they were informed about current support systems that are available for LGBQ youth in the community as well as what supports they found most helpful for them. They were also queried as to what extra support systems may assist an individual in regard to sexual orientation. Participants mentioned services that they have accessed, but more importantly outlined supports they believe would be most beneficial for youth today. Participants discussed how supports offered in the realm of sexual orientation must be something that is inclusive to all, non-judgmental, the less clinical the better, and something that is instantaneous and accessible. It is important to note that participants were provided with a list of licensed community services for LGBTQ youth after their participation in the interview and questionnaire process. They remarked on the importance of having such supports. However some participants mentioned that personalized services that could be accessed at their leisure would be more useful to them. Three major themes emerged 1) Support - with two sub-themes; helps to have a good friend, importance of online support 2)
Education is big 3) No more of this not seeing it crap. Figure 4. below is a representation of themes revealed in qualitative data for support and moving forward.

Figure 4. Representation of themes within Tier 3

**Theme one: Support.**

**Sub-theme one: Helps to have a good friend.** Participants commented on the importance of having a good friend for peer support. They remarked that just having one loyal friend to talk to for moral support, to bounce ideas off of, and to provide a personal touch is an important protective factor. One participant suggested,

> Find someone who you can, someone who is not going to tell you to shut up, its getting annoying - someone who will whole heartedly [will] listen to you or can relate to you. And is … hmm … Is willing to and not just to passively listen to actually interact with you and ask you the questions, like how are you feeling… They really need … what I really needed was personal association, I still needed … I needed a personal anchor. I needed someone who I could go to day or night and groups are great but you can’t just again expect them to also be there… you kind of need to feel like, that’s not going to be taken away from you. Someone at
least one person is still going to pay a world of attention to you - that you are still worth [something] that to them. I think is very much important, especially after just coming out (Sam).

Sam discussed how friends as so important, for unlike family, they ultimately choose to be your friend and associate with you.

Another participant described why he believes peer support is so important for LGBQ youth.

You know to actually have a friend that is both willing to help you. If they are a true friend they love you and they are going to care. Not just that they do care but that they are at least comfortable enough to try to do more good than harm. It is one thing to um say you support diverse sexualities and then turn around and call something gay, and not realize (Aron)

Dane discussed why in his experience he finds peer support more helpful than other forms. He discussed his feelings,

D: Um I mean I, I, it’s hard to ask for help when all you want to do is cry but at the same time, you don’t want to talk, you want to hug?

M: Yes.

D: Sort of thing? You want to feel accepted but you don’t want to be treated like…. because when I feel those professionals helping me, it’s their job to help me. They don’t [care]… even if they want to help me I don’t feel that way because …

M: Um hmm.
D: Because it’s their job. That’s what they are paid to do. They are paid to help people. Whereas if I have a friend, they are not being paid, they are helping me because they care.

Another participant commented on the importance of peer support and why he believes it is sometimes more effective than approaching a stranger. He shared a story about when he was recruiting for a business. It was his job as a student recruiter to talk to other students his age and answer their questions in regard to their enrolment. He believed that this was important for them to have the opportunity to talk to him instead of an adult. He could tell them the true story because “they are going to be more honest [with me, and me with them] You are going to get the right story. You are not going to get [someone] who is obviously going to try and twist the stories…. I think you get a more honest story from your peers” (Craig).

Dane described how having one friend that genuinely cares for you will help you not only for emotional support but also in bullying situations.

You need to feel not segregated from everyone else because you are not going to stop the bullying. But you can make a person feel ok if they have the people around them that make them feel … go with who they are. If you have a group of 10 people that tell the person that they are ok and you have the one… it doesn’t even have to be more… like one person can make the difference… But as soon as you have that person bullying them and then the person supporting the person saying, “Hey it’s okay, don’t listen to that asshead”. They are almost going to stop being bullied because the bully is not going to get the reaction any more because of the person being more accepted.
Dane makes an interesting point about the important of a bystander and having that one good friend, how knowing that you have the support of one individual can make the world of difference. However another participant discussed how sometimes having a friend is not always available for people if you are being bullied. He commented, “something like a decent friend network, but then that can only take you so far because you are bullied to the point where you don’t have any friends.” (Aron). Aron also described how this is the occasion when it becomes important to have community resources available, as not having a trustworthy friend is sometimes a sad reality for youth who are being bullied on the basis of their sexual orientation.

**Sub-theme two: Online support.** Accessing online forums as a means of support was a prevalent strategy for participants. They described the different forms of online support that are helpful: self-help website, personal blogs, forums and Youtube (personal stories). Participants typically described online support as instantaneous, individualized, meaningful to them (in terms of which form they would use) and private.

One person described why he thought the Internet is such a good form of support. It was the first realm where he could go and explore the questions he was having about his sexual orientation, without revealing himself to others. He stated, “When you are first trying to figure it out before you come out to anyone, pretty much the first thing you do, you can go on the internet in your own privacy, or you know privately” (Aron). Another participant commented that ‘online’ is private but it is also self-explanatory and can be accessed at your own individualized pace. The Internet services can also be tailored to individual needs.
It is just self exploratory and it is at your own pace, so it is not like - oh yeah - next week you are going to be this and the week after you are going to be this. It is not like you are in this program step by step, it is like very open and if you want to stop and you want to come back and come back in three months and keep looking at it and it is there if you want to use it but you have to because some people develop differently and understand themselves differently (Craig).

Another participant described a similar feeling about online as he compared it to formal types of support (i.e. group meetings). He described specifically how online services in his experience gave him the ability to be able to control how much information he would reveal online. This made him feel more comfortable, for he could talk to people his own age, and he could decide how he wanted to participate, whether being an active ‘poster’ or a passive reader. He explained,

In terms of informal, I like … one of the things I was really big on when I was struggling and blogs and such. Because it, I also felt a lot of the formal ones were really stiff not because, not because they meant to be stiff, it was easier to be stiff be in terms of regulation or the people I was trying to identify with, it was weirder when it is adult oriented because I was a teenager at the time. It was easier to go through blogs and thing because I could find people my age who were going through things similar and were talking candidly about, we didn’t have to worry about. I guess we also didn’t have to wait such a … such a time to go to this group. The great thing with blogs is that I could leave a post and someone could leave and reply to it later. We didn’t necessarily have to be in the same room at the same time … you can’t just show up and expect anyone to be there, whereas
this group [online] is always there. … especially when you are uncomfortable because for a while you are going to be uncomfortable with yourself. It is very, very difficult to… [off topic]… you are so uncomfortable with yourself. Why would you want to put yourself in a situation when you are physically and emotional putting yourself out there. The physical groups are very imposing as it is effectively doubling the pressure, or at least it feels that way. And so the blogs - and as far as informal goes - were fantastic for just that. I didn’t have to put more of myself. I could maintain a degree of anonymity. I could just be a reader - I could just be a passive participant or I could be active. Or I could just soak it in. I could contribute if I wanted to. I had absolute control over how much of myself I put out there… So when you have that ability to say to someone well this is all of me that you are allowed to see. That is brilliant. That is brilliant you don’t feel this transparent anymore. So you get some of those reins back and it feels good.

(Sam)

Sam discussed how he finds online support very versatile for he can decide how he wants to participate and what he wants to reveal about himself. Another participant shared a similar perspective in regard to watching Youtube videos and the Kids Help Phone website as a form of support.

I use a lot of Youtube videos, for like - I guess there is a lot of like … anonymous, there is a lot of anonymity on Youtube because it isn’t like that you are giving something you are just watching something. Hmm so, I used a lot of that when I was accepting who I was. Hmm … so I also used the services through Kids Help Phone, but I know like their services [were] offered through school that I never
used. I was always like afraid to go and talk to anybody. Hmm …so I really like the fact that it was anonymous online, that I could make whatever name I wanted for myself (Craig)

Craig and Sam discussed the online chat forums and Youtube as giving them anonymity which provides them with a sense of comfort and safety. They can seek help at their own pace while still being able to maintain personal anonymity.

Another participant commented on the personal nature of Youtube and how it offers concrete examples that youth can connect and engage with and offers true real life perspectives. He commented,

H: Something I wrote in the hard copy - there are some really good Youtube services, some of them from resources like this, some of them are people on Youtube who like to be helpful - where it is really nice to see a face and to hear their story. What has that person gone through – because - yes, I am not that person and I have not gone through their things. Might be completely different but at least I know stories. Um, because I guess the stereotypical thing going back to the 90s, help is out there or you can get through this, all this fluffy positive stuff doesn’t really help me. It doesn’t solve my problem when I have to do something really uncomfortable. Seeing other people, a specific person, I can look at. “Oh well look there is Jim Bob and he has done it! Sweet!

M: Um hmm.

H: That is a little bit of an emotional boost- I mean I can do it.

M: Something concrete and see and participate in!
H: Ya and be able to participate and feel a bit of a community support and it doesn’t necessarily need to be you know- let’s get all of these people together in one group but just any community where that is supported and consistent. A couple of the groups that I am in online are comfortable with various sexualities; it’s a non-issue! (Harrison)

**Theme two: Education is big.** Education is a prevalent theme that emerged from the interview data in terms of support and what can assist LGBQ youth and alleviate the effects of bullying on the basis of sexual ‘difference’. Participants, when asked about preventative strategies to reduce bullying and what could be done to help support LGBTQ youth, almost all discussed the importance of education. Although participants named the education system as a key site for victimization, some participants commented that the school context has the capacity to retrain minds, break stereotypes, and educate others on the sexuality continuum. Within this theme two sub-themes emerged 1) the current system is failing 2) teach the continuum

**Sub-theme one: The current system is failing.** During interview conversations, participants described a great amount of discontent with the current education system. Many recounted instances where they believed their school had set them up for disadvantage. One participant in particular expressed his concern about the complete disregard, lack of services and attention to sexual orientation at school. He stated

If [students] don’t want to go to school anymore because they are afraid of going to school [for] the service, yeah it might help them, like feel better about themselves. It is not going to stop the root issue (Craig)
Craig made an important observation noting that students do not feel comfortable going to school because their issues are not addressed in the current curriculum. Although there are anti-bullying campaigns, gay-straight alliance groups in schools, if students do not feel comfortable, those services merely become a bandage solution that is not addressing the underlying issue. Craig believes that schools – the curriculum – should properly address sexuality. Otherwise the bullying issues will never go away. LGBTQ youth will always feel marginalized in the school environment.

Other participants expressed similar discontent with the lack of presence in educational teachings and the lack of physical space in the educational setting for LGBQ youth. One participant commented on educators’ lack of knowledge of LGBQ issues and their unacceptable level of comfort communicating information to students.

I went to a public school and I know there were religious teachers who taught me health class. I was lucky, the best teacher I ever had she was our social studies teacher. She understood sexualities and everything, she was just the sex ed. teacher for our class. All the other classes got the fairly conservative sex ed. classes, fairly religious, probably haven’t encountered an LGBTQ student. So on one hand, maybe the teachers aren’t very comfortable, some teachers are scared to teach sex at all, or even talking about what a penis and vagina are. Seriously [laughs] but there are others that are down right homophobic! … I think the education system should include this and sort of as a teacher you should be required to know this stuff. This is for the youth that you are supposed to be helping - you know - live healthy futures. You know if you are not ok with yourself because you’re not even like - present in the education system, how are
you expected to live a happy and fulfilling life? People do it, but it is sets us up at a disadvantage (Aron)

Another participant shared a similar perspective discussing how important it is for educators to communicate such knowledge as students will find it elsewhere “well you know this is what gay people do… well that needs to be talked about in sex ed. That would be handed [out], most kids get it off the Internet, and that is not always the best (Sam). Aron described a similar instance where a teacher who did not teach inclusive sexual education, set LGBQ students up for failure. He drew a parallel between different sexual education models (i.e. Catholic schools versus public schools) and how each model set students up for failure. Aron stated,

Other stuff - like ok - say you are a gay teen or something and you are going - I mean as a teen you are going to be exploring your sexuality and if there is no sort of umm - you know legitimate education system for stuff like safe sex, you know that is increasing your chance of having risky sex. I mean you can have safe gay sex, but you have to know what to do and I think schools are scared to…. I mean you look at something at Catholic school that speaks to abstinence, so people are going to have sex but they are not going to be prepared for it. But if you take the public school model, they teach heterosexual sex so then when students have gay sex, they are not going to be as prepared. (Aron)

Participant also indicated that they felt there was a lack of physical space within schools for LGBQ to come out, or people to talk to if they were having issues.

Yeah, but even like in school, in high school and in junior high, you don’t even get exposed to it. I think the reason why my friends either didn’t think about
coming out or were afraid to was kind of like… there is no space to come out. If you do, you are opening yourself up to become a target. Even if you are in a generally safe environment there is kind of nowhere for you to belong, so you don’t think that it is that important. (Aron)

One participant shared a different perspective about the gay straight alliance at her public high school and why she believes the physical presence of these clubs are so important.

We would sell hot chocolate and just make ourselves known and let other kids know we were there... If you don’t know the support systems are available and you don’t know there are kids in the same situation then you are - or you don’t get any help I guess. But it … I think after we made ourselves aware and um and let other kids know we were there...Yeah I think that was helpful. It also made other kids know…awareness, and to be like we are here - this is a thing - we are not the stigmas that you think we are and stuff like that.” (Janet)

**Sub-theme two: Teach the continuum.** Many participants discussed the importance of education to ‘normalize’ LGBTQ issues and break down stereotypes in regard to various sexualities. Through inclusive education, the dichotomous normal and abnormal would be eliminated. Many participants believe that educating individuals about LGBTQ matters would help students become more aware as to what is going on, and to highlight the similarities and differences that individuals deal with. Teaching the sexual diversity continuum will eliminate stigmas. One participant commented on the inconsistencies in sexual education.

A: Yeah like when you are growing up, we take sex ed. or most people take sex ed. and you learn about - you know - how your bodies are changing and you know
what is involved. It is a very heterosexual model. They will touch on queer identities but not in the same way that normalize them to, to their heterosexual counterparts. I mean using myself as an example again I think a lot of people and myself included, sort of subscribed to the straight and gay camp – you are either one or the other. Um, so I think if I showed any umm, you know, possible ugh, if it looked I could possibly be on the other side, if I wasn’t 100% heterosexual, dominant male then I was automatically gay. And people don’t realize that there is all these shades of grey in between. Just knowing that whatever identity you are. There are lists and lists of possible sexual identities, even like I would say, you can’t even really technically put a label.

M: It’s a continuum.

A: It’s a continuum, exactly. But just to show there is a continuum and not everyone is completely one sided. Even if you have those resources it is a good start. (Aron)

Another participant shared a similar perspective on the importance of providing inclusive resources at an earlier age, and not making LGBQ identities elusive. He discussed how having inclusive resources at a younger age in children’s storybooks is very helpful. He stated,

C: Hmm … having it exposed to kids who are younger. [laughs] like hmm through like - to make it like not like this thing -like you come into high school! Oh what is this? I have never learned of this before. What happened, … hmm so it is not even like - I know lots of people there is a push against that for some people. Oh you are going to make everyone gay and all that sort of stuff but I
think even like you don’t have to have a lesson. This is whatever just have it like,
I know there is story books with it in there now. Just have it there, not have it like
M: Not have it so hidden?
C: Like even if it is in the behind the scene curriculum, not like we are saying this
is a man and this is a man. Not all that sort of thing. But just have it like in a
storybooks where there is like two mothers or whatever and stuff like that. Or all
the different or just have it exposed so it is not like when you get into grade nine -
oh what is all this stuff I have never heard about before? (Craig)

Craig highlighted the importance of providing students with inclusive resources and
having issues out in the open; there are many excellent picture books that address same
sex parenting and blended families. Another participant discussed the importance of
including transyouth in the educational discussion. He argues that educating for all will
help bring attention and awareness to all groups of youth, break stereotypes and dispel
ignorance. This in turn will help reduce bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. He
stated,

Umm, I think educating about this in particular…it’s kind of treated as something
that we shouldn’t talk about. And there are a lot of stupid arguments that it will,
oh well - if I talk about it my kids will talk about it my kids will thing it is ok to
be gay. 1 Why shouldn’t they? 2. Your kids are either gay or they or not
regardless if they want, why is it a big deal if you son likes a dude or your
daughter likes another girl? …But I think talking about it - actually dispelling all
this stupid crap about - well gays are more likely to get AIDS and or gays do this
or gays do that or.. all of gays like this.. All the gays like that... When we are
talking about gay youth we tend to forget the trans-youth, and everyone else. It’s like they are completely overlooked. That is something that needs to stop. They need to take this group and say hey by the way, they are right here, they exist and here is some information that way you aren’t a ignorant tool! {laughs}. I think, because knowledge dispels, ignorance… break stereotypes and actually educate on things….. In terms of like talking about them as a group of people have – like - what makes them different and it doesn’t. Specifically draw the parallel, that they only thing that makes the different is - they like same sex and some people you don’t. I think that knowledge would break that easily. (Sam)

Sam made an important point that LGBTQ issues have been left out of the conversation; they are taboo subjects. which have created stereotypes, alienated youth and have further reinforced bullying on the basis of sexual orientation.

One participant shared another perspective of why it is so important to provide inclusive education in terms of sexual diversity. She commented that we need to educate people that LGBTQ is for everyone “I had a lot of people think it is just exclusive to them [LGBTQ], but it is inclusive of everyone” (Janet). Another participant remarked that inclusive education would not only support LGBQ students but would help non-LBGQ individuals become better allies and more aware to shift thinking from a herteronormative model.

I was scared of losing friends and of having family disapproval and umm…. And of people telling my secret before I was ready. That was the case. Some people did ‘out me’ before I was ready and that wasn’t cool. Hmmm…. So maybe something… Ah… you know what would have been nice? Some sort of resource
for people who are friends and allies of LGBTQ people to - you know - to teach others about not ‘outing’ someone. Using proper terms! I know a couple transsexual people I know about the preferred pronouns and some people don’t, when someone prefers she to be a he. So stuff like that - extra stuff - that comes with being a friend to LGBTQ people (Aron).

Aron made an interesting point in regard to inclusive education and how it will not only benefit LGBQ students, but will make equip LGBQ students to become better allies for others and more aware of their issues. Aron is a supportive advocate for affecting positive change in the education system to shift thinking. He stated.

People are racist for no reason - people are sexist for no reason, just as much as people are homophobic or heterosexist or whatever you want to call it. A lot of people have been trained to hate and I think that needs to be switched. People need to obviously retrain their minds. (Aron)

Aron advocates that education would be a way to help us retrain our minds with inclusive teachings that would both create an educational and societal shift. Aron also discussed how we need to adopt an inclusive philosophy in terms of the way in which we look at instances and how the problem maybe be a larger issue than what it appears to be. He stated,

I don’t know if you have heard the quote “there are no gay teens suicides, there are only gay teen murders”. I think it kind of makes sense. There is so much hate and people need to not minimize that. If someone, you take something like one of the gay teens that killed themselves, there is a focus on them and there you know all this stuff that is going on in their life and how you know, they were a bright
young person who was tortured by their sexuality and the bullying or whatever. But it doesn’t talk about how this kid or these kids actively tried to hurt them and make them feel like they were nothing. Like honestly, I know people wished I was dead just because of who I was. I know even like some of my friends before they knew me, but knew of me. I hate that guy because everyone hates that guy. Once they got to know me they were like - you are a good person! It got to the point where I didn’t even realize that about myself. I didn’t even think I was a good person at that time. I just assumed that because I was fat, ugly and nerdy I was worth nothing. I had to do everything to change and because I was feminine I had to do everything to change it. I didn’t know how and I didn’t know what to do. The problem wasn’t me - it was them. But no one is focusing on them, they are focusing on me and what I need to do to feel better about myself. When it is like NO, you need to tell bullies to stop! You need to tell them that they are going to destroy people.

Theme three: No more of this pretending ‘you don’t see it crap’! “No more of the pretend you don’t see it crap” (Sam) - was an emergent theme in interview data. Participants accounted many instances in which they believed people had witnessed bullying or unjust situations that had been committed against others based on their sexual orientation, yet were these misdemeanors were left unaddressed. Participants discussed many instances in which teachers, administrators, and bystanders have allowed victimization on the basis of sexual orientation to happen, not addressing the issue and punishing the perpetrators. One participant discussed this in detail.
S: So I think critically, not just this don’t bully, don’t be an asshole. Stop terrorizing kids! Which is important absolutely! But also I think isn’t it kind of important for the people who are putting out the same message to tell the kids who are being bullied is to make it clear to them, that you have rights, you have the ability to do this? These people can’t take them away from you, they can’t make you less of what you are and so I think its kind of important to empower them somehow to let them know that, that the system may not necessarily be [a] disadvantage to them but they may be able to that they should be able to play, that should be able to play in their favour that there is always something there. They need to make it clear that there is always a rope to grab onto. Well at the same time condemning the actions of others against them. I think it is particularly important. I think, no more of this pretending not to see it crap.

M: Yes.

S: That a lot of teachers and schools do, and none of this… I think there is too much leeway given to the whole … well they are just expressing their opinion, but yeah ok, but we wouldn’t let them express an opinion in such a fashion in terms of condemning based on an arbitrary feature. Like we wouldn’t but it is because someone associates it with, not making a dig the religious here. But if someone claims that oh well you are getting on that, it is a whole can of worms for administration that schools and teachers don’t want to get into. So they don’t get involved, kids die. Its just the reality of the situation, they need to draw a line and say you can have your opinion but sometimes you really shouldn’t express them and don’t …
M: And then it sends a whole other message…

S: Yeah! (Sam)

One participant described an incident when he was being bullied on the basis of his sexual orientation in his homeroom class. When he approached his school administration and teachers to address the issue, they wondered why he hadn’t said anything to them. However this particular student knew that teachers were watching and hearing the victimization happen. He explained,

Well like I said before, education is big. I think we need really strict anti-bullying policies…I remember this one point when I was in my homeroom class, we went around and did work with our homeroom class and I got treated like garbage. I asked to transfer, especially because one in the one class was like the main bully, at least. I asked if I could sort of switch and I did it under the pretense that it fit with my classes better and they sort of were like - you know - that isn’t a good enough excuse and then I was like ok, well this guy is bullying me and so is the rest of the class and I would like to get away from it. And they were like - why didn’t you tell us? I just felt like, there is not many opportunities to tell it, and you knew the teachers were seeing it, and the teachers would be calling these students out saying ‘don’t say that’, but they wouldn’t take it any further, they wouldn’t suspend or reprimanded. They would just be like –hey! None of that! Or a lot of stuff would be so subtle; that the teachers I don’t think even felt empowered to know what to do. Like little name calling in the hallways. It is harder to catch. Prevention strategies like ah, yeah I think like, I think it needs to be more publicized more I think. (Aron)
Aron made an important point that perhaps teachers do not know how to properly address bullying or how to deal with an issue when someone makes a derogatory comment regarding a person’s sexual orientation. Aron continued, “something that is like ‘that’s so gay’ it becomes a term, like a derogatory term because it is seen as abnormal”. Teachers do not know how to address this, which in turn marginalizes LGBQ youth.

In summary, participants in this sample described support and what they believed to be supportive to counteract bullying. Participants described the importance of peer relationships, the constructive nature of online support in the form of Youtube videos and comments, blogs, websites, and forums in comparison to formal types of support. Participants also outlined the importance of education, and provided constructive suggestions to improve educational support.

**Overarching Theme: Power**

‘Power’ was a recurring theme throughout interview data. This notion was discussed in terms of acts of maintaining, controlling individual and group behaviour, the power of staying with the masses, and more specifically, how people use power relations to control or influence a person’s actions and behaviour. As described by participants, bullying situations start with a unique power relationship and then turn this power into something that the perpetrator can use as a control mechanism. Aron described how the feeling of power was something that he was well aware of during a bullying situation. “They didn’t want to be friends with me because I was a guy, and but because they were my only friends they sort turned that into a power relation where they kind of like capitalized on other peoples’ bullying [against me]” (Aron). Other participants discussed power in relation to sexual orientation as a form of control. In connection with
concealment and revealment, one person contended that he believes people bully others on the basis of sexual orientation because they can make an LGBQ youth feel that he/she must hide their sexuality so that they won’t be bullied. To him, that is a strong control mechanism, referring to sex as something you can get in a market, something that is taboo, controlled and desired. He commented, “Sexuality is important because of control, you can control people with it. It’s effective. People use it for pleasure, and so when someone bullies [you] you hide it. If you can control that, you can kind of twist someone’s arm preferably speaking” (Sam). Sam also contends that an LGBQ youth may feel powerless after he/she reveals their sexual orientation. They lose that individual ‘power’ control everyone will know your sexual preference. He comments how using online support somewhat equals out the power/powerless relationship when a person is revealing their sexuality online; the person still can maintain some control. He commented,

I had absolute control over how much of myself I put out there. The problem was, having that much control over how much of yourself is, is the world allowed to see because that’s .. that’s where the problem when you start to feel really shameful about who you are, that is really starts to hit. You don’t control over that aspect of yourself, you can’t and you bring.. So when you have that ability to say to someone well this is all of me that you are allowed to see. That is brilliant.

(Sam)

The theme of power therefore extends orthogonally throughout all themes and is a pervasive theory related to bullying. Power is a dynamic that is further reinforced through
cultural and historical norms, and proliferates in group bullying situations as dominant/hegemonic masculinity and straightness continues to be positioned as the ‘norm’.

Figure 5 below is a representation of the interaction of Tiers one, two and three and the overarching theme of power.

Figure 5. Interaction of tiers one, two and three and the overarching theme of power.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore various types of bullying and the lived experiences of LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth, the rates of victimization they experienced and the various types of support participants perceive to be available to assist them in coping with bullying. The methodology that guided the study was a mixed methods approach, which included the gathering of statistical data through questionnaires and qualitative data through semi-structured interview conversations. Eight research questions directed the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study. The following is a discussion of the results pertaining to each question, firstly from a quantitative aspect, and finally from a qualitative lens using three tiers (Scope of bullying for LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth, impact of bullying on LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth, support and moving forward). As well the following sections will discuss relevant findings, implications for research, limitations of this study and future recommendations.

Tier One: Scope of Bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth

1.1 What are the predominant forms (direct vs. indirect) of bullying associated with sexual orientation?

1.1 (a). What is the prevalence rate of bullying and cyberbullying associated with sexual orientation?

1.2 How do the prevalence rates of cyberbullying and bullying compare?

The definitions of bullying.

It is important to begin with a discussion of peoples’ perception of what bullying means, for youth who are bullied, and those who are perpetrators must understand,
recognize and explain what this detrimental act is so that they may seek and receive support. Deconstructing the meaning of the term also brings light to this issue so that those who bully understand the harm they are inflicting on others and how this type of antagonism is detrimental to all. Since different forms of bullying have surfaced in the wake of recent technological social media site trends, this aggressive act has appeared in various forms that were not available in the past. Bullying is therefore a term that is transformative in nature over time.

Hawkins et al., (2001) define bullying as “a form of aggressive behaviour in which the child [or person] who is bullying has more power than the victim and repeatedly uses this power aggressively to cause distress to the victim through physical and/or verbal behaviour” (p. 512). It is remarkable to note that participants from this study sample provided a similar definition of bullying, classifying it as a series of dynamic power relationships that exist between the perpetrator and the victim. Yet according to one participant, bullying is not ‘a repeated act’ but can be a lone incident. Sam described an incident in which he was severely bullied, but only one time. He remarked that still to this day he avoids the perpetrator of the act due to the brutality of the attack that was leveled against him. Sam’s experience contradicts the notion that bullying is a repeated action. Recent research however supports Sam’s premise, presenting a slightly different definition of the term to include experiences like Sam’s. Volk et al., (under review), propose a more recent definition of bullying in which bullying is goal directed, happens in the presence of a power relationship and has the intent to cause harm. The authors also remark that a formal definition of bullying should include single severe acts of aggression, as well as repetitive aggression.
Although the issues of severity was not directly addressed in this study, it was highlighted through the lived experiences of Sam in which one severe bullying act leveled against him, continues to impact his feeling of security, his general wellbeing and behaviour today. In the recent research of Volk et al., (under review), they recommend that future studies should investigate issues of severity of victimization. To further this, future researchers should work to outline the difference and similarities between bullying/cyberbullying behaviours and abusive behaviours and specifically how the nature of bullying is connected and related to abusive behaviours and relationships.

**Definition of cyberbullying.** Participants were able to provide a more formal definition of cyberbullying, asserting that cyberbullying is multi-leveled and divergent in its interpretation. Li (2007) refers to cyberbullying as occurring in different forms – multi-leveled with multi-methods. Participants also related that online forums could be sites that provide support where a victim can seek refuge and utilize it as an interactive and passive support tool. On the other hand it can also be a setting where cyberbullying occurs. Where one person may consider a site as being supportive, another may not. Interactive sites where a person can post comments are subject to interpretation in their multi-leveled capacity. Cyberbullying is therefore a complex act that is interpreted and defined differently, depending on the person, their perception, and the cyber-space context utilized.

**Sexual orientation bullying: Direct and indirect.** Results indicate from this sample that general direct and indirect bullying is experienced at similar rates between LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth as demonstrated in Table 1 and Table 2. Further inferential statistics revealed that LGBQ and non-LGBQ groups do not differ in rates of bullying in
terms of direct and indirect bullying and direct cyberbullying. However, results signify that LGBQ youth are more likely to experience both types of bullying due to their perceived sexuality or their self-identified sexuality (Table 3). Further inferential statistics revealed that LGBQ youth differ from non-LGBQ youth in experiencing higher rates of both direct and indirect bullying as well as direct cyberbullying. These findings are consistent with previous literature (D’Augelli & Grossman, 2001).

In a comparison of direct and indirect instances of bullying, participants experienced traditional (direct) forms of bullying more often than indirect forms. Some individuals reported that they had been cyberbullied, yet they revealed these instances occurred less frequently than other types of bullying (direct and indirect). This finding maybe also is related to the age of the sample. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 29. Younger participants may have reported more incidences of cyberbullying (which has been discussed as a limitation to this research). The notion of age dependency or cohort effect is discussed by Schenk and Fermouw (2012). They comment that prevalence rates of cyberbullying vary with age and can be skewed when looking at older generations who not exposed to or who currently have little knowledge or interest in using informational technology.

Another issue highlighted by two individuals is the occurrence of bullying on a person’s perceived sexuality (See Table 3). Two non-LGBQ participants indicated that they experienced bullying because perpetrators perceived their sexuality as being ‘other than straight’. This finding suggests that the perception of one’s sexuality plays a significant role in the likelihood of becoming a victim of sexual orientation victimization. This may shed light on how systemic power plays a key role in victimization on the basis
of sexual orientation. Drawing on participants’ responses as to why bullying happens (ie. easy target), they believe that people who deviate from the ‘norm’ or anyone who is considered to be ‘different’ or is associated as identifying as belonging to ‘lesser’ sexual orientation is marginalized.

In terms of indirect bullying, one participant remarks how general statements used freely in public, cause a great deal of hardship for youth who are either struggling with their sexuality and have not ‘come out’, or even for those who have announced their sexuality to others. One participant used the example of “Justin Beiber is gay”. This statement appeared on a Youtube feed, which victimizes not only Justin Beiber but also the gay community. This remark is very noteworthy as it speaks to context and how people can understand situations differently and interpret things in a different way. The issue of context was mentioned in several interviews, where participants remarked that in terms of using the phrase ‘you’re gay’ or ‘you’re so gay’ it is very hurtful and discriminatory. This phrase has evolved to be an unconscious saying or a colloquial phrase. Others discussed how using these types of offensive phrases still demonstrates how many people are either blatantly discriminating against those who do not adopt societal norms, or are ignorant of the harm they are causing by using these phrases. One participant remarked that these phrases have been used as figures of speech, yet they remain very offensive to so many people. As Aron discussed “we live in a herteronormative world something that is like “that’s so gay” it becomes a term, like a derogatory term because it seen as abnormal I think. But the truth is, it is just as normal as any other sexuality”. Poteat and Rivers (2010) examine the use of homophobic language in adolescence and found using homophobic phrases such as “you’re so gay” or
“you’re gay” encourages bullying behaviours and promotes further victimization. Aron’s contention of how he believes someone can say they support diverse sexualities yet continue to use offensive language, demonstrates that many people subliminally victimize those who identify as LGBQ and further promote bullying on the basis of sexual orientation.

Research conducted by Craig et al., (2007) provides evidence as to why bullying occurs. The authors identify characteristics that may place an individual at risk, depending on the power relationship that exists between the bully and the victim. The authors maintain that bullying occurs in some cases by “knowing another’s vulnerability (e.g. obesity, stuttering, learning problem, sexual orientation, family background)” (p. 465). Furthermore bullying occurs through social advantage where the perpetrator possesses “a dominant role/social status (being popular), or through systemic power (e.g. racial or cultural groups, sexual minorities, economical disadvantage, disability)” (Craig et al., 2007, p. 465). Findings and emergent themes of Don’t Stand Out and Easy Target: Powerless from this study coincide with the above premise.

**Systematic power dynamics.** Findings reveal that to not be a victim of bullying, youth must move with the masses so they are not recognized as being different; they must conform to ‘proper’ gender roles and heterosexuality and stay within societal norms. Drawing on the results of this study and the findings of Craig et al., (2007) an explanation as to why bullying happens points to a dominant theme of systemic power. Not only do the resultant themes demonstrate the issues of power, participants outlined how this type of victimization is often unaddressed, tolerated and by some, considered an acceptable behaviour. Participants also provided explanations that demonstrate systematic power for
LGBQ youth, which serves almost as a double edged sword as sexual minorities are hidden from educational curriculum, a general society ignorance exists, and there is a complete disregard for the victim. The notion of ‘turning a blind eye’ is reinforced through hidden and subtle lessons of default. This systematic power relationship not only praises and celebrates hegemonic masculinity but also further oppresses sexual minorities.

It is also interesting to note the key role of the bystander in sexual orientation victimization. Results from this study indicate that victimization of LGBTQ youth is experience on multiple levels (peer-to-peer, within an education context and a societal ignorance), providing multiple contexts for bystanders. Drawing on the research of Sandstom et al., (2013), in regard to group norms and children’s reactions to bullying, it is interesting to note how bystanders have played a large role in multiple contexts and in victimization toward LGBQ youth. Bystanders on various levels have allowed victimization to continue by encouraging the use of colloquial derogatory terms such as “that’s gay” or “you’re gay”, and/or have not addressed the saying to deconstruct how this homophobic language reinforces victimization. As discussed by Karina, rumours may instigate bullying. “A rumour… in the girls’ change room and people would whisper, ‘oh God, she is a lesbian’” (Karina) - may contribute to victimization. Although bystanders may not have been responsible for starting the rumors, they continue to spread this information, or passively listen. Karina discussed how she remembered feeling badly for this individual, but she chose to say nothing.

Participants presented another view as to why they believe bullying happens. They referred to the notion where society condones victimization by making the excuse
that bullying is part of human nature. The perpetrator bullies to secure a social dominance. This supports the belief that many do not tolerate those who are ‘other’ – youth who do not fit into societal norms. In other words, society rejects difference, hence bullying is an acceptable behaviour. In terms of sexual orientation, this rejective ‘thinking’ then provides a perceived license to victimize LGBTQ persons, as they are considered to be different, to be of little value, and do not conform to a sexuality that is celebrated.

**Emergent themes.** The themes that surfaced related to LGBTQ youth victimization are conflicting gender roles, subtle and blatant ignorance, complete disregard, religion, lack of education on LGBTQ issues and hidden lessons of default. The bullying that ensues is a product of a society that celebrates heterosexuality as the norm and tolerates LGBTQ victimization in subtle and blatant ways. For example, hidden lessons of default that reinforce heterosexuality are further supported by dominant gender roles of what it is and/or what is means to be female or male and are also supported by societal dominant views of religion. In particular, Dane was tormented for nonconforming to gender roles and could not understand why gender roles, although not distinctly taught, become accepted as a truth, and in turn becomes a hidden lesson of what and how you should be.

DePalma and Jennet (2010), discuss how victimization relating to nonconformity is a common experience for students who do not fit into hegemonic masculinity. This issue stresses the educational importance of how grand themes and narratives interact with social ideals in the several contexts for both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth. A continued investigation in regard to the thematic interaction will produce a greater understanding of how these overlapping concepts can be deconstructed to alleviate LGBTQ victimization.
Research is therefore needed to investigate how the interconnectedness of these themes (gender roles, religion, education, ignorance and hidden lessons of default) reinforce victimization from several subsystems, as learned and subtly taught. An examination of school and institutional curriculum and related policies is needed to effect positive change on societal beliefs at all levels (Case & Stewart, 2010; Ferfolja, 2007; O'Higgins-Norman, 2008).

Participants also discussed how religion is a predominate theme related to LGBQ victimization, for religious groups according to participants, generally only sanction heterosexuality. Families who conform to these religious expectations often do not condone the actions of their own family members who are ‘other’, and may be asked rethink their beliefs. Religious beliefs therefore cause conflict as in the case of Sam where families tend to value their religious beliefs, over their children’s health and welfare. Oftentimes religious indoctrination undermines people’s common sense beliefs. Those who follow these beliefs are taught to reject the LGBTQ community instead of accepting and welcoming them. Families that follow these religious beliefs are alienating their own family members who identify as LGBTQ. This act of detachment encourages bullying. In Sam’s case, he was unable to contribute or talk about relationships with this family and believed that he was not accepted. The interaction of religion and sexuality within literature has been noted to set the stage for dominant views of sexuality of what is normal vs. abnormal fueled by stereotypes and reiterated through family, religion and education (Jewell & Morrison, 2010).

Education in terms of curriculum is also a theme discussed by participants as being a deterrent to change in societal viewpoints and expectations. The educational
environment is also as a key site of various levels of victimization by peers, teachers, and others in the educational community. As the curriculum does not openly, consistently and freely teach outside of heternormativity, youth indicated that they feel challenged and marginalized in the classroom setting. This concept is discussed by Buston and Hart (2001) who contend that, by leaving other sexualities out of educational context reinforces hetervosexuality and leaves LGBTQ youth to believe that they do not belong and that they are abnormal. Participants remarked on the issues they face in school, when curriculum content and the attitudes of some teachers alienate them and in turn cause incidences of bullying. Oftentimes bullying episodes are left to escalate if homophobic language and behaviours are not dealt with severely. Turning a ‘blind eye’, or making ‘light’ of harassment and bullying that occurs in the classroom either subliminally or blatantly, puts youth at risk further for either being harassed online outside of the classroom setting or in the schoolyard. Aron stated,

You knew the teachers were seeing it, and the teachers would be calling these students out saying don’t say that, but they wouldn’t take it any further, they wouldn’t suspend or reprimanded They would just be like hey none of that. Or a lot of stuff would be so subtle, that the teachers I don’t think even felt empowered.

Hardie and Bowers (2012) discuss how educators are more likely to ignore homophobic comments and how these comments are often followed by “silence and nonaction” (p. 85). However overlooking bullying behaviours, and dismissing the perpetrators without discipline, upholding herteronormative ideologies, and disregarding LGBQ issues in educational settings, will maintain herteronormative views and policies that perpetuate
sexual orientation bullying. In short, celebrating heteronormativity and failing to address LGBQ matters, reinforces a licensed victimization of LGBQ youth.

**Tier Two: The Impact of Bullying: LGBQ and non-LGBQ youth**

2.1. Are youth likely to conceal their sexuality due to fear of victimization?

Findings from this study reveal different levels of felt impact of bullying and victimization. As discussed earlier, participants indicated the way victims respond to bullying is individual, for harassment depends on the context as well as the means to which it is delivered and felt. Each person will therefore demonstrate various levels of impact. Participants discussed ramifications of bullying, such as lacking the desire and initiative to go to school, a decrease in self-worth, feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, and in some cases, thoughts of suicide. In addition, participants discussed the issues of how trying to conceal or having to reveal their sexual orientation caused a great amount of emotional stress, sadness, insecurity and anger. Participants also remarked that they always had to be wary of whom they could confide in, and whom they could trust when revealing their sexuality. Oftentimes, participants remarked that it is easier to conceal their sexual identity than in ‘coming out’. Harrison also discussed how difficult it was to move between social groups, for each time he met new people in a different social context, he would have to make the decision of whether to announce his sexuality or remain silent as he was unsure how others would react. This caused undue stress for him and disheartened him enough to shy away from meeting new people. He pointed out that individuals who identify as heterosexual do not feel obliged to announce their sexuality each time they socialize with new people, for heterosexuality is considered the norm. Yet people who define themselves as ‘other’ are constantly socially marginalized and
oftentimes are expected to ‘announce’ their sexuality. As Harrison commented “I guess an analogy for it [is] everyone sent in their books to the publisher and all of the people who are now identifying as not straight have to rush in and say “oh wait, wait, wait, I have to make this big change”. This ‘extra step’ of coming out that LGBQ youth have been forced into (based on heterosexual ideals of default) is discussed by Striepe and Tolman (2003), who make the point that heterosexual adolescences do not have to reveal or conceal their sexual identity to their parents. This is also discussed in literature in regard to models of sexual identity development, where LGBQ youth are expected to go through an “extra step” in which they must recognize that they are not attracted to the opposite sex (Anhalt & Morris, 1998; Worthington et al., 2002).

Many participants therefore discussed concealment as a means of staying safe. In Table 7, a sample of LGBQ participants revealed that they are more likely to conceal their sexual orientation due to fear of victimization, as compared to their non-LGBQ counterparts. Furthermore LGBQ youth typically concealed their sexual orientation, as they feared verbal harassment, or worse.

LGBQ participants talked about the negative acts and/or comments that were made against them and how often they would ‘make light’ of what happened. Some responded that ‘things could have been a lot worse’ and others related that they had ‘been so lucky’. These remarks suggest that LGBQ student feel that bullying and victimization is part of being an LGBQ youth and that for some reason they should expect to be bullied. Yes the bullying and victimization is bad and has left many long-term and short-term implications for them but in their minds they accept it and feel that they somewhat deserve this victimization because they have strayed from reinforced dominant
mainstream ideals. This notion demonstrates how ‘programmed’ normative societal views have made a lasting impact on them. Deep down they rationalize this negative behaviour because they believe that they are at fault; they do not fit the normative framework. This is a very serious issue that marginalizes LGBQ youth even further.

The emergent themes of ‘concealment’ and ‘revealing’ in this study are directly linked to the overarching theme of power. Participants indicated that the manner in which they negotiate these two themes is a very individualized process. They also described how concealing their identity gave them a sense of power in the form of control – they could control what they disclose to others – friends, family and strangers. Concealment was discussed as being related to hidden lessons of default – where they could hide their sexual identity until they were ready to divulge their ‘otherness’. Participants also commented that they would try their best to fit within the default guidelines so they would not be perceived as different and they would not ‘out’ themselves before they were ready. The act of ‘ outing’ themselves in their view would make them lose their control and power.

In the past, sexual identity development was discussed in terms of ‘stage-like models’, when categorizing themes of concealment and revealing (Cass, 1984; Troiden, 1979; Coleman, 1982). Participants in this sample described concealing and revealing as a process that occurs throughout time and in multiple contexts. As Harrison revealed, every new social situation is another environment in which you may feel inclined to reveal or conceal your sexual orientation. As well, concealing and revealing becomes further complicated by the fluidity of sexuality. Drawing on Aron’s description of his sexual orientation as being bi-sexual, he disclosed that if he were to describe his sexuality
on a scale, he said, “Right now, like if I was to fall on the scale I would probably be like 60 – 40 in favour of girls. Before when I first had this crush on this one guy I was like – ok – I have this crush on this one guy and I have never had a crush on a guy before. So I am going to assume I am technically bi-sexual”. Glover et al., (2009) discuss fluidity in terms of sexual identity. They contend that discussions on sexual identity must move away from a stage-like model to a continuum representation. A continuum model would more accurately represent fluidity of sexuality as experienced by Aron.

Telingator and Woyewodzic (2011) discuss how attitudes toward the LGBQ community have shifted after the deletion of ‘homosexuality’ as a disorder from the DSM-II in 1973. Four decades ago, those who were attracted to the same sex were considered as having a sexual disorder. Even though many studies have negated these beliefs, this outdated and incorrect ideology has set the stage for discrimination and victimization of LGBTQ youth of today. As one participant remarked when quoting a music artist, “gay is synonymous with the lesser”. However Zucker and Spitzer (2005) remark that this marginalizing ideology may still exist with the addition of the concept of Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood in the revised version of DSM-III to the DSM-VI of Gender Incongruence. This theory, which outlines the behaviour that is considered the norm for males and female, labeled as ‘gender role behaviour’, determines that heterosexuality is dominant, and defines what is acceptable and what is not, leaving space for victimization of LGBTQ individuals.

Participants were asked if they believe being called gay is an insult. Over 85% of the sample indicated that being called gay is sometimes an insult, depending on the context in which the phrase is uttered. Interpretation of this notion may suggest that the
phrase ‘you’re gay’ has become an unconscious phrase, (as discussed above). Some participants found it very offensive and others played it off as being ‘the norm’ – they believe that it is a colloquial term that people have adopted to demonstrate annoyance of an issue. However it cannot be disputed. Utilizing this term in any derogatory or condescending way is offensive and marginalizing. These findings are discussed by Athanases & Comar (2008), who examine the use of homophobic language. They contend that students are not aware of the implications of using such language or statements. Due to the current sample of 40 individuals (20 LGBQ and 20 non-LGBQ participants) an equal representation of LGBQ youth exists who might be more aware of the derogatory nature of the phrase. The conduction of a similar study in an educational context may provide interesting findings that may either support or negate the findings of Athanases and Comar (2008).

The theme of ‘safety’ in this sample was often connected to other themes such as ‘trust’ (concealment and revealment), ‘support’ and ‘education is big’. The theme of safety interacts with the other themes, because, for an individual to feel safe, they must be in an environment where they can trust others, regardless of their sexual orientation. They must also be supported by their friends, family, and peer groups and in all social and educational contexts. Overall data from the sample demonstrates that there is a significant impact for LGBQ youth, in terms of having to conceal their sexual orientation (both having to conceal due to societal expectation of default ‘straightness’), to feel safe and supported. Oftentimes, safety is related to feeling ‘bodily safe’ as well as emotionally safe. Many LGBTQ participants unfortunately do not feel safe in their family, social and educational surroundings.
Tier Three: Support and Moving Forward

3.1 What support would help an individual when he/she first declares his/her sexual orientation?

3.2 What prevention strategies can be implemented to stop (or reduce) bullying and cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation?

3.3 What types of support may assist victimized youth to cope with various forms of bullying based on sexual orientation?

Informal support. Participants were asked to provide what types of support they felt are needed or would be helpful when revealing their sexual orientation to others. In addition, participants discussed the type of support they felt would be most valuable to them to either combat bullying or assist them in dealing with personal issues. Although they were provided with a list of free community support services available in the region, they typically did not feel that these formal services (as listed on the support handout) would be the most effective type of support for them. They believe that informal types of support such as peer and online assistance is the most valuable, particularly in dealing with issues surrounding ‘societal ignorance’ of LGBTQ rights and freedoms. Three themes regarding informal support therefore emerged throughout the study.

The emergent theme of help is one that participants believe is of great importance. They discussed having a good friend to rely on as being very beneficial, for this type of support acts as a protective factor and serves as a much-needed social support aid.

Participants – Sam, Aron, Craig and Dane – discussed peer support as being more effective than formal types of support. They believe that friends provide a human touch and genuine willingness to help that an agency would not. Participants did however note
the importance of formal support services. In particular Dane discussed that formal support workers provide you with support and “you want to feel accepted”. He added, “it’s their job. That’s what they are paid to do, They are paid to help people”. Yet Dane made the distinction between help from a friend and help from an agency. “If I have a friend, they are not being paid, they are helping me because they care” (Dane).

Findings therefore suggest that peers provide the most effective support for LGBT youth in sexual orientation victimization and bullying circumstances. These findings imply that emphasis should be placed on promoting the importance of peer support in bullying situations, for if a victim can turn to a peer for support and assistance, he or she may receive instant solace and compassion. However Aron raised an important point for discussion. What happens when an individual does not have that one friend? Doty et al., (2010) suggest that support may not be available for those who wish to discuss matters related to sexual orientation bullying if their peers or family members identify as heterosexual, or if they do not accept those who identify as ‘other’. In Aron’s situation, where his acquaintances and family members are not always supportive, he stresses that formal support is needed and should be available at all times. Yet it is important to note that even though formal support services are readily available in urban centres, they may not be accessible in rural areas.

In relation to the accessibility of support services, the Bronfenbrenner (1994) model theory of ecological human development outlines the interactions between several systems that interact with one another to affect an individual and the individual’s development. This model is made up of the interaction between an individual and the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. The microsystem in
this model is comprised of an individual’s biology, peer relationships, parents, family, school, religion, and an individual’s community. The mesosystem is the bi-directional interaction of the components from the microsystem. The exosystem is composed of greater societal systems that are influenced by the macrosystem, which is made up of current ideologies and dominant societal beliefs. These systems as described by Bronfenbrenner (1994) outlines the interaction between different systems that both directly and indirectly affect an individual. Utilization of this model may be an interesting representation to examine sexual orientation systematic victimization, specifically how breakdowns in support systems in this model (Mircosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem) affect the individual and the types of support one might access. In addition, an examination of the ways in which these interacting subsystems within this model intersect and may reinforce or decrease the effects of victimization is needed. A focus is also needed to determine higher levels of support available in the various systems. More specifically, studies should be undertaken to examine how sexuality within this model is an intersecting variable between the environmental setting, the individual and subsystems and the roles of support.

Online support is another main form of assistance that according to participants is helpful and is easily accessible as long as Internet services are available. Participants also related that they feel comfortable with this type of support. Sam and Aron both indicated that going online was the first type of support that they accessed. Online chat forums provide an opportunity for victims to hear others’ personal stories, to view videos, read blogs in a private setting. Internet sites also provide excellent information about sexuality, and how to seek help and learn about safe sexual practices specific to their
sexuality. Participants described how online support affords them a sense of community in which they know they are not alone, yet still allows them to maintain their privacy and control. It is also a community in which they are able to choose how they wish to actively participate by posting comments and or videos. They can also read others’ posts, participate in forums or watch self-explanatory videos. All of the above can be accomplished at their own pace and be specific to their needs. The Internet therefore is a relatively new tool to support youth who are being bullied as well as those who are being victimized on the basis of their sexuality. Further research in this area should focus and highlight the usefulness of online support.

**Education is big.** Participants discussed the importance of education on many levels and particularly noted the importance of using schools as a key site to reduce victimization. Participants discussed how the education system has the ability to deconstruct stereotypes, reduce victimization, and provide all students with information on the unknown aspects of sexuality. Aron discussed how educators have the ability to give LGBQ students “a space” in the education system by have inclusive teachings that discuss intimate relationships of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Aron discussed how leaving these discussions out of the academic conversations contributes to the taboo of LGBTQ identities and alienates youth who must seek support and information elsewhere. It also reinforces bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. Drawing on Aron’s explanations, it is important to note that this space for LGBTQ matters can be something as simple as providing child and youth with appropriate reading material, having family appropriate work sheets to addressing other types of families for example reading materials that have stories about two mothers. In addition, Sam and Aron stressed
the importance of having and presenting inclusive sexual education that discusses sexual
diversity. Participants indicated that having this type of information available in schools
is imperative to reduce stigmas and create awareness around the unknown. There should
be a strong awareness of the importance of presenting this information in an appropriate
manner. Ferfolja (2007) discusses the importance of an appropriate approach in which
inclusive sexual education is delivered in the school context. Ferfolja (2007) contends
that teachers’ beliefs about sexual relationships are portrayed through the manner in
which they present the topic (body language) and the content they incorporate into the
discussions. The effectiveness of the discussions is therefore dependent on an educator’s
ability to speak appropriately in regard to diverse relationships. Students are able to
recognize if a teacher is confident and comfortable with the topic, and students’
individual judgments will reflect this. In other words, if educators are uncomfortable
discussing mechanics of sex for LGBQ youth, this may be re-interrupted by students,
reinforcing the ‘taboo’ or hidden nature of various sexual relationships. Furthermore, if
teachers fail to discuss sexual diversity by omitting this conversation in sexual education
classes, teachers are sending a clear message to students that relationships other than
heterosexual are abnormal. This omission reinforces victimization and stigma.

Findings also highlight that all youth need to be better informed and educated in
LGBQ and transgendered issues. Education is key to bring historically taboo
conversations on sexuality to the forefront and put them into a space in which individuals
can feel comfortable discussing the issues. Continued dialogue will also help alleviate the
problems related to the process of ‘coming out’, for youth will not have to conceal their
sexual identities. The education system must therefore work to ‘normalize’ LGBTQ
matters and incorporate them into an inclusive model. Above all, support services for LGBQ youth must be personal, immediate (at a finger's touch), and a system in which they feel comfortable and accepted. They must be afforded the privacy and comfort level they deserve and have the choice to participate in a passive or active capacity.

Limitations

Participants were recruited on a post-secondary school campus, in which students were generally well connected with services. However, some youth are not as connected with the same level of resources that are provided on a university campus and can have vastly different experiences. Furthermore, due to the small sample size, generalizing these finding to the general public has to be done carefully. Recruitment for this study was limited to a university sample; ages were limited to 17 and above. This sample may be subject to the age cohort effect in regards to issues of cyberbullying, where in many cases participants did not have a cell phone. For example, findings may be skewed as older participants may have had limited usage of information technology. Another limitation of this study is reports of bullying and sexual orientation are retrospective in nature and could be subject to recall bias.

Implications and Future Directions for Research

Bullying continues to be a serious issue that alienates and victimizes youth, regardless of sexual orientation. However, those who identify as LGBQ report higher rates of victimization. From the current findings, a number of implications can be outlined. For instance, both educationally and clinically, it is important to recognize the positive effects of validating one’s experiences, and recognizing how important it is to listen to the lived experiences of minority individuals. The implication of the stories
outlined in this thesis will help to bring attention to the importance of space and support for minority individuals. Most importantly, the findings can help inform educational and clinical policymakers of the need for both physical space within the education system and space within curriculum and classroom teachings regarding minority issues. A coherent approach that utilizes both top down and bottom up processes would be beneficial. A top down process must provide a legal framework to engage and inform public policy, as well as a legal policy to reinforce specifications as outlined by the law to protect the victim. Adopting and enforcing innovative anti-bullying laws, such as the Cyber Safety Act in Nova Scotia will place legal responsibility on individuals who bully online. These laws will serve as a guiding framework that will address matters of sexual orientation victimization. A legal framework must also recognize all forms of relationships as being equal in regard to marriage laws, and partnership benefits. Youth must also be apprised of such legislation in the educational context, and made aware of the specific needs of persons who identify as LGBTQ.

It is also imperative that students be made aware of the negative implications of the usage of derogatory language such as “that’s so gay” or “you’re gay”. Deconstructing the adverse meanings of these phrases at an early age will affect positive changes in attitudes and behaviour and will make students aware of the importance of respecting and acknowledging the LGBTQ community.

Another possible implication, is that although there is some formal support for youth geared specifically towards LGBQ issues, participants feel that organic forms of support such as having a strong peer support network and a safe discussion space are most helpful when struggling with issues regarding bullying and victimization. In
addition, support must come as a top-down process such as having space for conversations regarding LGBQ matters in the school environment. Through continued dialogue in the classroom setting, we may begin to break down heterosexual stereotypes, allow individuals to ask questions openly, and most importantly, educate others about how to be a good ally. The finding speaks to the major issue of knowing how to ask the right questions and how to be that one good friend, for participants discussed friendship support as being particularly crucial.

Findings from the present study suggest that all students, teachers and parents must advance educational practices in regard to educating children and youth about proper use of online practices and informational technologies. Educators must also teach proper online civil behaviour commonly known as netiquette and how to seek formal online information from reliable sources. Educational curriculum can be utilized as a preventative tool to create awareness of how to be a good online citizen, and highlight both the positive aspects of online use, as well as the necessary cautions that are needed. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of the educational system and educators as front line workers in educating children and youth on LGBQ matters. We as a collective group have to help foster healthy peer relationships to counteract the impacts of bullying.

As Aron, one of the interview participants, indicated support and reduced victimization of LGBQ youth can only happen until we begin to “retrain out minds” with education and awareness. Recalling the words of Harrison, we must remember that these “conversations are possible and they don’t have to be painful”.


References


doi: 10.1300/J461v03n01_04


Marini, Z., Dane, A., & Kennedy, R. (2010). Multiple pathways to bullying: Tailoring educational practices to variations in students’ temperament and brain function. In M. Ferrari & L. Vulatic (Eds.), *The developmental relations among mind, brain and education* (pp. 257–291), New York: NY: Springer.


Appendix A: General Recruitment Poster

Participants Needed!!!

For research investigating

BULLYING AND SEXUALITY

Participation in this study will involve
• Completion of various questionnaires that will take approx. 45 – 60 mins
  ○ you will be eligible to WIN a $100 GIFT CARD

• OPTIONAL interview that will take approx. 45 – 60 mins
  ○ Participation in an interview you will receive a $10 honorarium

ALL SEXUALITIES ARE WELCOMED
• Ages 17 – 26

For more information please contact
Mary - ms07zb@brocku.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Zepito Marini zmarini@brocku.ca (ext 3178)

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, Brock University [REB # 12 - 179] 905.688.5550 (ext 3035)
Appendix B: LGBQ Recruitment Poster

LGBQ

Participants Needed!!

For research investigating

BULLYING AND SEXUALITY

Ages 17 – 26
Participation in this study will involve
• Completion of various questionnaires that will take approx. 45 – 60 mins
  o you will be eligible to WIN a $100 GIFT CARD

• OPTIONAL interview that will take approx. 45 – 60 mins
  o Participation in an interview you will receive a $10 honorarium

SHARE YOUR STORY
For more information please contact
Mary - ms07zb@brocku.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Zanito Marini zmarini@brocku.ca (ext 3178)

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, Brock University [REB #12-179] 905.688.5550 (ext 3035)
Appendix C: Letter of Invitation (Email)

Letter of Invitation (Email to participants once they have contacted researcher)

Hello (participant name),

Thank you for your interest in this study that investigates sexuality and bullying. To be eligible for the study you must be between the ages of 17 – 26 and enrolled in post-secondary studies as well as self-identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning.

Participation in this study takes about 45-60 minutes where you will be asked to fill out a series of questionnaires. By participating in this portion of the study your name will be entered in a draw to win a $100 gift certificate to the Brock University Bookstore. As well, if you wish to participate in an optional 30 – 45 minute interview that discusses issues related to bullying and sexuality, you will receive a $10 honorarium for your time. Currently (room number) is booked for (date) to meet with you. If these times do not fit well with your schedule, please indicate times that may work well for you and your schedule.

If you have any 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. I look forward to your participation in the study.

Regards,

Mary Spring
(Contact information)

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board.
Appendix D: Letter of Consent (Stage One)

Informed Consent

Date:

Project Title: Sexuality and Bullying

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Zopito Marini, Professor
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
zmarni@brocku.ca
905.688.5550 ext 3178

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Mary Spring, Hon. B.A.
masters of Arts Candidate
Department of Child & Youth Studies
Brock University
ms07zb@brocku.ca

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to
further understand various types of bullying on the basis of sexual orientation as well as the
reasons as to why an individual is bullied or not. The study further strives to investigate the
levels of support that are available for those who are bullied.

WHAT IS INVOLVED
As a potential participant, you will be asked to take part in this study that will have a time
frame of approximately 1 - 2 weeks. The current research study design is in two stages.
Participation in STAGE ONE will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes of your time, where
you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires that pertain to the following: general
demographic information, an evaluation of forms and functions of bullying, and a
questionnaire that evaluates the perceived support available for those who are bullied.
STAGE TWO is optional and is comprised of a face-to-face interview. The researcher will
contact those who indicate interest in participating in stage two. All participants will be
compensated for their time and will have a chance to win a $100 gift card to the Brock
University Bookstore. Those who participate in stage two will received a $10 honorarium for
their time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Individuals will have an opportunity to tell their personal stories related to bullying. They
will also have an opportunity to express their opinions about the types of services and the
levels of support they feel are necessary to assist those who are being bullied.
There also may be risks associated with participation. Participants may experience anxiety
and/or uneasy feelings, given the nature of the study. In the event that you may feel any
apprehension or wish to seek further counsel, a list of free support services will be provided.
to you. Many of the support services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
All information that you provide is kept confidential; your name will not be included or in any way associated with the data collected in the study. As a participant you will be assigned a participant ID. However anonymous quotations from open-ended questions on questionnaires may be used with your permission. In the event that a participant withdraws from the study, data from the participant will be destroyed at the request of the participant and no longer included in any analysis or reports.
Data collected during this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in a lab at Brock University, and will be destroyed after the thesis process is completed and a paper is published.
Access to this data will be restricted to the primary investigator and the principal student investigator named above.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from any component of the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

**PUBLICATION OF RESULTS**
Results of this study may be published in an academic journal and/or presented at conferences. Feedback in regard to this study will be available by the summer of 2013. For further information please contact the Student Principal Investigator at ms07zb@brocku.ca

**CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Mary Spring or Dr. Zopito Marini using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [REB# 12 – 179] 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 the study outlined above. I have made the decision to participate, based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I will be provided with additional information in regard to the study, if deemed necessary. I understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age: _____

2. I identify as;
   [ ] Male  [ ] Female  [ ] Transgendered  [ ] Other: ______________________

3. I Identify as;
   [ ] Straight  [ ] Gay  [ ] Lesbian
   [ ] Bisexual  [ ] Questioning  [ ] Other: ______________________

4. Current relationship status;
   [ ] Single  [ ] In a relationship  [ ] Engaged
   [ ] Married  [ ] Civil Union  [ ] Domestic Partnership
   [ ] Separated  [ ] Divorced  [ ] Other: ______________________

5. How many voluntary sexual/intimate partners have you had since the age of 16?:
   ______

6. What is the highest level of education you are currently pursuing?
   a. _______community college-currently attending or completed diploma
   b. _______university-currently attending or completed bachelor’s degree
   c. _______Masters or professional school (e.g., law, library science)-currently attending or completed degree
   d. _______Doctorate (Ph.D or M.D.)-currently attending degree, or completed

7. My geographical living situation is best described as
   [ ] Urban  [ ] Rural  [ ] Other: ________

8. I always have my cell phone with me
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] I do not own a cell phone

9. I predominately use text messaging to communicate with others
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] I do not own a cell phone

10. How often do you use the internet for emailing, social networking, web posting and blogging etc
    [ ] 1 – 5 hours per week
11. I predominately use the internet (ie social networking) to connect and communicate with others.

[ ] Yes    [ ] No    [ ] N/A

12. Have you ever had to reveal your sexual orientation to others?

[ ] Yes    [ ] No    [ ] Prefer not to answer

If YES.
For what reasons did you have to reveal your sexual orientation to others?

________________________________________________________________________

13. Have you ever had to reveal your sexual orientation to your family?

[ ] Yes    [ ] No    [ ] Prefer not to answer

If YES,
For what reasons did you have to reveal your sexual orientation to your family?

________________________________________________________________________

14. Have you ever had to reveal your sexual orientation to your friends?

[ ] Yes    [ ] No    [ ] Prefer not to answer

If YES,
For what reasons did you have to reveal your sexual orientation to your friends?

________________________________________________________________________

15. Have you ever had to conceal your sexual orientation from your family?

[ ] Yes    [ ] No    [ ] Prefer not to answer

If YES,
For what reasons did you have to conceal your sexual orientation from your family?
16. Have you ever had to conceal your sexual orientation from your friends?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

   If YES,  
   For what reasons did you have to conceal your sexual orientation from your friends?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

17. Have you ever had to conceal your sexual orientation due to fear of harassment or victimization?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

   If YES,  
   What type of harassment?
   [ ] Physical (punching, hitting, kicking)
   [ ] Verbal (put downs, name calling, spreading rumours etc)
   [ ] Cyberbullying (i.e. online threats)
   [ ] Other: _____________________

18. At different points in my life I have identified as another sexual orientation other than my sexual orientation I declared above?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

19. I have had people perceive my sexuality as something other than I thought it was
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

   If YES,  
   Did you feel as though you had to do something (ie. have intimate relations with others, date others etc) to reassure others of your sexuality?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

20. In your opinion is being called “gay” an insult?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If YES, Why?
________________________________________________________________________

   If NO, Why not?
21. Have you ever accessed support services for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) youth?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

If YES,

What kinds of support services did you access?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Did these services give you the support you needed at the time?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

22. Have you ever accessed online support websites, forums for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) youth?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Prefer not to answer

23. In your opinion, what kinds of services would be helpful to youth who are victimized based on their sexual orientation?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

24. Do you have any other comments about bullying, cyberbullying and sexuality that you would like to share?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
### Appendix F: Support from Family and Friends

Directions: The following statements refer to feelings and experiences that occur for most people at one time or another in relationships with friends. For each statement there are five possible options: 1 (Never) – 5 (Always). Please circle the answer that best pertains to your circumstance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. My friends give me the moral support that I need.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>B. Most people are closer to their friends than I am.</th>
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<th>C. My friends enjoy hearing about what I think.</th>
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<th>D. Certain friends come to me when they have problems or need advice.</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<th>E. I rely on my friends for emotional support.</th>
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<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>F. If I felt that one or more of my friends were upset with me, I'd just keep it to myself.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<td>(Never)</td>
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<td>(I don’t know)</td>
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<tr>
<th>G. I feel that I'm on the fringe in my circle of friends.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>(I don’t know)</td>
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<tr>
<th>H. There is a friend I could go to if I were feeling down, without feeling funny about it later.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>(I don’t know)</td>
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<th>I. My friends and I are very open about what we think/discuss about things.</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>(Never)</td>
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<td>(I don’t know)</td>
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J. My friends are sensitive to my personal needs.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

K. My friends come to me for emotional support.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

L. My friends are good at helping me solve problems.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

M. I have a deep sharing relationship with a number of friends.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

N. My friends get good ideas about how to do things or make things from me
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

O. My friends give me good ideas about how to do things or make things.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

P. When I confide in friends, it makes me feel uncomfortable.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

Q. I think my friends feel that I am good at helping them solve problems.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

R. I don't have a relationship with a friend that is as intimate as other people's relationships with friends.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

S. I've recently had a good idea about how to do something from a friend.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

T. I wish my friends were much different.
   1  2  3  4  5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)
Directions: The following statements refer to feelings and experiences which occur to most people at one time or another in relationships with their families. For each statement there are five possible options: 1 (Never) – 5 (Always). Please circle the answer that best pertains to your situation.

A. My family provides me with the moral support I need.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

B. My family gives me good ideas about how to handle situations or how to make things.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

C. Most other people are closer to their family than I am.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

D. When I confide in the members of my family who are closest to me, I feel that it makes them uncomfortable.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

E. My family enjoys hearing about what I think.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

F. Members of my family share many of my interests.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

G. Certain members of my family come to me when they have problems or need advice.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

H. I rely on my family for emotional support.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

I. There is a member of my family I could go to if I were just feeling down, without feeling funny about it later.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

J. My family and I are very open about what we think about things
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)
K. My family is sensitive to my personal needs.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

L. Members of my family come to me for emotional support.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

M. Members of my family are good at helping me solve problems.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

N. I have a deep sharing relationship with members of my family.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

O. I give my family members good ideas about how to handle situations or how to make things.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

P. When I confide in members of my family, it makes me uncomfortable.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

Q. Members of my family seek me out for companionship.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

R. I think that my family feels that I'm good at helping them solve problems.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

S. I don't have a relationship with a member of my family that is as close as other people's relationships with family members.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)

T. I wish my family were much different.
   1 2 3 4 5
   (Never) (I don’t know) (Always)
Appendix G: Victimization and Bullying

A. How often have these acts been **DONE TO YOU** during the last year?

1. Pushed and shoved
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

2. Called names and sworn at
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

3. Received hurtful and unsigned notes
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

4. Excluded from a social event or activity
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

5. Teased or ridiculed
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

6. Rumors and untrue stories about you have been circulated.
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

7. Kicked and hurt
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday

8. Another person has verbally threatened you.
   
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   Never A few times a year A few times a month A few times a week Everyday
B. In your opinion, how many of these acts AGAINST YOU have been based on your sexuality and have occurred in the past year?

1. Pushed and/or shoved
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

2. Called names and sworn at
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

3. Received hurtful and unsigned notes
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

4. Excluded from a social event or activity
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

5. Teased or ridiculed
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

6. Rumors and untrue stories about you have been circulated.
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes

7. Kicked and hurt
   [ ] Yes       [ ] No       [ ] Sometimes
C. In the last year how often have **YOU COMMITTED** these acts?

1. Pushed or shoved

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2. Name calling and swearing at an individual

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3. Writing hurtful and unsigned notes/messages

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4. Excluding someone from a social event or activity

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5. Teasing and ridiculing

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6. Spreading rumors and untrue stories

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7. Kicking and hitting

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8. Asked another person to verbally hurt someone

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D. In the last year how often have **YOU COMMITTED** these acts on the basis on someone’s sexuality?

1. Pushed or shoved
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

2. Name calling and swearing at an individual
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

3. Writing hurtful and unsigned notes/messages
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

4. Excluding someone from a social event or activity
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

5. Teasing and ridiculing
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

6. Spreading rumors and untrue stories
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

7. Kicking and hitting
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes

8. Asked another person to verbally hurt someone
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Sometimes
We are interested in gaining knowledge in regard to your use of technology and electronic devices. This includes use of any communication devices such as computers, and phones, for the purpose of texting, web posting, e-mailing, online chatting and using social media (e.g. Facebook). There are no right or wrong answers. Please circle the answer that best fits your situation.

**E. How often have these things been DONE TO YOU during the last year?**

1. Received mean and insulting comments on your Facebook wall.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. None of the members of your group return your messages.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. Someone you argued with posted embarrassing information about you on a website.
   1  2  3  4  5

4. To become popular, someone used your computer to download banned and forbidden pictures.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Someone copied private pictures and information from your computer.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Someone you know posted rumours and untrue stories about you on a website
   1  2  3  4  5

7. To retaliate, someone you know posted embarrassing pictures of you on Facebook.
   1  2  3  4  5

8. To be cool, someone excluded you from joining an online computer game, forum, or online discussion group (ie. BBM or Facebook group).
   1  2  3  4  5
9. Someone was angry with you. To retaliate he/she downloaded personal and confidential information from your computer.

10. You have been excluded from joining an online group.

11. Someone was mad at you. To retaliate he/she sent you threatening, nasty emails.

12. To be accepted by a peer group, someone you know posted private information you shared with them on Facebook.

13. To get even with you, someone you know posted an invitation to a party on Facebook and left you out.

14. To get what they wanted, someone you know posted rumours and untrue stories about you on a website.

15. To be cool, someone you know ignored your request to join an online group.
F. How many of these acts AGAINST YOU have been based on your sexuality that have occurred in the past year?

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1. Received mean and insulting comments on your Facebook wall.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. None of the members of your group return your messages.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Someone you argued with posted embarrassing information about you on a website.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. To become popular, someone used your computer to download banned and forbidden pictures.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Someone copied private pictures and information from your computer.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Someone you know posted rumours and untrue stories about you on a website.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. To retaliate, someone you know posted embarrassing pictures of you on Facebook.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. To be cool, someone excluded you from joining an online computer game, forum, or online discussion group (ie. BBM or Facebook group).
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Someone was angry with you. To retaliate he/she downloaded personal and confidential information from your computer.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. You have been excluded from joining an online group.
    1 2 3 4 5
11. Someone was mad at you. To retaliate he/she sent you threatening, nasty emails.

12. To be accepted by a peer group, someone you know posted private information you shared with them on Facebook.

13. To get even with you, someone you know posted an invitation to a party on Facebook and left you out.

14. To get what they wanted, someone you know posted rumours and untrue stories about you on a website.

15. To be cool, someone you know ignored your request to join an online group.
We are interested in finding out your experiences with using technology and electronic devices. This includes any communication devise such as phones, texting, web posting, e-mailing, online chat and using social media (e.g. Facebook). There are no right or wrong answers. Please, circle the answer that best describes your own experience.

**G. How often have YOU COMMITTED these things during the last year?**

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1. Sent mean and insulting comments on someone’s Facebook wall

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2. Did not return messages from a member of your group.

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3. Posted embarrassing information about classmates because you argued with them.

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4. To become popular, you used someone else’s computer to download banned and forbidden information.

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5. Copied private pictures and information from someone’s computer.

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6. Posted rumors and untrue stories about someone on a website.

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7. To retaliate, you posted embarrassing pictures of someone on Facebook

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8. To be cool, you excluded someone from joining an on-line computer game, forum, or online discussion group (ie. BBM or Facebook group)

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9. To retaliate, you downloaded or copied personal and confidential information from a person’s computer after having an argument with them.

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10. Excluded someone from joining an online group.

    |   |   |   |   |
    |---|---|---|---|
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
11. To retaliate, you sent threatening and nasty messages to someone.

12. To become more popular, you posted private information on Facebook that someone shared with you.

13. To get even with someone, you posted an invitation to your party on Facebook and intentionally left them out.

14. To get what you wanted, you posted rumours and stories about someone on a website.

15. To be cool, you ignored someone’s request to join an online group.
H. How often have **YOU COMMITTED** these acts based on an individual's sexuality in the last year?

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<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
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1. Sent mean and insulting comments on someone’s Facebook wall
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

2. Did not return messages from a member of your group.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

3. Posted embarrassing information about classmates because you argued with them.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

4. To become popular, you used someone else’s computer to download banned and forbidden information.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

5. Copied private pictures and information from someone’s computer.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

6. Posted rumors and untrue stories about someone on a website.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

7. To retaliate, you posted embarrassing pictures of someone on Facebook
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

8. To be cool, you excluded someone from joining an on-line computer game, forum, or online discussion group (ie. BBM or Facebook group)
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

9. To retaliate, you downloaded or copied personal and confidential information from a person’s computer after having an argument with them.
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

10. Excluded someone from joining an online group.
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5

11. To retaliate, you sent threatening and nasty messages to someone.
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5
12. To become more popular, you posted private information on Facebook that someone shared with you.

13. To get even with someone, you posted an invitation to your party on Facebook and intentionally left them out.

14. To get what you wanted, you posted rumours and stories about someone on a website.

15. To be cool, you ignored someone’s request to join an online group.
Appendix H: Request to Participate (Stage Two)

Request to Participate in Stage Two: Interviews

As a participant you have the option to participate in a 45 – 60 minute interview. Interviews will take place in a semi-private environment (lab setting) and will remain confidential. The interview consists of 11 interview questions that will be focused around bullying, cyberbullying, sexuality and types of support deemed necessary to assist victims of bullying (ex. “In which environment do you think bulling occurs? Can you describe these for me?” & “Describe a situation where you believe you have been bullied on the basis of sexual orientation or your sexuality?”). Interview participants will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name). Anonymous quotations will be used with your permission. All information that you provide is kept confidential; your name will not be included or in any way associated with the data collected in the study. Participants will receive a $10 honorarium as compensation for the time spent in this stage of the research study.

I am interested in participating in a confidential interview. _____Yes  _____No

If Yes,

Please provide contact information. The principal researcher will contact you to set up an interview at your convenience.

Name: _____________________________

Email: _____________________________  [ ] preferred communication

Telephone: _________________________  [ ] preferred communication
Appendix I: Informed Consent (Stage Two)

Informed Consent

Date: February 2013

Project Title: Sexuality and Bullying

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Zopito Marini, Professor
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
zmarini@brocku.ca
905.688.5550 ext 3178

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Mary Spring, Hon. B.A.
Masters of Arts Candidate
Department of Child & Youth Studies
Brock University
ms07zb@brocku.ca

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to further understand various types of bullying on the basis of sexual orientation as well as the reasons as to why an individual is bullied or not. The study further strives to investigate the levels of support that are available for those who are bullied.

WHAT’S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be asked to participate in this final portion of the study that will have a time frame of approximately 1 - 2 weeks. This current research study design is in two stages. Stage one (which you have already completed) was comprised of a series of questionnaires. Stage two (the current stage) is a face-to-face interview. This interview will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes of your time. The interview will provide the researcher with a greater understanding of participants’ experiences in regard to bullying and sexuality. Compensation in the form of a $10 honorarium will be provided to you for your time spent in completion of this final stage.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Individuals will have an opportunity to tell their personal stories related to the topic of bullying. Participants will also have an opportunity to express their opinion on the types of services and the levels of support that are needed to assist those who are being bullied. There may be risks associated with participation. Participants may experience anxiety and/or uneasy feelings, given the nature of the study. In the event that you may feel any apprehension or wish to seek further counsel, a list of free support services will be provided to you. Many of the support services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information that you provide is kept confidential; your name will not be included or in
any other way associated with the data collected in the study. A pseudonym will be used. Interviews will be audio-taped for accuracy and remain confidential. However anonymous quotations from interviews may be used with your permission. Shortly after the interview has been completed I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add to or clarify any points that you wish. Interviews conducted in stage two will not be associated with data collected in stage one (questionnaires). In the event that a participant withdraws from the study, data collected from the participant will be destroyed and will not be included in any form. Data collected during this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in a lab at Brock University, and will be destroyed after a thesis defense is completed and a paper is published. Access to this data will be restricted to the primary investigator and the principal student investigator named above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from any component of the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in an academic journal and/or presented at conferences. Feedback in regard to this study will be available by the summer of 2013. For further information please contact the Student Principal Investigator at ms07zb@brocku.ca

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Mary Spring or Dr. Zopito Marini using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [REB# 12 – 179] 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 the study outlined above. I have made the decision to participate, based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I will be provided with additional information in regard to the study, if deemed necessary. I understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: __________________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix J: Pre-interview Verbal Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview portion of this study, which investigates the issues of sexuality and bullying. This interview will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be guided by a few questions. At any point during the interview process, you may decline to answer any questions for any reason. At any point you may take a break or stop the interview. During the interview, we request that you do not mention any third part names when discussing issues to protect individual’s confidentiality. A list of support services is provided to you if you feel any form of distress and level of anxiety or feel you have been a victim of abuse or assault after the interview has ended, we encourage you to seek support through these various organizations. Do you have any questions for me at this time? Please feel free to ask any questions at any time.
Appendix K: Interview Prompts

The following general questions were used as prompts within the open-ended interviews.

1. In which environment do you think bulling occurs? Can you describe these for me?

2. Describe a situation where you have been involved in or witnessed a bullying experience/situation(s)? In your opinion why was this bullying happening?

3. Can you tell me about cyberbullying? What is your opinion of cyberbullying?

4. Describe a situation where you believe you have been bullied on the basis of sexual orientation or your sexuality?

5. In your opinion why are comments (negative or positive) regarding someone’s sexuality such a big deal? (ie hurtful, pride etc).

6. Describe support services that you believe are available for youth who have been bullied on the basis of sexual orientation.

7. In your opinion what types of support may assist victimized youth to cope with various forms of bullying based on sexual orientation?

8. In your opinion do you think youth are likely to hide their sexual orientation for fear of not being accepted by others or victimized?

9. In your opinion, what prevention strategies can be implemented to stop (or reduce) bullying and cyberbullying on the basis of sexual orientation?

10. What support would help an individual when he/she first declares his/her sexual orientation? Can you describe for me some support services or ideas that you believe could assist youth?

11. In your opinion what prevention strategies would help youth in the
digital/technological age with bullying on the basis of sexuality?
## Appendix L: Support/Resource Handout

### Resources for Sexually and Gender Diverse Community in Niagara Region

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<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brock Pride</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brockpride@hotmail.com">brockpride@hotmail.com</a> Facebook</td>
<td>A discussion/social group of individuals who support and advocate for LGBTQ issues. Everyone is welcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock University Student Development Centre</td>
<td>905.688.5550 ext 4750 (to book an appointment)</td>
<td>Confidential personal counseling. Available to Brock University students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line</td>
<td>1.800. 268.9688 <a href="mailto:askus@youthline.ca">askus@youthline.ca</a> <a href="http://www.youthline.ca">www.youthline.ca</a></td>
<td>Peer support and information available across Ontario Sunday-Friday from 4:00 pm – 9:30 pm for youth to 26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Help Phone</td>
<td>1.800.668.6868 <a href="http://www.kidshelpphone.ca">www.kidshelpphone.ca</a></td>
<td>Provides 24 hour counseling and informative support to all youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTniagara</td>
<td><a href="mailto:general@outniagara.ca">general@outniagara.ca</a> <a href="http://www.outniagara.ca">www.outniagara.ca</a></td>
<td>An umbrella group serving the LGBTQ community in Niagara to celebrate, inform, educate, and support the LGBTQ community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFLAG+ (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans)</td>
<td>Cathy MacKenzie <a href="mailto:jmackenzie35@cogeco.ca">jmackenzie35@cogeco.ca</a> <a href="http://www.pflagcanada.ca/contact">www.pflagcanada.ca/contact</a></td>
<td>Support groups to provide information for parents and families. PFLAG+ also strives to raise awareness about LGBTQ information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFLAG Canada – Gender Identity support</td>
<td>1-888-822-9494 <a href="mailto:gender@pflagcanada.ca">gender@pflagcanada.ca</a></td>
<td>Information and support for those struggling or who require more information regarding general identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quest Community Center</td>
<td>145 Queenston St. Suite 100 St Catharines ON L2R 2Z9 905.688.2558 <a href="http://www.questchc.ca">www.questchc.ca</a></td>
<td>Provides primary health care services to individuals who experience barriers to accessing health care, for sexually and gender diverse communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Youth Niagara</td>
<td>Stephanie Vail (Community Health Worker) 905.688.2558 ex 222 <a href="mailto:svail@queststchs.ca">svail@queststchs.ca</a></td>
<td>Rainbow Youth Niagara provides information, support, resources to sexual and gender diverse individuals and family. Includes groups presentations, referrals and individual support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Niagara</td>
<td>905.228.1846 <a href="mailto:info@transgenderedniagara.com">info@transgenderedniagara.com</a> <a href="http://www.transgenderedniagara.com">www.transgenderedniagara.com</a></td>
<td>A support group for transgendered individuals that meets month. Online groups and one to one support is also available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transparentcanada.ca">www.transparentcanada.ca</a></td>
<td>A support group for parents and their trans-identified children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Regional Police</td>
<td>Emergency: 911 Non- Emergency:</td>
<td>Provides polices assistance to citizens and visitors of the Niagara Region in instances of abuse, assault, and theft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>