DISRUPTING ‘BULLY’ TALK: PROGRESSIVE PRACTICES AND TRANSFORMATIVE SPACES FOR ANTI-VIOLENCE WORK IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in schools is the target of much attention from scholars, the media, educators, policy makers and families. At the same time, there is sparse discussion about how bullying is constructed and little critique about the hegemonic assumptions that shape popular notions of bullying. The primary goal of this study was to challenge discourses that relegate violence in schools to the realm of the private, thus obscuring the role of structural inequalities.

Through the lenses of feminist post-structuralism and post-colonialism, data were collected and analyzed including individual and focus group interviews with 15 social justice educators who work with high-school students—seven community-based educators and eight school-based educators. Other data include scholarly literature, media stories, and British Columbia Ministry of Education resources.

Utilizing critical discourse analysis, I traced four overarching discourses about bullying: the first, a discourse of deficit and deviance, pathologizes young people by focusing on a problem set of behavioural traits; second, a discourse of production and reproduction turns a critical gaze to the family as a site for producing bullies and victims; third, a discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration constructs bullying as an all-encompassing explanation for violence; and, in the fourth discourse—a discourse of tokenism and tolerance—care and respect are given only superficial and depoliticized consideration.

At the same time, emerging from the interviews with the participants, I identified a marginal, more hopeful, oppositional discourse that is built from a critique of difference and dominant masculinity and centres on critical notions of citizenship, community, and
safety. With an aim of nurturing counterpublics in which violence with young people can be problematized and disentangled, strategies of resistance—such as rewriting relationships with young people, cultivating connections and coalitions, and working organically—are highlighted.

It is clear that bullying, as currently constructed, constrains young people and those who act with and for them in particular ways. I conclude the dissertation with reflections on the implications for both educational policy and pedagogical practice of a re-worked approach to school violence, one the foregrounds inequality, difference and exclusion and aims to promote social critique and positive social change.
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DEDICATION

For my Pops.

Walter Moy
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

This research project has been fuelled by the troubling as well as inspiring experiences I have had as a social worker with young people and within schools. In my various roles with community-based organizations, high schools and post-secondary institutions, I have long been dismayed by the ways in which young people are subjects of blame, critique, and moral outrage (Anisef & Andres, 1996; Kelly, 2006; Roman, 1996b). At the same time, I remain inspired by the extraordinary moments and opportunities that can be found within school walls (Weis & Fine, 2001).

The goal of this research is to challenge the predominant discourses about school 'bullying' that relegates violence and harassment to the realm of the individual and private. Bullying is currently a hot topic and, in the aftermath of numerous high profile bullying cases across the country, the question, "How do we stop bullying?" has served as the rallying call and foundation for much of the literature and research on bullying.

Within this dissertation, I will argue that this question, "How do we stop bullying?", stems from a framework which positions young people and their families as threats to harmony and social order (Schissel, 1997) and promotes a narrow and restrictive understanding of violence. Furthermore, I will argue that this dominant discourse about bullying proves troublesome for those committed to social justice. When the causes for school violence are simplistically reduced to explanations of individual psychology and pathology and solutions are increasingly targeted towards individual reform, opportunities for social critique and challenging power relations within schools becomes more difficult to

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1 I use quotation marks around bullying to indicate that this is a contested and socially constructed term.
find and maintain. More specifically, I will argue that anti-bullying rhetoric—constructed from an ideology of individualism—obscures an analysis of systemic disadvantage and social relations and is, therefore, inherently ‘allergic’ to initiatives that promote social critique and social change.

Beyond a critique of dominant discourses on bullying, this research project also journeys toward alternate or oppositional discourses about school violence. Utilising a research strategy consisting of discourse analysis and interviews with school and community-based educators who ‘teach against the grain,’ I explore the ways educators combine their own anti-violence work with their efforts to challenge power relations, promote inclusion, social change and encourage social critique. In other words, I am interested in what Fraser (1993) terms “counterpublics” or social spaces where opportunities have been seized and developed in order to subvert or stretch dominant notions of bullying.

Setting the Context

My initial interest in anti-bullying initiatives stemmed from what appeared to be contradictions in the definitions of, and approaches to, bullying. These tensions were made visible to me through a series of high-profile media stories in British Columbia. In one set of stories, the media implicated bullying in the deaths of several young people. I am referring here to the murder of Reena Virk in 1997, the ‘Columbine Massacre’ in 1999, and the suicides of Hamed Nastoh and Dawn Marie Wesley in 2000, and Emmet Fralick in 2002. All

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2Here, ‘teaching against the grain’ broadly refers to educational discourses and theories that question and critique power relations (Ng, 1995). Thus, educators who teach against the grain work to “create more critical and egalitarian structures [and] imagine more open opportunities for all” (Weis & Fine, 2001, p. 498).

3The definition of inclusion is informed by Kelly’s (2000) work on inclusive schooling in which inclusion refers to efforts to engage students who have traditionally been marginalized in schools while also challenging practices of racism, sexism, ableism, classism and heterosexism.
five stories were highly publicized in local and national news and played on the ‘bullying’ factor.⁴

At the same time as school systems were putting their concerted efforts into promoting ‘zero tolerance’⁵ for bullying policies, another set of ‘newsworthy’ events emerged. In this stream of stories, attempts at promoting anti-homophobia education and a social justice curriculum were prevented within the Surrey school district; both in-class curriculum and extracurricular efforts to create dialogue about sexual orientation were restricted when several books were banned and gay-positive student coalitions were prohibited.⁶ While these stories may have paralleled each other in terms of time and geographical space, bullying and anti-homophobia education were never merged or connected into the same conceptual landscape. Within the media coverage, these accounts of bullying were seen as detached and separate from homophobia and racism and consequently, any initiatives to counter bullying with social justice work were made invisible.⁷

In an effort to act on my own concerns and curiosity about the ways in which bullying is framed, I entered the education library at UBC with the intention of reading and becoming familiar with anti-bullying resources. I was perplexed; where I expected (or hoped) to find books on bullying and school violence nestled amidst materials on social justice,

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⁴ For example, see “Stop the bullying: A week long investigative series” in The Province, January 15-20, 2001.
⁵ Zero tolerance policies are part of a ‘get tough’ approach to school violence that advocate suspension and/or expulsion for student deemed guilty of bullying. This approach has also been critiqued by numerous authors for unfairly disadvantaging youth of colour and youth who are poor and/or working class, at the same time as it obscures the role of adults and educational institutions (Akom, 2001; Fine & Smith, 2001; Noguera, 1995).
⁶ In 1997 the Surrey School District banned three gay-positive children’s books. This led to a legal battle that began in 1997. In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the ban was unreasonable. The same school district also made it difficult for Gay Straight Alliance clubs—student clubs that provide opportunities for support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning students and their allies—to be formed.
⁷ News stories revealed that much of the ‘bullying,’ Hamed Nastoh endured revolved around sexual orientation; while the focus on the media stories centred on the student’s sexual orientation, discussion of homophobia as the root cause of the bullying was absent. This occurred in the same school district where certain anti-homophobia and social justice initiatives were banned (see previous footnote). In Reena Virk’s murder, it has been argued that her racial background was obscured in media coverage (Jiwani, 1997).
critical pedagogy, and anti-oppression education, none were to be found. Instead, I was saddened and dismayed to find that the resources on bullying were located next to books about administrative supervision, student surveillance, behaviour management, and ‘at risk youth’ and youth crime. Apparently, and unfortunately, much of the academic research and literature on bullying indicated that the media was not alone in the perception that violence in schools is unrelated to social justice.

**Unlikely bedfellows? The partnering of social justice and violence**

The words do begin to sound not just random, but empty and then meaningless...there’s a lesson and a message here: now is as good a time as any other to challenge our own orthodoxy, to rethink basic principles, to storm our own headquarters. (Ayers, Michie, & Rome, 2004, pp. 123-124)

Given that this research is premised upon the argument that social justice and critical education needs to be a fundamental cornerstone of anti-violence work in schools, this section builds the foundation for this argument by articulating the meanings and value I attach to ‘social justice’ and ‘violence.’ Rather than approach social justice and school violence as two distinct categories or subject areas, this research rests on the assumption that violence and social justice can, and for the purposes of this project should, be positioned within the same theoretical terrain. The literature on social justice and violence is immense and I make no claim that this research project provides a comprehensive review or critique of this literature. However, it is important to make visible my own working definitions of both violence and social justice with an eye towards arguing their theoretical compatibility. Similarly, the discussion about violence is not meant to be definitive; given this dissertation has as one of its overarching themes the re-theorizing of violence in schools, I return to a framework for violence throughout the following chapters.
It may appear, at the outset, that the pairing of social justice and violence is unnatural or, at best, a stretch. Indeed, within both subject areas, there is a lack of consensus about how each is defined; firm definitions are slippery and, perhaps more importantly, ideologically loaded. If violence and social justice are understood in their more traditional and narrower sense, then the two concepts remain conceptually (and practically) distinct. But, if alternate understandings of both ‘violence’ and ‘social justice’ are further examined, theoretical intersections can be seen, which then become an integral backdrop for this study.

The elusive social justice

The immediate difficulty one confronts when examining the idea of social justice is that it does not have a single essential meaning—it represents discourses that are historically constituted and it is a site of conflicting and divergent political endeavours. (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996, p. 11)

Within the varied and vast literature written about social justice, it soon becomes evident that social justice is a highly contested concept without one universally agreed upon meaning. In some models, social justice privileges individual rights, responsibility and social obligation (Clark, 2002), while in others, the term ‘social justice’ is equated with human rights or a legal-based justice (Ife, 2001). In perhaps the most widely applied model for social justice, social justice is premised upon an argument for redistribution in which social justice is interpreted as equality of opportunity and access and fair distribution of benefits and resources (Gewirtz, 1998; Mullaly, 2002). Within a distributive paradigm, “discussions of social injustice tend to revolve around inequalities of wealth and income, and the extent to which the state can or should mitigate the suffering of the poor” (Young, 1990, p. 19).

Simply put, distributive social justice equals the struggles for such things as an adequate minimum wage, fair access to health, education, and childcare.
While fair distribution is inarguably important and necessary, the distributive model of justice can be seen as a partial or limited justice since social structures, processes and practices are in no way altered or challenged (Gewirtz, 1998). This is not to trivialize the importance and need for equitable distribution; indeed, as Young points out “the immediate provision of basic material good for people now suffering...must be a first priority for any program that seeks to make the world more just” (1990, p. 19). But, on its own, the distributive model remains “essentially individualistic and atomistic” (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 471) and “assumes a single model for all analyses of justice: all situations in which justice is at issue are analogous to the situation of persons dividing a stock of good and comparing the size of the portions individuals have” (Young, 1990, p. 18). Theorized in this way, social justice risks oversimplification and becomes, as Rizvi and Lingard (1996) aptly note, “not so much a universal ethical principle as an administrative principle” (p. 18).

As a result, the distributive paradigm gets translated into what Gewirtz (1998) terms a ‘weak’ liberal definition of justice within the educational system; in other words, schools can be deemed ‘just’ institutions by merely subscribing to the discourse of ‘equal opportunity’ (i.e., all children receive education and resources therefore the educational system is just). Schools, with policies of inclusivity and equal access, can claim that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and thus conclude that injustice does not exist. It can then be seen how the distributive model evolves into a “restricted or restrictive framework” that limits the search for social justice to a question of who gets what (Troyna & Vincent, 1997, p. 137), while simultaneously hindering an analysis of the “fundamental problems of hierarchies of power, wealth and other privileges” (Lynch, as cited in Gewirtz, 1998, p. 472).
In contrast, this research project draws from those theorists who advocate a relational framework for social justice which incorporates, but extends beyond, a distributional theory of social justice (Bell, 1997; Young, 1990). To be clear, social justice within this dissertation not only refers to equality of opportunity and fair distribution of resources but also addresses the “various complex ways in which exclusion and discrimination are now practiced” (Rizvi and Lingard, 1996, p. 21). While a distributive model has been critiqued for papering over an institutional context and analysis, a relational dimension to social justice focuses on the “nature and ordering of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other [and] refers to the practices and procedures which govern the organization of political systems,...social institutions, families and one-to-one social relationships” (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 471).

In other words, a relational approach to justice represents a more ‘potent’ form of justice; oppressive relations and practices are problematized and targeted and this, in turn, can pave the way for a more transformative vision of school and society. Where the model of distribution “serves an ideological function...implicitly supporting the institutional relations it assumes as given” (Young, 1990, p. 198), a relational approach worries these same institutional relations, and calls into question the justice/injustice of institutional and social structures and organizations. Hence, the work of those committed to social justice moves beyond advocating for more resources or better access to include critiquing institutionalized discriminatory practices, promoting inclusion and participation for all groups, and challenging the nature and order of social institutions and social relationships (Bell, 1997; Gewirtz, 1998).
Troubling and stretching violence

Similar to social justice, theorizing on violence is immense and marked with contradictions. My goal here is not to provide a review of literature on violence, but to try and make transparent my own assumptions about violence and map a ‘starting point’ for talking about violence which will serve as a theoretical, definitional, and ideological ‘touchstone’ for subsequent chapters and arguments in this thesis. Ultimately, as in the case of the term ‘social justice,’ I argue for a more expansive complex framework for violence that takes into account social practices and relationships.

Within conventional or mainstream definitions of violence, several overlapping assumptions about violence can be identified that underwrite literature on schools, bullying, and violence. First, and perhaps the most common assumption, violence is seen to fall—wholly or primarily—within the realm of the physical. Here, violence is about threatening, attempting or inflicting harm on persons or property (Reiss & Roth, 1993) and comes to be understood as that which is “visible, quantifiable and therefore more easily legitimated” (Hill Collins, 1998, p. 923). A dangerous fallout from this assumption is that violence becomes narrowly associated with the extreme. Most notably, and especially relevant in current times, violence in the context of schools has come to be conflated with the panic of ‘school shootings’ and, as a result of this merger between ‘school violence’ and ‘shootings,’ there is less space and attention for other forms of violence which are deemed to be non-legitimate (Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

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8 During the time period of this research, the tragic occurrences of school shootings became front and centre in the media and political arena as a result of the shootings and deaths in various places including Dawson College in Montreal (2006) and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (2007). These incidents were preceded by shootings in high schools such as Columbine high school in Colorado (1999) and W.R. Meyers in Taber, Alberta (1999).

9 See Aitken (2001), Buell (2001), and Wise (2001) for a discussion of school shootings. These authors provide a critique of the ways in which school shootings have evolved into a panic and point, among many things, to the underlying racism, and sexism, which underscore coverage of school shootings. However, in all three of these
A second theme underscoring standard or dominant frameworks for violence is that violence is understood as an individual act occurring between individuals. Violence is defined in purely descriptive terms implying that it is not the context in which violence occurs and is fostered that is important, but the particular act itself (Young, 1990). Hence, the context in which violence occurs is made invisible and, instead, an analysis of violence becomes a restricted critique of a specific incident, or situation (Van Soest & Bryant, 1995). As Hill Collins (1998) argues, this focus on the individual as the unit for analysis leads to "patterns of erasure" in which "historically constituted groups disappear" from the definition and understanding of violence (p. 931).

Third and closely linked to the second theme, the causes of violence are also theorized from the individual; not only is violence defined as an individual act, the roots of violence are essentialized within the individual. More specifically, dominant frameworks for violence posit that violence is a learned behaviour, a rational choice in which the benefits of violence outweigh the consequences, or a biological inevitability (Casella, 2002). While subsequent chapters in this dissertation will further trace the influence of these assumptions about violence within schools, I contend here that these assumptions are influential in that they carry with them the ideological power to predetermine the discourses about bullying and school violence.

This research is premised upon an expanded conceptualization of violence which extends beyond the overt, extreme, individual, and visible. Building on a critique that violence is solely located within individual or particular acts, violence in this research is also understood in relation to several related concepts: the systemic, the social, and the everyday.

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examples, the authors (to varying degrees) conflate the terms 'school shootings' with 'school violence' or 'teen violence.'
This project is aligned with those who seek to situate violence within larger social, political, economic, and cultural arenas (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 1999; Fine & Smith, 2001; Herr & Anderson, 2003). Where violence might traditionally be defined along the lines of “any act or situation in which a person injures another” (Van Soest & Bryant, 1995, p. 549), or “physical or verbal behaviour that aims at harming and/or destroying someone or something” (Wolman, 1995, xv), alternative viewpoints contend that violence is systemic and linked or ‘shrouded’ in the ‘everyday.’ For example, Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence has been applied by some to expand the scope and mandate of violence within critiques of school violence (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2003; Herr, 2005). With a theory of symbolic violence, in which ‘violence’ is stretched to include “a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims” (Bourdieu, 2001, as cited in Bryan & Vavrus, 2005, p. 188), violence is enacted not just through individual acts, but through “domination …exercised in the everyday practices of an institution” (Herr, 2005, p. 188).

Taking this discussion within the realm of schools, an understanding of violence must then include a critique of that which maintains hierarchical order and, as a result, forces a look at institutional practices which function as mechanisms of social control.

Just as violence cannot be separated from the institutional and systemic contexts, violence cannot be analyzed apart from social groups, practices, and processes. Young (1990) argues that violence is inextricably linked to social groups in that violence is supported by social contexts and practices directed,

at members of a group simply because they are members of that group ....The oppression of violence consists not only in direct victimization, but in the daily

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10 Young defines a social group as a “collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices or way of life...Groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group” (1990, p. 43).
knowledge shared by all members of oppressed groups that they are liable to violation, solely on account of their group identity. (p. 62)

However, Hill Collins (1998) takes Young’s argument further. Where Young (1990) contends that violence is a criterion “for determining whether individuals and groups are oppressed” (p. 65), Hill Collins (1998) argues that “power relations shape definitions of violence” (p. 920), and that violence is “constructed within social hierarchies” (p. 921). Thus, although both theorists give weight to the relationship between social groups and violence, Hill Collins foregrounds, with more specificity, the role of social groups, context, and locations in determining what counts as violence and what is experienced as violence.

Seeing school violence through the lens of the social and the ‘everyday’ influenced this research in several ways. First, it guided me to expand my thinking about violence beyond ‘acts’ to include a critique of climates, relationships and practices; the assumption that violence is about more than the individual means that the larger contexts in which violence takes place become critical units for interrogation. Second, a framework of violence that takes into account the symbolic and systemic leads to a recognition that the after-effects of violence are much more than a recovery from physical harm or threat. If violence operates to enforce the ‘taken for granted’ order of relationships and hierarchy, then questioning social relationships and the value attached to social identities and social groups becomes the mandate of anti-violence work. Third, violence is seen to be relational; given that violence is assumed to be constructed within innumerable intersecting group histories and social locations, violence is not a static phenomenon but one that is relational and ever shifting.

Social justice and violence intertwined

Through a discussion of ‘violence’ and ‘social justice,’ these two concepts become more intertwined in a ‘thicker’ more nuanced relationship. In their narrowest definitions—in
which social justice is defined solely as redistribution and violence is defined as an individual and physical act—social justice and violence would follow disparate trajectories and consequently, the argument that anti-violence work should be melded with social justice education would fall short. However, within a developed framework in which violence and social justice are both centered on a relational model which foregrounds social groups, the space in and around anti-violence work in schools expands and becomes more 'fertile' ground for transgressive work. In the current conservative political and economic climate of cutbacks, individualism, and discipline, educators in and out of school are often forced to act on school violence through a lens of surveillance and punishment (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). A tandem focus on social justice and violence encourages educators and their allies to view violence alongside "actual practices of domination wherever they occur,.at the personal, cultural and structural levels" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 69).

**Self as researcher: Situating my relationship(s) with bullying**

Thus, we begin from an experiencing and knowing historical self and move to a critique of an ideological, dominant version of history and knowledge ....There would be no critique if we did not begin from our actual lives. (Bannerji, 1993, p. xix)

Several of my own experiences have informed my reading of the various texts, and I bring my own recollections of how my life has intersected with discourses about bullying into the research process. These are stories about exclusion/inclusion, violence, and discrimination accumulated during my childhood, adolescence and adult years. Three examples stand out for me that highlight the risks in utilizing the dominant discourse about bullying in an uncritical way. In the first incident, I was in elementary school and, along with a group of girls, harassed and excluded another classmate over a period of time. She happened to be the only other Asian girl in my grade. In the second example, my brother,
who has Down Syndrome, was about to enter a high school different than my own. I had witnessed the harassment that students with disabilities endured in my school and recall being extremely anxious and terrified that he, too, would be bullied based on his disability.

The third example stems from my work as a social worker in an 'alternate' school where I met countless students who, because of what was termed bullying, left the mainstream school system (some were named as bullies and expelled while other students were targets for violence and left for a so-called safer space). I was often asked to sit in on meetings assisting the administration with cases identified as student bullying in which the primary interventions would inevitably be lessons in conflict resolution and/or expulsion. In one incident, an extremely quiet and heavy set boy was repeatedly ridiculed and physically harassed by three other boys in the school. In what was deemed by staff to be a successful intervention, all four boys were called together for conflict resolution and, at the end of the meeting, forced to shake hands and declare friendship.

Upon reflection, it is clear that all three incidents revolved around social groups, the construction of difference, and processes of marginalization and exclusion. In the first example, I was guilty of thinking "thank goodness it’s her"; my understanding at the age of 11 interpreted the dynamic to be "if it’s not her, it’s me." I had assumed that my classmate was alienated based on her ethnicity and, sharing a darkness of skin, I felt and reacted to my own perceived vulnerability. In the second example, I anticipated that my brother might be the target of what I now see as ableism, but in the conversations with my parents at the time, lacked the language to name discrimination and thus only knew to call it ‘bullying.’ In the third example, the staff at the school (including myself) focused solely on a simplistic
solution without delving into more meaningful and necessary conversations about why males who failed to meet the image of a ‘tough guy’ were repeatedly the targets of violence.

Reflections upon these experiences have taught me to be wary of simplistic solutions and reductionist frameworks for challenging the violence that has come to be seen as bullying. The reasons why I contributed to marginalizing a peer in my childhood are similar to the reasons why I had a justified fear for my brother’s safety in his school and why the young man was repeatedly harassed at the school where I worked. These are reasons that extend beyond the ‘easy’ explanations offered through the literature and instead incorporate perceptions of who is, and is not, deemed valuable and worthy in society. In addition, these experiences have taught me about the power of the bullying discourse to mask a critical social analysis. Despite the good intentions I may have had as a social worker at the alternative school, it was all too easy for me to accept the discourse of bullying and all of its risks in an unexamined way. Of equal if not more importance, these incidents remind me about the potential influence of adult allies in schools to disrupt hegemonic discourses and challenge injustices (Mills, 1997). At numerous points, an educator or other adult could have nurtured a different understanding of violence within me and, conversely, I wonder about the different impact I could have had as a school-based social worker had I approached violence through a more critical framework.

As a result of these lessons, I bring three central assumptions into this research project. First, I believe that schools can be a site for reproducing social hierarchies at the same time as they can be sites for transformative social critique. Second, I assume that reasons for violence oftentimes run beyond the interpersonal to include socio-political factors and contexts and therefore I argue against assumptions that the responsibility for school
violence should solely be placed on individual young people. Third, since violence in schools has a multitude of origins and cannot simply be explained away as a school problem, I believe that responsibility for school violence rests not just with school educators or administrators but with the whole of society. In other words, I assume that many allies—working from various positions, mandates, and contexts inside and outside of schools—are necessary to disrupt the well worn discourse of young people as subjects of blame and pathology.

The experiences and assumptions I have just discussed are examples of ‘knowing’ and living from multiple locations that, as Ng (1995) writes, “…do not sit well together. They give rise to contradictions and dilemmas that I … must deal with continuously. It is nevertheless in these contradictions that I exist, and therefore think, speak, and write” (p. 134). In other words, I engage with the various texts about bullying with alternating and contradictory self-images of authority/marginalization and privilege/exclusion that are the result of a positioning process influenced not only by race, gender, class, ability, and sexuality, but also by institutions, disciplinary/professional practices and paradigms, and history (Skeggs, 1997).

Research Questions

Three overarching research objectives underpin this research project and formed the basis for the research questions below. The first group of research questions build on the literature review and delve further into the implications of the dominant discourse. The second group of questions centre on the articulation of a counter-hegemonic or oppositional discourse, while the third research theme explored the research participants’ strategies for both resisting
dominant discourses as well as promoting alternative visions for anti-violence work. The following questions guided this research study:

- What counts and does not count as bullying and what ideological assumptions mould popular notions of bullying? What are the implications of the current focus on bullying for educators committed to social change?

- In the current climate where discourses of punishment and individualism predominate, how are these educators who teach for social change thinking about school violence differently in ways that account for social inequality and identity? How are oppositional or counter-hegemonic frameworks for understanding and challenging school violence envisioned and articulated?

- How, and to what degree, are these educators able to resist, subvert and/or stretch bullying discourses to nurture oppositional discourses? What spaces and opportunities within schools have these participants found, created, fostered and imagined to link anti-violence theorizing and practice with social change?

**Significance: Why and For Whom?**

Within this dissertation, I attempt to critically engage with the language and meanings given to bullying. I do this with the assumption that if the discourses (and their implications) are made more apparent, the need to foster and develop oppositional frameworks about violence, and consequently alternate strategies for anti-violence work, also becomes clearer and more urgent. This project rethinks violence that occurs in schools in a way that foregrounds difference and identity and in so doing, impacts both educational policy and pedagogical practice while also supporting progressive school-based and community-based educators in their important work.
I have many hopes contained in this research: to interrupt the moral panic surrounding bullying; to re-contextualize bullying within a politicized framework of violence; and to nurture oppositional frameworks which incorporate discussions of identity, power, and changed social relations. Perhaps my overarching hope is that my research will “make counter-hegemonic noise” (Roman, 1996a, p. 168), and therefore, help disrupt the further pathologization of young people by creating, identifying, and nurturing opportunities and alternative spaces from which adults and young people—in all of our various locations and positions—can actively, collaboratively, and determinedly work for change.

Commitment to social justice means beginning a completely unknown journey with confusion and danger along the way, and where the end is a mystery....The activities leading us in to this dream are already underway by millions of people....There are small courageous experiments happening everywhere, based in local conditions, but aware of the whole world. (Bishop, 2002, p. 150)

**A Roadmap: Organization of This Thesis**

This dissertation is structured in the following way. Chapter Two outlines my theoretical ‘home’ drawing from post-structural, feminist post-colonial, and moral panic theories and reviews the methodological ‘footholds’ which underpin this research. This chapter also retraces the research process and introduces the educators who participated in this study. The purpose of Chapter Three is three-fold. First, it provides a critique of four dominant discourses about bullying. Second, an analysis of disability and the ways in which disability is positioned within bullying discourse is highlighted. Third, the implications of the dominant discourses are examined and it is here where the participants begin ‘talking back’ and wrestling with traditional frameworks within the dissertation. Chapter Four begins the process of envisioning and articulating oppositional discourses and, within this chapter, the major tenets of an alternate discourse which re-theorizes violence and bullying are explored.
In Chapter Five, the focus moves ‘to the ground’ and highlights the strategies and transgressive spaces and practices fostered by school-based and community-based educators which help ‘turn the tide’ on dominant bullying rhetoric. Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by re-visiting the significance of the study, proposing next steps for research, policy and practice and situating the research in the implications of the everyday.
CHAPTER TWO:

OF COMPASSES, LANTERNS AND MAPS: RESEARCH DESIGN AND MY THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ‘HOME’

This exploration of ‘bullying’ has, on many an occasion, left me feeling puzzled and disheartened. I have wondered at the sheer power of the dominant discourses about bullying to mask its own contradictions while also obscuring a more critical social analysis. How is it that teachers, who otherwise advocate student empowerment, caring communities and peace education, come to support extremely punitive policies against so called ‘bullies?’ Why do some anti-racist educators support policies such as zero tolerance which are shown to unfairly disadvantage students of colour (Akom, 2001; Fine & Smith, 2001; Noguera, 1995)? Why do parents agree to bullying interventions that, when closely examined, are part of a larger framework that assumes parents to be at fault? Why do some anti-bullying policies superficially tackle homophobia and racism, but completely ignore disability? And, looking in the mirror how is it that I, with my claims of a critical social work perspective,11 uncritically supported the mainstream bullying interventions at the school in which I worked (as discussed in Chapter One). Taken together, what implications do these questions have for the day to day reality and experiences of young people in schools?

This chapter visits my ‘compasses, lanterns and maps,’ or the research tools and theoretical companions which guided my way through the research and helped shed light on answers to the above questions. More specifically, here I begin to outline my theoretical

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11 Critical social work theories are bonded by a commitment to social justice practice, structural analysis of social and personal problems, a commitment to social change and an intimate relationship between social theory and political practice (Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2002).
framework, retrace the research process, introduce the all important research participants, and
discuss discourse analysis as well as some ethical implications or ‘worries’ about this
research.

Myth, mayhem, marginalization and meaning: Post-structuralism, feminist post-
colonialism and the role of moral panics

In the earlier stages of planning this research, it became evident that the answers to the
questions in the introduction to this chapter needed to be theorized from a framework that
accounts for both the discursive and material. While language, as broadly defined, might
predetermine the contexts and ways bullying is read and understood, the discourses about
bullying have very real social and political implications for young people and for those that
work with and for them. This section summarizes the roles that post-structuralism, feminist
post-colonialism, and the concept of moral panics play in locating a ‘home’ for my research.

Bullying as crisis and moral panic

Despite the political rhetoric to the contrary, we do not collectively consider children
our most valuable resource. In fact, we consider them one of our most dangerous
threats. (Schissel, 1997, p. 1)

Inarguably, bullying has come to be seen as a social problem that reinforces notions
and ideologies of who is virtuous, inadequate, and dangerous (Edelman, 1988). With each
news story and call for action, I am conscious of having to ‘steel’ myself against the
manipulation of emotions. The stories are dramatic and traumatic; school shootings, youth
suicide and bullying have become intertwined, and the anguish of parents and friends can
not, and should not, be minimized. However, to address ‘bullying’ without recognizing the
ways discourses about bullying position young people means reinforcing a pattern of
demonizing young people as "folk devils," 12 symbols of deviance and aberrance (Anderson, 2007; Cohen, 1972) and signifiers of society's downfall (Roman, 1996b). As Kelly (2006) writes, "youth are a discursive domain through which a variety of social anxieties or 'crises' can be read" (p. 29). Looking at bullying through the lens of moral panic helps to unpack the assumptions and consequences behind each of the discourses that are profiled in the following chapters and helps to explain the ways in which schools, and society in general, have responded to this crisis.13

Bullying constitutes a moral panic in that it grabs and frightens people and produces an 'other' (e.g., the bully/the victim) on whom, in turn, fear and moral anxiety are directed (Roman, 1996b). In line with other characteristics of moral panics, bullying has caused an anxiety which has been sustained over a period of time; is important to various regimes (e.g., politicians, criminal justice system, and educational administrators); caused rapid and increasing social concern; and hinders a thorough analysis of the underlying social problems (Cohen, 1972; Thompson, 1998).

As several theorists argue (Anisef & Andres, 1996; Kelly, 2006; Schissel, 1997), moral panics targeting youth are discourses of ideology which are decidedly discriminatory;

12 "Folk devils" is a term coined by Cohen (1972) who first wrote about young people and moral panics in his analysis of 'mods' and 'rockers' and is used to represent the ways in which particular groups of young people will periodically become scapegoats or symbols of a (constructed) crisis. For a more detailed discussion of moral panics see Cohen (1972), Schissel (1997) and Thompson (1998).
13 There are those who question the value of moral panic theory (McRobbie & Thornton, 2000; Stabile, 2001). For example, Stabile (2001) argues that fear, an underpinning and all-important notion in moral panic theory, is a "notoriously difficult emotion to pin down or measure" (p. 260). Furthermore, given that in Stabile's view, moral panic theorists "offer no investigation or research on the organization of public opinion among the dominated" (p. 262), it becomes all the more suspect to claim that public fear can be traced back to a particular event, media construction, etc. While I am aware of this critique, I argue that moral panic theory is both relevant and valuable to this research. As this chapter and subsequent chapters illustrate, the anxiety and fear on the part of parents, administrators, etc. brought on many significant ideological and material consequences for the participants in this study (and, in turn, the young people with whom they work). As a result, I believe there is much to learn from viewing bullying as a "political spectacle" (Edelman, 1988) and crisis. Citing Berliner and Biddle (1995), Anderson (2007) writes that "the notion that...public schools are in crisis is not manufactured; the crisis is real. The struggle is over how the crisis is defined" (p. 118).
attention is deflected away from a problem that “originates with the structure of society into one that appears with youth themselves” (Schissel, 1997, p. 17). Bullying, while itself a moral panic is also the site where numerous other moral panics intersect and reinforce one another (Corrado, Cohen, & Odgers, 2001) specifically affecting youth who are marginalized and disadvantaged (Schissel, 1997). In other words, society’s hysteria about the presence and prevalence of bullies becomes inseparable from the moral panics about deteriorating family values, (immigrant) youth gangs, teen ‘swarmings,’ girl violence, youth suicide, poor parenting, and lax school discipline.

Herein lays the importance of a moral panics framework. Moral panics are sustained by (amongst many things) media representations, interdependence of institutions, corporate surveillance, fiscal crises and the subsequent interdependence of moral panics themselves (Aitken, 2001; Hall, 1988, Kelly, 2006; Schissel, 1997). As a result, a study of bullying against a moral panics framework directs the gaze of study away from young people and onto these same structures and relationships, institutions and practices that fuel and foster panics. In turn, mass media, educational and legal systems, economic systems and expert or ‘professional’ discourses become the object of critique, rather than the ‘dysfunctional family,’ ‘tyrant bully,’ ‘provocative victim,’ and ‘passive bystander.’

Post-structuralism: Language and struggle

Language promotes some possibilities and excludes others; it constrains what we see and what we do not see (Howe, 1994; as cited in Mullaly, 2002, p. 22)

Within this research, I argue that post-structuralism has the potential to drastically shift the ways in which ‘bullying’ is conceptualized. In contrast to modernist assumptions

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14 Here, it may prove fruitful to provide a cursory review of modernism since, as following chapters will illustrate, many tenets of modernist thought prop up the dominant framework about bullying. Modernism arose from Enlightenment ideals and advocated rational thought, universal truth and objective knowledge while
of a universal or common experience and an essentialized or fixed subjectivity, post-
structuralism claims that language mediates our experiences and that the ways we
understand and express experience are never independent of language (Bensimon &
Marshall, 1997; Gavey, 1997). As Chapter Three explores, examples of positivism\textsuperscript{15} and
modernist rationale can be found throughout much of the literature on bullying: ‘bullies’ and
‘victims’ are fixed as one dimensional stereotypes (e.g., bullies as tough and victims as
weak), bullies and victims are identified and ‘cured’ and, the problem of ‘bullying’ itself is
somehow assumed to be self evident and uncontested. In response to the seductive and
straightforward frameworks promised by modernism, this section will outline the ways in
which post-structuralism provides an alternative starting point for thinking about bullying.

Post-structuralism offers a much different vision by making “the primary assumption
that it is language which enables us to think, speak and give meaning to the world around
us” (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). Rather than seeing power as concrete, monolithic or centralized,
it is through discourse, preliminarily and simplistically defined here as “a particular way of
talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Phillips & Jorgensen,
2004, p. 1), that “material power is exercised and that power relations are established and
perpetuated” (Gavey, 1997, p. 54). To be more specific, dominant or commonsense
discourses enforce the status quo and have the potential to obscure competing discourses

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\textsuperscript{15} Positivism assumes that research should be unbiased and neutral, the researcher is expert, and that knowledge is 'pure' and value free (Hammersley, 1995; Wharf and McKenzie, 1998).
while oppositional discourses—or those which hold less authority—carry with them the potential to highlight marginalized knowledge. In other words, to seek out discourses that are in competition with one another reveals that “apparently settled accounts of the world are never entirely settled, that dominant discourses are always being contested” (Miller, 1993, p. 371).

Given that the term post-structuralism houses numerous theorists and theories, my own understanding and application of post-structuralism needs to be further detailed. The following tenets underpin my understanding and use of a post-structural framework within this research project. First, struggle and resistance are theorized within a framework in which power is fragmented and decentred versus monolithic, centralized and concentrated (St. Pierre, 2000). More specifically, this fragmentation of power indicates a suspicion of theories of domination, a privileging of heterogeneity, and a ‘destatusing’ of professional knowledge (Weedon, 1987). Second, rather than a critique of state or the ruling elite, it is the subject, differently positioned by different discourses, who becomes the battle site for competing interests (Hall, 1996). Third, within a post-structural framework, experience is only given meaning through language; on its own it has no essential meaning (Weedon, 1987). Fourth, discourses are in competition with one another with some discourses carrying more authority and others which carry little currency or credibility (Keddie, 2005; Kelly, 2000). Last, post-structuralism informed by feminism claims to be attentive to language as well as the larger social picture. For example, feminist post-structural theorists such as Gavey (1997), Weedon (1987) and St. Pierre (2000) maintain that feminist post-structuralism articulates the social power relationships within texts and, as a result, remains at least partially anchored within “the material bases of power (for example, social,
economic, and cultural arrangements) and the need for change at this level of discourse” (Gavey, 1997, p. 54).

Consequently, post-structuralism, with its focus on struggles over meaning, competing interests and the “extraordinary hegemonic power of common sense discourses” (Miller, 1993, p. 361) contributes to an understanding of the moral panic surrounding bullying by highlighting how moral panics are positioned within discursive chains. As Thompson (1998) explains:

The various elements of the threat to moral values discourse are now so well established that it is not necessary for the media to list them all for a moral panic to be created. As the coded elements are linked in chains, it is enough to mention just one or two for the others to be summoned up immediately (p. 95).

Attention to discourse helps illustrate how a single event leads to a moral panic because it can ideologically fit into a pre-established discourse (e.g., the ‘violent bully’ is connected to the passive victim, apathetic teacher, lax parent, etc.). In summary, post-structuralism makes “visible how language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 481), and there is something potentially liberating and generative in this. If there is the belief that language constructs meaning (and, consequently, structures and practices in society), it then follows that we are all in some way “responsible for those structures and the damage [meanings and discourses] do. We cannot appeal to some absolute authority out there somewhere to justify ‘the way things are’” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 483, italics in original). The possibility of engaging with, and responding to, inequality through language and discourse is, in many ways, hopeful.

At the same time as I recognize that language and meaning influence the way social problems are framed, certain aspects of post-structuralism continue to worry me. If, as post-structuralism argues, meaning can only be constituted through language, experience risks
being lost in a purely discursive framework. As Hall (1996) contends, attention still must be paid to the ways in which ideological, cultural, and discursive practices continue to exist within material relations. Similarly, as Torres (1995-96) warns, a fully discursive framework "decentres experience, material interests and notions of group identity, and increasingly undermines a central organizing principle of struggle" (1995-96, p. 302). This concern still arises with feminist post-structuralism which tries to stay attuned to social relationships and discourse; as St. Pierre (2000) points out, "when we try to get to the bottom of language and meaning, we find that we are lost in the play of discourse" (p. 477).

**Feminist post-colonialism: Repositioning the material terrain**

- We argue that, like the internal colonies in urban areas, schools produce their own colonial ghettos. (Watts & Erevelles, 2004, p. 277)

- While post-structuralism constructs the window through which the relationship between ideology, language and predetermined discourses about bullying can be seen, my theoretical camp is set up amongst those who argue that deconstruction is not an end in itself and must also be grounded within historical tendencies and material conditions (Bannerji, 1995; Hall, 1996). Here is where post-colonialism helps this research by demonstrating the necessary links between moral panics, citizenship and the lived experience or reality of bullying discourses. Feminist post-colonialism revisits some of the tenets of critical modernism and post-structuralism while, at the same time, addresses some of the weaknesses that have led critics to question their 'on the ground' usefulness and applicability. Although post-structuralism and critical modernism can claim to 'make visible' the marginalized, critical modernism can be criticized for essentializing and glossing over differences, while post-structuralism can be accused of locating difference solely
through discourse and “dissolving the stability and analytic utility of the categories of race, class, gender and sexuality” (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, p. xv).

Perhaps one of the defining strengths of post-colonialism for this research is its conceptualization of difference. In contrast to both the modernist framework which subsumes difference under overarching categories (e.g., ‘bully,’ and ‘woman’) and the post-structural risk of extreme relativism, feminist post-colonial theorists promote a discussion of difference within a framework of economics, politics and ideology (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Brooks, 2000). However, on its own, post-colonial scholarship is not constructed from a gendered analysis and adding a gendered analysis to post-colonialism provides the lens “for unmasking the colonizing processes that have shaped the construction of gendered and racialised identities” (Anderson, 2002, p. 10). In other words, a post-colonial feminist perspective promotes the perspectives of those marginalized through historical and social practices while also providing a template for focusing on intersections of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, ability, and so on) (Brooks, 2000).

Post-colonialism, with its sharp critique of citizenship and belonging, lends an invaluable ‘edge’ to an analysis of violence in schools. In opposition to modernist ideals which assume a version of citizenship built from homogeneity, post-colonial critiques of citizenship challenge assumptions of inclusion and identity. As Brooks (2000) asserts, citizenship, through a post-colonial lens, is not a singular universal entity but is understood as a mechanism for identifying with multiple identities. Focusing on female citizenship, Brooks contends that citizenship is not merely static state membership but a fluid or transitory state. Drawing from examples of Canadian citizenship discourse, Bannerji (1997)
extends this critique pointing to discursively ‘loaded’ terms such as ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee’ to illustrate how citizenship is multilayered and nuanced.

When the critiques of citizenship, inclusion, and national borders are taken and applied to the educational arena, the modern image of a “fictive harmonious national family that nurtures individual growth and civic responsibility” (Roman & Eyre, 1997, p. 16), is replaced with a critical lens that sees school as a contested space in which borders are policed and ‘others’ are created. Taking this further, other theorists apply the concept of ‘internal colony theory’ to the contexts of schools. Internal colony theory, as the term suggests, proposes that oppressed people in society are forced to live in internal colonies (Freire, 1970, as cited in Watts & Erevelles, 2004); consequently, internal colonies within the context of education become those institutional sites and practices that result in structural violence and inequality (Watts and Erevelles, 2004). In response to this, a theoretical framework informed by post-colonialism seeks to ask what notions of ‘citizenship’ are inherent in discourses about bullying and demands that assumptions regarding who belongs, who counts, and who is marginalized and excluded be addressed and unpacked (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Roman & Eyre, 1997).

Theories in conversation: A summary

A framework borrowing from post-structuralism and post-colonialism is instrumental for this research. First, it helps highlight the intersection between citizenship, social justice, and discourses about bullying; it “compels us to question what is taken for granted and to scrutinise the social and historical location from which dominant discourses have been produced” (Anderson, 2002, p. 9). In so doing, the framework demonstrates how anti-bullying initiatives are complicit in reinforcing social hierarchies by failing to acknowledge
the role that identity (e.g., race, ability, sexuality, etc.) and oppression play in determining who gets targeted for exclusion and violence. Second, this theoretical framework provides a ‘way out’ of a moral panic in which youth are constructed as targets of blame and critique. While, as moral panics theorizing points out, the process of constructing young people as violent, volatile and ‘out of control’ is significant, both post-colonialism and post-structuralism give the reminder that it must be asked “from where, in whose name and interests” are these categories spoken (Roman, 1996b, p 5). The intersections between these theories becomes a space of opportunity: the possibility of both materially and discursively stifling discourses about bullying which shape, and are shaped by, moral panics while nurturing a discourse which is able to critically incorporate difference, citizenship, power, and identity. With this theoretical home rooted in moral panics, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism, I hope to honour the importance of language as a constitutive process at the same time as the connections between social relations and life experiences are articulated and legitimated.

**Research design and process: Of people and paper and text and talk**

Research can be part of the solution, not part of the problem. It is situated within the same power relations as schools, and is by no means simply emancipatory, but it can begin to imagine and rearticulate the meanings of schooling for all young people, and the many roles education can play in their problems and in their growth. (Kelly & Gaskell, 1996, p. 149)

With my ‘theoretical home’ in place, I now turn to the methods I used to learn about bullying and school violence. In this section, I retrace the data gathering processes that shed light on the hegemonic and oppositional discourses about bullying as well as the strategies of resistance practiced by the participants.
Collecting data

As a simplified overview, the data collection in this study can be seen in two parts. In the first stage, academic literature on bullying, government documents, educational curriculum and media articles provided the majority of data for the articulation and interrogation of the dominant discourses about bullying (Chapter Three). Second, given the scarcity of texts that speak against the traditional framing of bullying and school violence, I looked to interviews and focus groups with educators, practitioners and activists who teach for social change in high schools to help better the understanding of alternative ways of theorizing and practicing anti-violence work in schools (Chapters Four and Five). Of course, this ‘two step process’ is, in part, an artificial and overly sanitized distinction since there are many examples of scholarly literature that informed my understanding of a counter-hegemonic discourse\(^{16}\) for violence in schools just as there were numerous moments when ‘common sense’ traditional tenets of theorizing about bullying were visited and reinforced within the participant interviews.

Clarifying notes

Much of my research efforts prior to the individual interviews were focused on answering my first research question, “What counts and does not count as bullying and what ideological assumptions mould popular notions of bullying?” Consequently, the interviews with the participants, in large part, begin with the second research question (which can be summarized as, “How are educators who teach for social change thinking about school violence differently?”). Given that my exploration of the hegemonic and oppositional discourses are addressed and critiqued through differing means (the former primarily through

\(^{16}\) For examples of this, see Casella (2002), Fine and Smith (2001), Herr and Anderson (2003), and Watts and Erevelles (2004).
written materials and the latter primarily through interviews), it could potentially appear that I am privileging one discourse over another by approaching the research questions differently or, alternately, that the relationships between research questions and research methods are murky. Consequently, my reasons behind this research design bear repeating.

In the early days of my interest in bullying, I had hoped to find opposition and resistance to the media portrayals and framing of bullying within ‘scholarly’ literature and unfortunately, little was to be found at that time. At no time did I consider it a choice to limit my research to an exploration of the dominant; I needed to find something more hopeful in the “language of possibility” (Giroux, 1988, as cited in Ayers, Michie, & Rome, 2004, p. 128) and hence, I turned to interviews with those rooted in social justice to help locate resistance and possibility.

To be clear, I was, and am, equally curious and passionate about exploring the dominant and oppositional discourses about bullying. I believe that deconstructing popular bullying rhetoric meets the call for researchers to “critiqu[e] and demystif[y] contemporary moral panics that discursively position youth in a struggle which has material and political as well as symbolic consequences” (Roman, 1996b, p. 20). At the same time, I take seriously the responsibility to help “offe[r] an alternative to the ‘commonsense’ or dominant discourse” (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2003, p. 201) with an eye towards broadening and deepening opportunities for social transformation (Keddie, 2005).

Data collection unfolding

I began the textual analysis and critique of the dominant discourses in the fall of 2001 and this continued in earnest until the winter of 2003 (of course, I returned to this critique numerous times after that especially after each round of interview data analysis). After I
formed my initial analysis of the dominant discourses, I conducted a pilot individual interview in March of 2004. Subsequent to this, I made several changes to the flow and structure of the interview schedule. For example, I made more effort to explain my own interest in the study. I realized that I went into the pilot interview carrying some of my own expectations around ‘objectivity’ and had refrained from sharing any of my own assumptions about the research. Consequently, I made the decision to be ‘up front’ about the analysis I had conducted up to this point and my preliminary theorizing about the dominant discourses.

Following participant recruitment (which will be discussed further on in this chapter), I scheduled individual interviews with each of the fifteen participants during the summer and fall of 2004. Each interview lasted between one and one-half to two hours and all were audio taped. It is important to note that, in the context of current events, several things were happening at the time of these interviews that related to this research. For example, within the six months prior to the first interviews, an incident at Rockridge Secondary in West Vancouver was covered in the media. In addition, the retrial of Kelly Ellard for the murder of Reena Virk also began in April of 2004. Finally, the provincial government’s safe schools guidelines were also revealed in April of 2004. Consequently, stories, opinions, and

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17 In October 2003, a thirteen year old Asian boy was charged after a knife attack on a sixteen year old boy who was White. Both boys attended Rockridge Secondary in West Vancouver. As discussed in subsequent chapters, several participants referred to this incident and commented on the racialised coverage in the media (e.g., attention to the fact that the thirteen year old had immigrated from China) and lack of coverage on reports that the thirteen year old was the target of racial slurs prior to the knife attack.

18 Reena Virk, a fourteen year old from Saanich on Vancouver Island, was found beaten to death in November of 1997. Her death resulted in a second degree murder conviction of Warren Glowatski in June, 1999. A female, Kelly Ellard, was tried three times for second-degree murder after the first two trials ended in mistrials. The third trial, which ended in 2005, ended in a conviction (“The murder of Reena Virk”, 2005, April 13).

19 Three provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), led by Lorne Mayencourt, conducted province-wide community consultations about bullying, harassment and intimidation in BC schools. This consultation process lasted almost one year. While Lorne Mayencourt initially stated that he hoped to address homophobia through the task force, the task force report was criticized for its ‘watered-down’ recommendations (Perelle, 2003, June 26).
panic about ‘bullying’ were plentiful in the media and numerous participants referenced these and other high profile cases within their interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured for two primary reasons. First, I hoped to avoid an overly structured or “theatrical” script effect (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 52) in lieu of a more exploratory atmosphere which promotes flexible dialogue and “free interaction” between the researcher and interviewer (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18). Rather than rigidly adhering to the pre-determined set of questions of a structured interview, I was loosely guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix A), composed of open-ended questions that were “expanded at the discretion of the interviewer and the interviewee” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 19). While the interview schedule was helpful in guiding me, I did not feel restrained by it and there were numerous examples of interviews with participants in which the participants led me down rich paths not covered by the interview schedule. For example, one participant (Nina, CBE),\(^{20}\) introduced the topic of nationalism, citizenship, and membership in schools and following this conversation these themes became important in subsequent interviews (as well as within the data analysis). In another example, in an enlightening interview with Mo, a school-based educator, I only occasionally referred to the interview guide during our interview, since he spoke at great length and in great detail about his strategies and philosophies related to violence and exclusion with very little prompting.

Second, I chose an open-ended interview format as a means of resisting the positivist tradition of a neutral, unbiased interviewer. Whereas structured predetermined interviews risk positioning the interviewer as faceless and objective (Fontana & Frey, 1998), open-ended interviews—marked by reciprocal sharing and interaction—offer genuine opportunities to

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\(^{20}\) Nina is pseudonym of the participant (each participant has been given a pseudonym) and CBE indicates that she or he is a community-based educator. Elsewhere, SBE is used as an abbreviation for school-based educator.
engage in conversation, learn about and from each other, and foster collaboration (Lather, 1995; Reinharz, 1992).

While individual interviews offered "freedom and flexibility" and provided rich data (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 11), I included group interviews to further learn about the perspectives of the participants. Focus groups were not intended to replace or substitute individual interviews, but served to enrich the research project in several ways. First, as Lather (1995) contends, group interviews "provide tremendous potential for deeper probing and a reciprocally educative encounter" (p. 299). Discussion and the expression of shared or differing perspectives encouraged the participants to reflect on, build upon and clarify their own understandings and meaning making (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Second, group interviews directed participants' attention to different layers of their experience. Reinharz (1992) contends that individual interviews may help unpack a participant's feelings and thoughts whereas group interviews may guide participants towards a reflection on practice and tactics. Third, as Roman (1993) points out, group interviews can build solidarity by encouraging the participants to question and analyze their concerns collectively. Finally, the extended time between the first interviews and focus groups, although not planned, ended up adding a deeper dimension to the second round of interviews. More specifically, a full school year had passed between the interviews and many participants referred to the ways in which their thinking about violence had changed or shifted in that year and this, as participants said, was as a result of our first meeting.

Two focus groups involving the participants took place in 2005 and were important for several reasons. First, I felt it was important to interview a second time because I did not want to assume that the beliefs or practices of the participants remained constant throughout
the time period of the study. I hoped that the time period between our meetings would give them the opportunity to reflect on their own thinking and approaches to violence. Second, I hoped that a second meeting with the participants would provide the chance for me to present my analysis of the individual interviews and, more importantly, allow the participants to engage with and challenge my interpretations (Fine, Wise, Weeson, and Wong, 2003). Third, although the time between the first interviews and the second meetings was longer than originally planned, this allowed for a deeper exploration of themes within the follow-up meetings that might not have been possible had the interviews been scheduled closer together. More specifically, several participants stated that they had reflected upon and shifted their practice in the year in between the two meetings between the initial individual meetings and the focus groups in light of what we had talked about in our first interview. To illustrate, some of the participants mentioned that, after our first interview, they had become much more aware or critical of the ways in which the word ‘bullying’ was used (by them or by others). In another follow-up interview, Rosemary (a school-based educator) said, “So I’ve been thinking a lot about that since we talked and yeah, how, where is the line and what really is bullying and what do we need to find different terms for? And, I’ve been thinking a lot about that in my own practice and clarifying it.”

Given the potential difficulties with scheduling a group interview, as well as the potential risks to confidentiality that a group interview poses, individuals who were unable or unwilling to participate in the focus groups were still accepted as research participants in the study. All participants who could not attend the focus group were invited for a second individual interview.

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21 Due to medical reasons, I had to take a leave of absence from school for one semester and this meant a greater lapse between the first interviews and follow-up interviews than I had originally planned.
Two focus groups were planned for the summer of 2005 and in total seven participants took part (three in the first group and four in the second group). Each focus group lasted for approximately two to two and one-half hours. I conducted second individual interviews with three participants who could not attend the focus groups (approximately 45 minutes each). In total, ten of the fifteen participants were interviewed (either in a focus group or in an individual interview) a second time.22

The structure of the focus groups and follow-up individual interviews were similar in that they were both more structured than the first individual interview. This was due in large part, to the fact that I was presenting my preliminary analysis to them. For both the focus groups and second individual interviews, I took the time to review my thoughts about oppositional discourses and strategies of resistance, and participants were given time throughout to respond to my analysis and make suggestions, give feedback or give examples which supported or contradicted my analysis. Individual interviews and focus groups were then transcribed and sent to participants for review.

Participant recruitment: With crossed fingers and the kindness of strangers...

There are small courageous experiments happening everywhere, based in local conditions, but aware of the whole world. (Bishop, 2002, p. 150)

As discussed in Chapter One and explored further in Chapter Three, I argue that a critical framework for anti-oppressive and social justice education is antithetical to the ideology of individualism inherent to dominant discourses of violence and bullying. Given that my hope for the interviews was to find my way towards alternative and progressive ways of understanding and challenging school violence, I solicited educators and community

22 Of the five participants who were not able to meet a second time, three participants had arranged follow-up interviews but had to subsequently cancel because of scheduling conflicts. One changed jobs during the study and we temporarily lost contact with each other and another participant was out of country at the time of the follow-up interviews.
practitioners who, in their school-based social justice work, taught and practiced in opposition to the values and ideological tenets espoused by the dominant bullying discourses (for example, the assumption that bullying is solely caused by, and resolved through, personal responsibility). Ultimately, I had the opportunity to interview fifteen such educators for this study.

Criteria

In my search for participants, I outlined the following criterion. First, the participants needed to be community-based23 (CBE) or school-based educators (SBE). My decision to include both school-based and community-based educators within the study stem from the assumptions I outlined in Chapter One. To revisit these, I believe young people have allies, or people who work with and for young people, both in and out of schools just as I believe that violence in schools is not just an issue for schools but needs to be conceptualized within the much larger sphere of community and society. Therefore, anti-violence work can potentially occur everywhere and anywhere. As a result, the work, collaborations, partnerships, and various relationships between young people, community-based educators and school-based educators has been a major cornerstone of this research project.

The second criterion was work24 with and within high schools; participants needed to be (or have been) involved with activities that, in some way, brought them into high schools. While bullying is an issue that is framed as both an elementary and a high school problem (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001b; Juvonen & Graham, 2001), I chose to focus on high schools.

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23 The criteria for the 'community-based educator' were purposely loosely defined. Given the various funding requirements, mission statements etc., of the various community organizations and programs with which the participants worked, I was not looking specifically for participants whose job titles reflected an educational role. Rather, I was searching for participants who in some capacity, presented ideas to and engaged with young people in the form of support groups, training sessions, workshops, conferences and presentations, curricular/extracurricular programming etc.

24 There was no further criterion attached to 'work'; 'work' referred to full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, permanent or contract etc.
my attention and research questions on discourses about bullying in high schools or secondary schools. The reasons for this decision are two-fold. First, while the moral panic about bullying touches on young children in younger grades, the ‘crisis’ has primarily focused on ‘teenagers’ serving to prove what Aitken illustrates as our “growing anger at and fear of young people” (2001, p. 595). Second, I have a long-standing commitment to work with young people that arises from numerous personal experiences, including the good fortune of having adults in my life during my own high school years whom I considered to be trusted allies. With memories of this, many of my social work experiences have centered on work with youth on youth activism projects, mentoring programs, and, as previously mentioned, the alternative or non-traditional school system. Research in my Master of Social Work focused on high schools as a site for and source of student anti-racist activism and, as hoped, my current studies have served as another avenue to learn about the opportunities that young people and their allies have to disrupt stereotypes about young people while critiquing identity, difference and structural inequality.

The third criterion for participants was a self-identified commitment to social change. I recognized that this was, as Ayers, Michie and Rome (2004) argue, a difficult task since “there is nothing automatic about who teaches with an eye on social justice, or even about what ‘teaching for change’ looks like from one situation to the next” (p. 125). In an effort to further anchor my criteria for critical educators, I sought individuals who perceived themselves as social justice educators willing to discuss identity, difference and social inequality and who, in their work, endeavoured to raise awareness about homophobia, sexism, classism, ableism and/or racism.

25 In British Columbia, high schools or secondary schools include grades eight through twelve and primary or elementary schools include kindergarten through to grade seven. There are middle schools in some school districts which cover grades five through seven.
Finally, I was searching for participants concerned about violence and exclusion in schools and who, in some way, saw their practice/work as directly or indirectly preventing or responding to ‘bullying’ or violence. To be clear, the participants were not required to be directly involved in a formal or structured anti-violence or anti-bullying program (although many of the participants were or had been); rather, I saw it as important to accept participants who, in their everyday practice and mandate—whatever that might be—were mindful of violence and exclusion in schools and used the opportunities presented in their work to think about and challenge it in alternative ways.

Given that I was hoping my interviews would inform my search for alternatives to ‘commonsense’ explanations about bullying, it was key that I found participants also troubled by the mainstream understanding of violence. In recruitment documents explaining my research goals (e.g., see Appendix B) and in discussions with prospective participants, I stated that my research stemmed from a concern that the current focus on bullying pathologized young people allowing the potential participants to know the aims, assumptions and objectives of my research more intimately (and thus make a more informed choice about accepting or rejecting my invitation for participants). While this, as Lather (1986) writes, is considered by some as “unorthodox as it flies directly in the face of the essential positivist tenet of researcher neutrality” (p. 67), it meets what I consider to be the more important call to strive for transparency, speak against a moral panic, and attempt a democratized research process (Roman, 1993; Spalter-Roth & Hartmann, 1999).

All fifteen participants met these four participant criteria—role as an educator, involvement with high schools, social justice orientation, and concern about the ways in which bullying is framed—*with the exception* of one participant. In this one case, I loosened
the criterion for work with and within high schools and did so for two main reasons. This individual—recommended to me by various people—was an elementary school and middle school educator who, on an ongoing basis through both policy and practice, struggled to stretch the traditional notions of bullying. Second, this individual’s participation within numerous professional organizations and committees meant that this participant had ongoing relationships with high school educators and parents of high school students. Therefore, I felt that this educator could speak to the challenges and opportunities in high schools (and middle schools) and, as a result, I was confident that this warranted an exception to the criteria.

Recruitment

I connected with the participants in a variety of ways. My studies at UBC as well as my own social work practice and teaching activities put me in contact with educators (school-based and community-based) who met the criteria for participation. In addition, I collected the names of potential participants through referral, word of mouth, and media articles. I contacted these potential participants directly, and they were sent an initial letter/email outlining the study and inviting them to participate (see Appendix B). Twelve of the fifteen participants were recruited through this direct or purposive sampling.

Next, I posted a recruitment announcement (see Appendix C) on specific listservs through the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF). The participants who were selected from those who responded to postings on listservs met the criteria and helped achieve the balance and representation that I sought. I received approximately fifteen expressions of interest through the BCTF listservs and of these, three were recruited for participation. My decisions regarding selection were based on the goal of recruiting a diverse

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26 In the effort to protect anonymity, I am purposefully vague about the sources for participants (names of listservs and so on).
sample group.\textsuperscript{27} For example, prior to my call for participants through the BCTF listservs, all but one of my participants were located in the metropolitan Vancouver area and there was also an under representation of participants with a specific interest in anti-racism and disability issues.

In addition to the above criteria, my goal in terms of forming a participant group was to strive for a balanced number between participants who were based in the community and those who were based in schools. Further, I sought to recruit a diverse group of participants to include individuals with varied personal identities and work contexts. While seeking this diversity was important, this was secondary to my hope of representing a diverse range of work, practice and/or teaching interests; in other words, I was concerned about achieving representation of social justice issues and initiatives. One of the overarching concerns in this study is that mainstream discourses about bullying undermine social justice efforts\textsuperscript{28} and, consequently, it was important that I learn about how these dominant discourses affect the on-the-ground efforts of those who work against inequality. I wanted to ensure that I had the opportunity to learn from those who were involved with challenging racism, heteronormativity, ableism, etc., and address how 'bullying' intersects with their work.

**Participant profiles: Of passion and pedagogy**

Fifteen individuals participated in this study and what follows is an overview of the participant group. In the ongoing and all important principle of protecting anonymity, pseudonyms are used and individual characteristics or descriptors are embedded within a 'safer' and less risky profile of the group. As described earlier, the common denominator

\textsuperscript{27} I sent follow-up correspondence to all who responded to the call for participants but were not selected for the study. In the correspondence, I thanked them for their interest and explained that the study had achieved the maximum number of participants.

\textsuperscript{28} As an example, if a gay student is harassed, schools could 'hide' behind the rhetoric of bullying rather than naming homophobia or challenging heterosexist attitudes. This point is further explored in Chapter Three.
between all participants is that each, in some way, attempts to decipher bullying or school violence through a social justice framework. In other words, despite the various differences across venue, job mandate, social location, and geographical location, each participant claims a perspective of teaching and practicing 'against the grain.' And, despite differences in pedagogical approaches, curricular focus, and social justice passions, each participant resists and questions, to varying degrees and in individual ways, popular notions about 'bullying.'

Community-based educators

Of the fifteen educators, eight participants were community-based and seven were school-based. Of the eight participants who were community-based educators (CBEs), five were women and three were men. All community educators were employed by non-governmental organizations and all but one of the eight community educators were working for non-profit groups. While all of the community-based educators were employed within a fifteen kilometre radius of downtown Vancouver, their work in high schools often took them to various parts of British Columbia as guest speakers or workshop facilitators.

The breadth and depth of community educators’ experiences educating with and for young people were impressive. Some worked (or had worked) for programs or organizations specifically geared towards a specific social justice issue (e.g., anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, etc.) while others worked under a broader mandate or field (e.g., sexual health, youth recreation, community theatre, and/or youth criminal justice). While, for the sake of ease and simplicity, I refer to their work as community-based education, it is important to note that

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29 By this, I refer to the particular issue(s) most closely associated with their social justice work. While the overall approach to social justice and anti-oppressive work in this thesis aligns itself with an intersectional model which attempts to account for the intricate criss-crossings of different oppressions (Baines, 2000), this does not negate the fact that some of the participants in this study viewed their work against specific inequities (i.e. homophobia or racism) as fundamental or central to their own practice.
these community educators also referenced their overlapping roles as counsellors, activists, consultants, administrators, facilitators, and advocates. It is also important to note that for some, the gap between educating as a teacher in the school and as an educator in the community, might not be such a transition. One of the community-based educators interviewed had been a teacher in the high school system for over ten years. Similarly, during the course of this research study, another teacher made the decision to leave her job in a high school for a position as a community educator, advocate, and consultant.

School-based educators

Of the seven participants who were teachers in schools, four were women and three were men. Three of the school-based educators (SBEs) were or had been school counsellors, two were or had been resource teachers, and, while all but one had worked in high schools, two of the school-based educators were currently working in middle or elementary schools. In contrast to all of the community-based educators who were located in the Vancouver area, the group of school-based educators was more geographically diverse. Two of the teachers worked in large suburbs bordering Vancouver, while two participants were based in school districts on the outer limits of the Greater Vancouver area. The remaining three school-based educators lived and worked outside the Greater Vancouver region in other areas of the province: one participant was employed by a school district in the Okanagan Valley (in southern British Columbia) and two participants worked in school districts located on Vancouver Island.

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30 Resource teachers’ (traditionally referred to as ‘special education’ teachers) work with students deemed to have high needs (i.e., behavioural issues, developmental disabilities, learning impairments etc.).
31 Greater Vancouver region refers to the southwest corner of the province. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) is composed of 21 municipalities with over two million people (see www.gvrd.bc.ca).
Group profile and demographics

As might be expected, the schools and communities in which the community-based educators and school-based educators worked and taught varied immensely. One participant taught in a school with less than 100 students, while the school of another participant included more than 1500 students. One community was characterized by lower incomes and high rates of seasonal unemployment, while another community in which one community-based educator was employed was known for its immense affluence.

While it was more important to this research that I reflected a diverse group of social justice initiatives, the demographics of the group itself were also varied. In total, nine women and six men participated in the study. 32 Five participants identified themselves as gay or bisexual and five participants were non-White (two self-identified as Black, one as South Asian and two participants self-identified as Asian). While almost all of the participants could be categorized by virtue of their roles and occupations as middle class,33 a number of the participants spoke about growing up in low income households. Of the fifteen participants, seven had children. One participant had a physical impairment34 and another spoke openly about her experiences parenting a child with autism. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 64 years old. Educational background also varied; the vast majority of participants had post-secondary credentials (nine at the post graduate level), while there were

32 I did not strive to have equal numbers of men and women in this study but although the gender distribution was not planned, the percentage of men and women in this study may accurately reflect the gender imbalance in the field of education and human service. For example, women make up 69% of teachers who work in schools (see www.workfutures.bc.ca).
33 All but one of the participants in this study were getting paid to do their educational work. One participant was doing educational work in a volunteer capacity while doing paid work in a job unrelated to this research.
34 I recognize that ‘impairment,’ ‘disability’ and ‘disabled’ are contested and theoretically loaded terms. In using impairment, I am distinguishing between ‘disabled’ as a socially constructed oppression and ‘impairment’ as a functional limitation (Oliver, 1996), but, at the same time, I am aware that this carries the risk of implying a rigid or impermeable boundary between the physical/social/material (Hughes & Patterson, 1997). In this particular instance, this participant had disclosed an impairment but did not self-identify as ‘disabled’ or having experienced disability in any of our conversations.
also two participants who had high school diplomas and, at the time of the interviews, had no intention of pursuing post-secondary education.

There is of course, no easy way in which to describe or account for the uniqueness of the individual and the context in which he or she practices while seeking to protect his or her anonymity. I am (painfully) aware that this attempt to do so here whispers of counting or ‘check marking’ diversity and risks seeming exploitative; as researcher and author of this study, the descriptors that I choose to include or not include will, in part, determine how each participant is read and this is a potentially dangerous power. Consequently, I want to make clear my intention of demographically ‘profiling’ the participant group. While I think there is much value in seeking the perspectives of others not traditionally recognized as ‘knowers’ or ‘subjects’ (Rosaldo, 1989; Skeggs, 1997)—in other words, marginalized voices and identities—the post-modernist/post-colonialist critiques of essentialism and universalization have taught me that one should not, or more accurately, can not, be expected to speak for all. Simply put, the fact that there is a Black educator in my participant group does not mean that all Black educators are spoken for. In my opinion, the value of seeking and describing diversity lies elsewhere.

First, there is, as Kelly (2000) argues, merit and value in “recogniz[ing] diversity within the group” which, in and of itself, runs “counter to the widespread practice in the analysis of qualitative data of looking for commonalities” (p. 207). There is no unified voice or perspective of ‘the social justice educator’; each participant is complex and multiply positioned.

Second, there is the potential to learn about what it might be like to work from a given or claimed identity in multiple contexts. For example, numerous participants make
reference to being ‘out’ within the school system as an educator who is gay and how they negotiate this (part of their) identity in relation to their teaching goals within politically conservative climates. Each person speaks for themselves, but the lessons that each offers can be taken up by others across various contexts.

Third, and perhaps most important to this study, all of the participants at various times in their interviews, made reference to how their individual social locations, identities and personal histories helped inform their social justice practice as well as shape their understanding of bullying and violence. For example, references to growing up poor and/or non-White and/or heterosexual and/or female were enmeshed with stories of parenting boys/girls or being parented by a violent parent, and each of these stories—reflective of their own positionality—were then linked to their own framework for practice. In other words, the identities and descriptors used in introducing the participants are not laid out here for a voyeuristic purpose but shared as a way of shedding light on the larger societal contexts in which the participants lived and worked and the lessons that the participants had, over time learned and, in turn, taught me.

Data analysis: Discourse analysis as theory, method, touchstone and synthesis

I have yet to discuss in any detail my relationship or journey with data analysis and this reflects my struggles with where to integrate a discussion of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is, as many researchers argue, both theory and method (see Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). As discussed earlier in this chapter, some forms of discourse analysis (e.g., conversational analysis) are rooted in post-structuralism and the subsequent assumption that discourses make meaning and construct social reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). With this focus on “the social context of language and to its function in or relation to structures of
power" (Gavey, 1997, p. 56), discourse analysis, and its role within my research, could have been solidly placed within my ‘theoretical and methodological home’ earlier in the chapter. However, discourse analysis is also about the task and techniques of investigating texts, and as such could also find a firm foothold within the previous discussion of research process. Instead, I have chosen to give discourse analysis its own section and endeavour here to describe my perspective and utilization of discourse analysis. At the same time, I use this discussion as a touchstone for reiterating or synthesizing important points made earlier in this chapter.

Discourse analysis, or the study of discourse(s) is, in most simplistic terms, “about the discovery and theorization of pattern and order” (Wetherell, 2001b). But to blanket all research that locates meaning through the exploration of language under the one term “discourse analysis’ is to deny the theoretical loyalties, philosophical tensions and political goals and motivations of the various discourse analysis traditions. With its diverse disciplinary roots in psychology, linguistics, and cultural studies, discourse analysis has a plurality of meanings and, subsequently, a plurality of associated methods or techniques. But, as Phillips and Jorgenson (2002) point out, discourse analysis welcomes a thought-out “multiperspectivalism” (p. 4), defined as the combination of different tenets and elements of discourse analysis perspectives. Consequently, the following section considers two streams of discourse analysis—critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology—and the ways in which each informed the shape of the overall research project as well as the analysis of the research data.
In tandem: Critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology

As previously discussed, the appeal of a post-structural and post-colonial 'home' rests with its ability to cross discursive and material terrains while seeking to explore and challenge social relationships and inequality. Accordingly, it was important that I use a template for discourse analysis that aligned itself with these values and goals. Critical discourses analysis (or CDA) meets these criteria; it examines the “role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 300). The analysis within CDA does not stop with individual texts35 (e.g., an interview), but includes within its scope of analysis text, discourse and context (Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). A critique of language doesn’t happen within a vacuum but occurs “with a view to discerning discursive patterns or meaning, contradictions and inconsistencies” with the overall aim of challenging power relations and inequality between groups and within institutions (Gavey, 1997; Van Dijk, 2001). Taken and applied to this research, critical discourse analysis sets the stage for questioning how discourses about school violence function in shaping social relationships and educational contexts.

However, another stream of discourse analysis, discursive psychology, has been influential in guiding my analysis and reading of the data. If critical discourse analysis can be credited with helping to keep me attuned to the ‘macro’ implications of discourses, discursive psychology helped me “investigate how people use the available discourses flexibly in creating and negotiating representations of the world …and to analyze the social consequence of this” (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 7). This is not to imply that discursive

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35 Texts are considered individual discursive ‘units’ and include a range of forms including pictures, written texts and spoken words (Phillips and Jorgenson, 2002; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). As Phillips and Hardy (2002) write, “Texts are not meaningful individually; it is only through their interconnection with other texts, the different discourses on which they draw, and the nature of their production, dissemination, and consumption that they are made meaningful” (p. 4).
psychology and critical discourse analysis are in opposition or completely independent; as Wetherell (2001c) argues, discursive psychology is a “hybrid approach and embodies many of the tensions between fine grain analysis and more macro social discourse work” (p. 189). With sensitivity to the everyday practice of people, discursive psychology guided me towards an exploration of the ways in which my participants flexed or selectively borrowed from or stretched discourses to construct their own meanings. To explain further, discursive psychology directed the analytical focus towards what the participants’ accounts “are used...to do” (Mancini-Pena & Tyson, 2007, p. 36, italics in original), and helped me explore the implications of different understandings and constructions. As an example, rather than overlooking those moments when participants drew from the rhetoric of dominant discourses, the notion that that there is a “relationship [between] the construal of social facts [and] behavioural consequences” (Rettig, 2005, p. 97) was significant in revealing how participants strategically employ discourses in order to gain administrative approval for social justice programs.36

To summarize, critical discourse analysis helped with my overarching curiosity about how dominant discourses about bullying work to perpetuate unequal power relations (i.e., by masking the role of difference or identity and thus treating violence as an apolitical or neutral process). At the same time, an analysis seen through the lens of discursive psychology helped me stay attuned to the ways in which language is occasioned or context bound or more specifically, how participants themselves, “selectively draw on different discursive resources in different social contexts” (Phillips & Jorgenson; 2002, p. 140).37

36 Chapter Five discusses this in more detail.
37 I discuss this further in Chapter Five and examine some of the contexts in which participants selectively utilize or ‘slip’ into the tenets of dominant discourses.
Since the focus of discourse analysis research can range (e.g., from a micro analysis of conversational utterances to large scale analysis of macro discourses), it follows there is a host of potential tenets or principles dependent on one’s understanding and usage of discourse analysis. Given this, I will highlight four principles of discourse analysis that were particularly relevant in this research project.

The first theme centers on the assumption that individuals are not passive but actively locate themselves in/with/between various discourses. Second, it then follows that, in the shuffling between discourses, individuals can, through talk and action, draw from discourses that are in contradiction with one another. This is, in part, explained by intertextuality which “refers to the condition whereby all communicative events draw on earlier events. One cannot avoid using words and phrases that others have used before” (Phillips & Jorgenson, 2002, p. 73). Third, the concept of ‘ideology’38 plays a central and defining role within both critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology. Discourses are rooted in ideological assumptions and consequently, individuals are multiply positioned within competing ideologies. Fourth, and equally important, is the assumption of an ideological effect or the idea that discourses can and should be measured or evaluated in terms of their effect on social groups (Hodge & Kress, 2001).

**Discourse analysis in action**

With the above framework for discourse analysis in mind, I sought to find patterns in the various texts I came across. Given that numerous disciplines and fields are invested in bullying, the analysis of texts were drawn from education, psychology, and criminal justice publications as well as newspaper articles, policy papers, workshop curricula, websites, and

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38 Ideology is defined here as “partial accounts of the world constructed from and within particular historical contexts ... serv[ing] particular economic, political and social interests” (Kelly, 2000, p. 69).
the transcribed interviews and focus groups. Interview transcripts were read at least four times to explore the ways in which participants actively made sense of violence in schools and how they constructed or made meaning of their anti-violence work. In the first reading of transcripts, I read for dominant discourses and the ways in which the interviews corroborated or contradicted what I had analyzed in the printed/web texts. Second, I read for themes or categories participants employed to construct an oppositional discourse. Third, I read for the ways in which the themes of an oppositional discourse were linked to practice, behaviour, actions and strategies. These three readings of the individual transcripts occurred prior to the second round of interviews and focus groups so that I would be able to follow up on areas that needed clarification or expansion in my analysis of an oppositional discourse (e.g., themes of citizenship, counterpublics, or masculinities). Consequently, the fourth reading of transcripts included an even closer reading for the tenets of an oppositional discourse.

In addition, I relied on several other strategies and principles that were useful throughout the analysis and writing up of this research. First, I read for silence and gaps. To explain, it was important that I needed to include not only the visible but the invisible and unspoken (Miller, 1993). In a particularly telling and powerful example for me, I became aware of a relative absence and silence around disability in both text (documents) and talk (the interviews) and this led to a more detailed exploration of bullying discourses in relation to disability, which forms part of Chapter Three.

Second, the method of comparison in which texts are studied in relation to other texts proved instrumental. This was especially valuable at the beginning of the analysis when I was trying to get a sense of the dominant discourses; here I compared texts reflecting traditional discourses with each other across genre (e.g., media articles versus academic...
research) and disciplines. For example, in comparing scholarly articles coming from criminology or psychology with media articles or websites sponsored by the provincial Ministry of Education that were geared towards high school students, it became evident that poor parenting or family dysfunction was a recurring theme presented as ‘commonsense.’ In turn, this guided me to identify a discourse of production and reproduction as one of the four dominant discourses about school violence (as discussed in Chapter Three).

Third, I was wary of what Cuadraz and Uttal (1999) describe as “stopping the analysis too soon” (p. 180). Throughout the analysis, I tried to be mindful of locating the analysis within history and place and within social relations and specific contexts (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 1999). To illustrate, in Chapter Five I discuss some of the ways in which community-based educators selectively utilize the rhetoric of bullying. On its own, this may not have been so illuminating, but understood in the context of conservative school districts that historically have censored explicit discussion of homophobia, their actions became more meaningful.

Fourth, I turned to the concept of ‘multivocality’ as a means of tuning in to intertextuality. Here, as Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) point out, each text consists of multiple ‘voices’ that represent various discursive positions so, therefore, the question then becomes “When does a discursive position appear or become visible?” To highlight this, as Chapter Three explores, when does ‘the bully’ get constructed from a certain mould or a set of psychological traits and in what contexts is ‘the bully’ presented as everybody/anybody (e.g., ‘anyone can become a bully’)?

Fifth, I used critical incident analysis as a way of strengthening my data analysis. While critical incident analysis is not specifically related to discourse analysis, I found it to
be an effective way of confirming or disconfirming what I was learning through discourse analysis. Critical incident analysis, as described by Herr and Anderson (2003), “invites a probing into workplace norms that help construct institutional realities and can stimulate reflection on institutional practices” (p. 421). While these incidents range from events that seem ‘typical’ to those events that are transformative, Tripp (1993) argues that it is the analysis of the incident that renders it critical and, as Herr (2005) explains, “potentially unearths assumptions that remain largely unexamined or outside the realms of public awareness” (2005, p. 25).

In reading for and analyzing critical incidents, I stayed attentive to those stories or examples that participants shared that seemed to point towards something of a deeper importance to them, something they indicated which, upon reflection, was telling or pivotal for them. Following the work of Smyth (1991), I reread these critical incidents with particular questions in mind: “Whose interests are served or denied by the actions taken? What conditions sustain and preserve the actions? [And], what power relationships are involved?” (as cited in Herr, 2005, p. 25). Later in my analysis, I drew from these critical incidents to assess the degree to which they resonated with major arguments of this thesis. As an example, in the following chapter, I discuss the influence of the psychologizing discourse which assumes that so-called victims choose to act in ways that invite violence. In one interview, Nina (CBE) spoke of working with a bisexual young woman who, based on her sexuality, was the target of violence. She said,

*I remember sitting down with her and talking to her and getting her to see the ways in which how she acted...made her more vulnerable...and as I’m talking to her my brain is going “What the hell am I doing?” Like this goes against everything I believe. (Nina, CBE)*
She cites this moment as the one which cautioned her against the psychologizing aspect of traditional discourses about bullying and for me this helped substantiate my initial theorizing about the potency of the psychologizing discourse.

Last, underscoring all of the analytic principles is the concept of reflexivity. Mauthner and Doucette (1998) remind the researcher that it is in the analysis of data that the perspectives of our research subjects are the most vulnerable. Holland and Ramazanglu (1994) also caution that “we cannot read meaning in interview texts … without also reading meaning into them” (p. 133). Although reflexivity is crucial in all aspects and stages of the research process, these authors caution that reflexivity is of paramount importance in the analysis stage of research. Reflexivity refers to the back and forth or reciprocal process of looking at myself and my “own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 121) in relation to the locations of my participants. To illustrate, during the point in my analysis at which I became aware of the silence around disability, I became aware that I was becoming quite frustrated or perhaps more accurately, disappointed in the research participants. Surely, I thought, these participants who claim a social justice perspective should be incorporating a critical analysis of disability into their practice. Upon reflection, I was able to reframe this and see this anger or frustration as a result of separate sources: my personal interest in disability (based on my “autobiography” as a sister to a disabled sibling39) as well as the frustration with the relative exclusion of disability within social justice or anti-oppressive theorizing (Meekosha & Jacobowitz, 1996; Oliver, 1996).

39 Drawing from theorists who argue that the term ‘disability’ needs to be contested, I use ‘disabled individual’ versus ‘individual with a disability’ consciously and strategically. This reflects the theorizing that notions of disability are ‘socially constructed’ (see Oliver, 1996).
Hierarchy and order: A note on delimiting discourses

Up to this point, it seems that I have casually referred to dominant discourses and an oppositional discourse as if discourses are 'neat packages' easily distinguishable from each other which they are not (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). It follows, then, that I need to explain how I determined what became a discourse. Following the advice of Phillips and Jorgenson (2002), who argue that "the question of delimitation is determined strategically in relation to the research aims" (p. 144), I considered the following. Given the overabundance of texts that adopt a 'common sense' or traditional approach to bullying, it made more analytical, practical and strategic sense to explore these 'common sense' themes in depth, and divide the various explanations about violence in school into different discourses (i.e., rather than looking at one overarching and monolithic discourse on school violence). But, at the same time, not everything can be considered a discourse, and given that oppositional explanations about bullying remain marginalized, I decided to concentrate on the various tenets of one oppositional discourse. This was also strategic. As Weedon (1987) writes, the ultimate goal of critical post-structuralism and discourse analysis is "the production of alternative forms of knowledge, or where such alternatives already exist, of winning individuals over to these discourses and gradually increasing their social power" (p. 111). My hope is that one oppositional discourse, albeit in its infancy, has more potential of 'gaining momentum' than several disconnected ones.

To summarize, violence between young people in schools or what has been constructed as 'bullying' is the order of discourse (or discursive field) (Fairclough, 1995). Within this, I have identified four dominant discourses that circulate around bullying, including a discourse of deficit and deviance, a discourse about production and reproduction,
a discourse of amalgamation and conglomereration, and finally, the discourse of tokenism and
tolerance. In contrast, I focus on one oppositional discourse which is rooted in social justice
and draws from various themes such as a critique of masculinities, citizenship, and community.

Wondering aloud: Research considerations and ethical tensions

Through my Master of Social Work research, I realized how schools build
‘gatekeeping’ mechanisms and processes that hinder discussion or exploration of a topic
deemed the least bit controversial (Kelly, 1993). While the participation from educators in
this study did not require consent from schools or school districts, I have needed to remain
mindful that the topic of school violence is shrouded in moral panic and those who
participated in this study shared ideas that could be seen as running counter to school boards,
administrators or official policy.

Consequently, there were several ethical responsibilities that I needed to keep in the
forefront of my research. In addition to using pseudonyms for participants, I have changed
information that might identify them or any third parties. While I have made every effort to
protect the anonymity of the participants from those outside the research study, a group
interview compromises both anonymity and confidentiality among research participants. All
participants were informed from the outset of the risks to anonymity and confidentiality
associated with focus groups and that, as a result of this, participation in the group interview
was not required for participation in this research project.

40 For example, the transcriber that assisted me with transcribing signed a confidentiality agreement. In addition, interview tapes and other data linked to the identification of the participants were locked and/or password protected.
In addition to maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, I needed to ensure that I obtained informed consent by fully explaining, in terms understandable and relevant to the participant, the background and description of the research (see Appendix D for individual interview consent form and Appendix E for focus group consent form). As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) illustrate, informed consent “cannot be reduced to a conscious, cognitive process but is a continuing emotional awareness that characterizes every interaction” (p. 89). Consequently, in order to best protect the participants, I tried to remain ever vigilant to the tenet to ‘do no harm.’ When conducting interviews, I was mindful that stories of school violence could easily trigger feelings, experiences and stories of helplessness, pain, and marginalization and, as a result, I ensured that each participant had opportunities to debrief following the interviews. An ethical relationship with my participants, based on honesty, empathy, and respect (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was a guiding principle throughout this study. The ethical considerations are also highlighted by the code of ethics for social workers to which, as a registered social worker in British Columbia, I am accountable.41

Fluidity and the unpredictable unknown

As Ursel (1992) writes, there is “fluidity in the research process” (p. 314), and the unexpected inevitably presented itself (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). These moments were numerous. Some participants changed jobs, while other participants left on extended trips traveling. Medical concerns of my own meant I had to take a leave of absence from school for one semester, delay the second round of interviews, and conduct some of the follow-up individual interviews by phone rather than in person. And, while I originally intended to conduct a more in depth policy and media analysis as part of this project, I had to continually

41 The BC Code of Ethics for social workers can be found in its entirety on the BC Board of Registration for Social Workers website at http://www.brsw.bc.ca/pdf/CodeofEthics.pdf
revise or limit my focus and let go (albeit reluctantly) of some of my original hopes given the scope and amount of data. As I learned, these separate events are all examples of needing to “change research strategies, while continuing to honor [my] research intentions” (Tom, 1996, p. 347).

**Ethical responsibilities and worries revisited**

Honouring confidentiality and protecting anonymity are important ethical principles. However, there is also another set of ethical considerations that emerges when research argues for a shift in discourses and takes on the task of deconstructing a specific moral panic about young people. These concerns, as I argue below, also relate to the ethical tenet of ‘doing no harm.’ I present these as ethical ‘worries’ that I carried with me into the interviews, analysis and write up of the research.

My first worry centers on the awareness that teachers and the public education system in general are the targets of ongoing critique and surveillance and I, in no way, wanted this research to be seen as aligning with a neo-conservative critique.42 While this research is firmly positioned within the belief that schools can be the site of positive social change, I was also mindful that what is meant here to be a critique of dominant discourses of violence, which circulate in society and shape educational contexts, might be misconstrued as a ‘taking a swing’ at public schools or educators during a time of mounting cutbacks, heavy workloads, and unfair scrutiny.

To take this further, I am concerned that the data could be misappropriated for conservative cutbacks or policies (Fine, Weis, Weeson & Wong, 2003; Skeggs, 1997). As I further argue in Chapter Three, I think that there can be value behind many of the programs

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42 An example of this is the Fraser Institute’s ranking of elementary and secondary schools in British Columbia which has been critiqued for its overly simplistic and reductionist evaluation of schools (Gutstein, 2004; Repo, 2005; Smith, 2007).
that prop up the dominant discourse on school violence, regardless of how misdirected or risky I think these discourses might be. My fear is that research which pokes holes at these same programs or resources might be misappropriated to justify cutbacks to services meant to support students, thus making the work of those who consider themselves allies to young people more difficult and stressful.

The second ethical ‘worry’ is about representation of social justice educators and young people. Neither group—social justice educators nor young people—are unified. In other words, I am mindful of the dangers of romanticizing the participants, just as I am concerned about representing young persons as ‘pawns’ of discourse without agency/responsibility/resistance and so on (Fine, 1994).

Third, and most importantly, in my critique of discourses and language around bullying, I never wanted to become detached from the ugly moments that happen to young people and the incredible violence and isolation that some students endure. In other words, it is important to note that although I argue that the rhetoric of bullying should be questioned, I am in no way implying that the violence and loneliness children and young people now associate with ‘bullying’ should be overlooked, misplaced, forgotten or trivialized. These are tensions that, in the spirit of ethical issues, are not easily solved, but hopefully the act of naming these worries is an act of ‘preparation.’ As Fine, Weis, Weeson and Wong (2003) write:

these questions are intended to expand our work by helping us to recognize the potential influence of our writings: the pulls, fantasies, projections, and likely responses of very different kinds of audiences and the responsibility we have, therefore, to anticipate the relation between the texts we produce and the “common sense” that awaits/confronts them. (p. 201)
Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I highlighted the roles that post-structuralism, post-colonialism and moral panics theory play in this research while also summarizing the research process and introducing the research participants. Amidst the dilemmas, tensions, and moments of inspiration that have come with this research project, there has been comfort in finding and maintaining this home base. While my theoretical and methodological framework, research participants, and research design (collectively, my compasses, lanterns, and maps) have at times stretched me to, what hooks (1994) describes as, that place of “pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing” (p. 43). This framework or home has ultimately guided me, kept me on path, and served as the place from which to start and return.
CHAPTER THREE:

CONSTRUCTING ‘THE BULLY’: PROBLEMATIZING THE DISCOURSES SUPREME

A brief look at three news articles provides snapshots of how bullying is constructed. In the first, a *Globe and Mail* article (Mate, 2002) promotes a “cure for bullying” (p. A19). Citing Robert Bly’s phrase about “the deepening rage of the unparented,” the writer argues that a stay-at-home parent, who refuses to sacrifice child time for career advancement, is the answer to children who turn to bullying because these children are “starved for love and validation.”

In the second snapshot, an article in the *Globe and Mail* argues that “holding bullies accountable is a good idea as far as it goes. But schools bear the ultimate responsibility to ensure the safety of all students” (“Making the schools safe from bullies”, 2002, March 27).

Third, CBC reports that a teacher in Nova Scotia was suspended for encouraging boys in his classroom to hit another student, Bryden, who has Down Syndrome. Bryden had hit a fellow student and the teacher told the class that striking Bryden back would teach him hitting was unacceptable (“Province suspends teacher Digby board disciplined”, 2002, April 27).

These snapshots may seem random and unconnected, but they are not. With and through each, I have attempted to illustrate examples of how common sense notions of bullying obscure a critical analysis of violence. While on one level these are merely stories relating to violence in schools, a deeper analysis reveals that each, in some way, illustrates fundamental ideological underpinnings about ‘bullying’ that will be explored within this
chapter. In the first example, a discourse of psychology is linked to parenting and the author’s interpretation of family dysfunction. In the second quote, a reification of a bully, the accountability of individuals, and the duty of the school point to pervasive assumptions about who bears responsibility for violence amongst young people. And, the last troubling snapshot, points to an illustration that is disturbing on two levels: first, violence is legitimated as a form of social control; second, an extreme version of liberalism and individualism ‘neutralizes’ or decontextualizes interactions between students and renders social identities invisible or, perhaps worse, illustrates the vilification or degradation of a disabled student constructed as an acceptable target for violence.

Within this chapter, I will illustrate how the ‘discourses supreme’ or dominant discourses about bullying—in which we see bullying detached from discussions of oppression and power—prove problematic. When an exploration of identity and social practices and relationships are kept separate from discussions of violence in schools, the framework for understanding bullying becomes unanchored from a societal and political context; bullying then becomes a personal problem caused in some way by personal deficit and is thus assumed to be resolvable by and through individual change. Within such a framework, room for critical social analysis and action becomes increasingly scarce.

The first section of this chapter delves into texts that construct dominant or mainstream conceptions of bullying and highlights the ideological and political foundations of four discourses. More specifically, I will explore how the discourses of deficit and deviancy, production and reproduction, amalgamation and conglomeration, and tokenism and tolerance shape the ways in which violence in schools is understood. While it may seem that I am suggesting that there are four distinct, discrete and independent discourses about
bullying, this is not the case as all four discourses alternately influence, reference, overlap, and contradict each other (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Perhaps more important to this study is an exploration of how the discourses, separately and cumulatively, reinforce specific constructs or representations of students/young people, educators, and parents and the particular messages the discourses relay about who and what is valued in society.

The second section of this chapter examines some of the wide reaching implications that arise from these discourses. Two points I have made earlier need to be reiterated here. First, in a critique of these dominant discourses, the hard, ugly and violent moments that young people face need to be kept at the forefront. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the act of interrogating discourses surrounding bullying is not meant to diminish or question the pain associated with violence in schools. Second, at the same time as I argue against these discourses, the intent here is not to condemn or disparage the people and efforts behind traditional responses to bullying; the assumption is that there are good and genuine intentions behind all efforts at addressing violence in schools.

The authority of liberalism and humanism

Ruling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit to what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable, within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us. (Hall, 1988, p. 44)

The “Olweus”43 (1995) definition of bullying, which definitively states that “a student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (p. 9), has become one of the fundamental building blocks of bullying research, and models for intervening against schools

43 Olweus has written and published extensively on bullying in schools. Spanning several decades, his work on bullying focuses primarily on Sweden and Norway, but his analysis of bullying has been used as model in numerous countries including Canada (see Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999) and is often perceived as 'landmark' research (see Ma, Stewin, & Mah, 2001; Smith & Brain, 2000).
violence have unproblematically adopted the underpinning assumptions of this definition. To be more specific, ‘bullying’ is spoken of as if it is an inarguable fact, a truth or practice that is easily identifiable and easily defined and, in turn, many conjectures are linked to this thing called bullying. It is part of an indisputable logic that bullying is real and that bullies are a known entity and these ‘truths’ have breadth and longevity and carry currency in society. ‘We’ (as professionals, academic communities, concerned individuals, and larger society in general) presume to know where bullies come from, how victims are made, and forecast with confident predictions how these so-called bullies and victims will lead the rest of their lives.

This chapter aims to trouble this common sense and hopes to interrupt the numerous assumptions and trajectories that have been borne of the assumption that bullying is easily and simplistically defined and ‘known.’

However, the ideology of humanism and liberalism needs first to be foregrounded within a discussion of the dominant discourses since it is the potent blend of humanism and liberalism that trumps an understanding of violence which is constructed within the context of power relations and systemic inequalities (Hill Collins, 1998). The influence of humanism and liberalism in determining how bullying (and other social problems) are framed is pervasive (Gavey, 1997; Keddie, 2005) and, as St. Pierre (2000) asserts, “everywhere, overwhelming in its totality…” (p. 478).

The tenets of liberal humanism—a reverence for rationality, a privileging of individualism, a belief in a singular essence of things and people (Gavey, 1997; Keddie, 2000)—together form, as Gavey (1997) puts it, “the theoretical basis of “common sense” (p. 51) in which the “complex relations of power and human suffering get lost amidst the celebration of individualism and citizenship” (Kincheloe & Steinburg, 1997, p. 14).
This ideology of liberalism is woven throughout and constrains an analysis of bullying to the realm of the private. Within these dominant frameworks, acts of violence are divorced from institutional practices and the larger sociocultural environment and any reference “to unequal power relations is subsumed under the discourse of individual pathology, dysfunctional behavioural traits, and the atomized individual” (Jiwani, 1997, p. 2).

Discourse One

Psychologizing the ‘Other’: Discourse of deficit and deviance

The typical victims are more anxious and insecure than students in general...They are often cautious, sensitive and quiet. When attacked by other students, they commonly react by crying and withdrawal....(They are) lonely,...abandoned...physically weaker. (Olweus, 1995, p. 32)

The pull of psychology

Perhaps no discipline has been more influential in the study of bullying than that of traditional or mainstream psychology. Given that psychological notions are so much “a part of ordinary contemporary Western discourse” (Kitzinger, 1998, p. 199), it is perhaps not surprising that discursive codes underwrite hegemonic frameworks and push a focus on individual deficit or inadequacy into the forefront. Consequently, the ‘cataloguing’ or ‘check marking’ of individual traits and characteristics becomes a means of understanding and explaining violence between young people. The thrust of this psychological discourse is to construct ‘the bully’ and ‘the victim’ as different and deviant; in other words, the ‘otherness’ of bullies and victims is established by drawing upon “sets of divisions marking out the normal from the pathological, the ‘sane’ from the ‘insane,’ the ‘adjusted’ from the maladjusted,’ terms that are central to psychological knowledge” (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001, p. 10).
This critique of the influential role of psychology within the study of 'bullying' is not meant to be a conclusive indictment on the entire discipline of psychology (indeed, a discourse of resistance discussed in the following chapter borrows from the research of critical psychology). Rather, this critique questions and speaks to the authority of mainstream notions of psychology in constructing what is commonly understood as bullying. Traditional psychology has been characterized by several principles which have rendered itself to be, as Kitzinger (1998) states, "deeply individualistic" (p. 201). As will be demonstrated, the primary tenets of mainstream psychology—a focus on inner traits as the unit for analysis, the belief in a "timeless, stable and historical" self (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001, p. 27), a claim to 'know' the individual through the application of quantitative or scientific methods, and the assumption that society and the individual are separate entities—have all been unproblematically adopted within studies of school violence (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Scheman, 1983). Where streams of critical psychology might concern themselves with "deconstruct[ing] notions of internal states and authentic voices" (Kitzinger, 1998, p. 206), traditional psychology "ascribes to the modern conception of the individual as an autonomous, delimited agent with a set of authentic characteristics" (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 98).

This is not to automatically argue that traditional psychology has nothing to teach those interested in an oppositional discourse and should be completely dismissed. One participant, well known for her efforts at advocating for social justice issues in schools, outlined her own struggles in determining the amount of credibility a psychological discourse

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44Here, traditional psychology is differentiated from critical 'denominations' of psychology such as critical feminist psychology, post-structural or post modern psychology, or discursive psychology (see Kitzinger, 1998, for a more in depth discussion).
deserves despite her critique that schools concentrate on the individual at the expense of a social context:

At the end, [schools] focus on what the victim does wrong. You know the victim needs assertiveness skills, the victim needs self esteem. The victim needs to connect with other kids, all of which are probably true at some level but again it doesn't go beyond that....Given I'm a counsellor, I don't want to undermine the individual focus, it's complex. (Liv, SBE)

The primary argument in this research is that the hegemony of psychological explanations and response—as a starting point and an ending point—should be questioned and disrupted in light of the easy overlap between a discourse of psychology and one of victim-blaming.

**Bullies and victims: Typologies and archetypes**

Psychological states and traits carry widespread explanatory power. Individual attributes are not only identified as the reason for bullying (e.g., bullies lack empathy), but are also named as the consequence or fallout from bullying (e.g., victims will suffer from self-esteem issues), and the solution to bullying (e.g., victims need assertiveness) (Hoffman, 1996; Rigby, 1998; Tattum & Herbert, 1997). Within this discourse of deficit and deviance, individuals are 'psychologized' within an analysis that constructs bullies and victims from a fixed set of traits. The task is not to question whether such a person as a bully or victim exists (that is taken as a given) but to study the individual as "a cultural artefact" (Kitzinger, 1998, p. 201) in order to best understand, know, and identify the presumed nature of the bully and victim. Consequently, this discourse starts and ends from a place of psychological skill deficiency (see Goldstein, Harootunian, & Conoley, 1994). According to numerous experts on bullying, a bully derives satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering, has little empathy, is anti-social, aggressive, impulsive and scores low in cooperativeness (Banks, 1997; Rigby, 1998). The bully is apparently an individual who has "sound social cognition
and mind skills to manipulate and organize victims” who may also “tend to smoke and drink, [and] cheat on tests” (Ma, Stewin, & Mah, 2001, p. 6). The psychological checklist continues; a bully is “a disrupter, thief and vandal…a threat to the good order of a school” (Tattum & Herbert, 1997, p. 3), enjoys inflicting pain, has a hostility to their environment, and it is “natural to predict” that bullies “run a clearly increased risk of later engaging in other problem behaviours such as criminality and alcohol abuse” (Olweus, 1999, p. 18).

Likewise, the victim is known and reified in a similar way. According to Craig, Peters and Konarski (1998), victims “cry easily, are manifestly anxious, lack humour, lack self-confidence, and self esteem, and reward their attackers by being submissive” (pp. 23-24), while Rigby (1998) reports that victims are timid and introverted. Ma and colleagues (2001), in their comprehensive review of literature on bullying, demonstrate both the pervasiveness of conventional psychological studies about bullying as well as the propensity of conventional psychology to attach psychological states to individuals “in abstraction of their social setting” (Scheman, 1983, p. 232). Ma and colleagues point to research that demonstrates victims are “psychologically sensitive” (p. 253) and they go on to highlight research which suggests that “victims of bullying lack skills in emotional regulation, a process facilitating coping behaviour that ease the stress of negative emotions from frustration, failure and trauma” (p. 254).

Olweus (1995), in a troublesome extension of this trajectory, goes on to further categorize victims as “passive” and “provocative.” While passive victims “signal to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked,” provocative victims are those “students who…behave in ways that may cause irritation and tension to those around them” (pp. 32-33). In the BC Ministry of Education (2001b) resource,
"Helping Our Kids Live Violence Free: A Parent's Guide for Students in Grades 8 to 12,"

Olweus’ categorization of victims are reiterated and given centre stage:

*Passive* victims are the most common. Often smaller in stature than their harassers, they tend to be shy and have fewer friends. They spend their energy trying to avoid their harassers.

*Provocative* victims are rarer and often thought to be harassers themselves. They regularly pester others, are quick tempered, have problems socially interacting and are willing to fight back. (p. 13, emphasis in original)

The implications of a psychologizing discourse are numerous and while some of the cumulative after-effects of the dominant discourses will be discussed further on in this chapter, I want to highlight two specific consequences of this discourse here. First, this discourse of deficit and deviance flirts dangerously close to ‘blaming the victim’ and an ideology of ‘rugged individualism.’ The psychological states of the individual, detached from a social context, are pathologized and theorized as the exclusive or primary causal factors of violence in schools. As a result, this discourse pins sole responsibility on the individual to fix themselves and consequently, “counselling recipients (or aggressors) of bullying is viewed as an effective way to enable them to take charge of the situations themselves” (Glover, Cartwright, & Gleeson, 1998, p. 132). When the expectation of change and reformation is placed squarely upon young people, then the solutions and messages to young people focus on acting, behaving and responding ‘appropriately’ (by becoming more confident, less meek) as a ‘way out’ of violence.

Second, the essentializing of bullies and victims leads to a perception that bullies and victims can be easily, simplistically and formulaically identified. The untroubled categories
of bullies and victims are seen to be static and concrete\textsuperscript{45} and these fixed categories within a simplistic framework that focuses on binaries (weak/strong, passive/aggressive) whitewashes any reference to complex social identities.

An applied reading of the Olweus descriptors of victims within the provincial government resource, “Helping Our Kids Live Violence Free: A Parent’s Guide For Students in Grades 8 to 12” (British Columbia, 2001b) helps to illustrate the pitfalls of this discourse. If, for example, a young person is encountering racial slurs or harassment based on sexual orientation at school and looks to this document for guidance, one wonders how the message about passive or provocative victims would be internalized by the student. How would students read into the ‘advice’ that they have, in some way, acted too passively or provocatively and thus brought this on to themselves? Similarly, how does this discourse play itself out in the ways schools choose to react to cases of violence?

In a powerful example of the power a psychological discourse of deficit and deviance wields, one participant talked of a gay student who was suspended for “not doing well with his coming out process” (Drew, SBE). Rather than treating this as a larger issue of homophobia, heterosexism or contextualizing the psychological within a socio-political context, the participant discussed how his school, in this instance, chose a route that seemingly problematizes the behaviour without contextualizing the behaviour within a process potentially marked by much loneliness and fear. Similarly, Ellen (SBE) also commented on the prevalence of a psychological discourse saying:

\textit{There’s new stuff coming out....I have this book called, “So you’ve been bullied” or something like that and..., it’s 300 pages about why you’re the victim because you’ve

\textsuperscript{45} As an example, Olweus (1995) in his oft-cited book, \textit{Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do about it}, titles one section, “A Concrete Picture,” which provides a character overview of victims, or as he terms, “whipping boys” (p. 37).
obviously set yourself up to be the victim and...it’s such the wrong focus. No kids should feel unsafe because of who they are. (Ellen, SBE)

As will be discussed further in this chapter, many approaches to school violence draw their insights from psychology and “this has meant that [schools] have concentrated on the personal and interpersonal …. The dominant tendency here has been to individualize and pathologise, even infantilise the violence which occurs within schools....” (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, p. 127).

Discourse Two

Breaking the cycle: Discourse of production and reproduction

This second discourse\(^{46}\) positions bullying as a process of production and reproduction and argues that the ‘cycle’ of bullying must be broken.\(^{47}\) ‘Bullying’ is not limited to conflict that happens within school boundaries but both engulfs and conflates violence in the home, on the streets, and in a larger societal or global realm. At times, this discourse aligns itself with the psychological discourse of deficiency and deprivation as both stem from locating the root cause of school violence within traits (individual traits, family traits, and so on). This discourse, however, in contrast with the first discourse of psychology and deficit in which the onus of responsibility was placed upon the individual to change their ‘shortcomings,’ turns the critical gaze towards those sites that ‘breed’ bullies and victims.\(^{48}\)

\(^{46}\) I first worked at drawing out this discourse in a collaborative project with Jody Polukoshko, in which we conducted a group interview with five participants (including school-based educators and parents of school-aged children) to learn about the ways bullying is interpreted by parents, teachers, former students and so on (Moy & Polukoshko, 2002).

\(^{47}\) ‘Breaking the cycle’ is an oft-heard slogan that has come to be associated with initiatives aimed at addressing social problems through individual action and responsibility. For example, breaking the cycle of poverty problematizes the poor but does not challenge structures that maintain or produce economic equality. Kelly (2000) also speaks to the ways in which ‘cycle’ rhetoric scapegoats marginalized groups. She argues the ways in which many experts, politicians, media etc. benefit from the continued stigmatizing of groups should instead become the focus.

\(^{48}\) At times, the discourse of psychology is positioned as contradictory to a discourse of production/reproduction. For example, in an editorial written for The Province newspaper, Susan Martinuk
In other words, this 'break the cycle' discourse rests on the assumption that 'bullying' has the capacity to regenerate itself and this, in turn, perpetuates the panic that bullying is anywhere and everywhere (Moy & Polukoshko, 2002).

**Family as breeding ground**

Pop psychology lulls us into thinking that as long as our intimate relationships are in order, life will be fine. (Hewlett & West, 1999, as cited in Burstyn, 2001, p. 8)

Perhaps most central to this discourse is a critique of the family as a primary site for the making of bullies and victims; the message here is that dysfunction or deficiency that causes bullying can be passed down and is “intergenerational” (Ma et al., 2001, p. 255). Connections between bullying and family ‘dysfunction’ are easily found. Craig, Peters, and Konarski (1998) emphasize that it is “clear bullying starts at home” and go on to explain that the parents of ‘bullies’ are “hostile or harsh, and inconsistent in the enforcement of rules” whereas victims “come from homes where there are few positive interactions, many hostile interactions, and harsh and inconsistent punishment practices” (p. iii). Rigby (1998) also typecasts the families of bullies and victims. While families of bullies are “insufficiently cohesive and supportive,” families of victims are “too wrapped up in each other, resulting in a failure to learn, to interact effectively with the external world” (p. 90).

The familial roots of bullying apparently run deep; bullying and the production of bullies and victims are blamed on lack of parental supervision, family under-involvement/family over-involvement, lack of parental education, harsh discipline practices, lack of parental warmth, and general ‘family disorganization’ (Banks, 1997; Craig et al.,

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wrote that schools are currently ruled by a “cult of self esteem” in which “making the student feel good about himself...has become a main goal of modern education. According to this, the worst offenders are kids who feel bad about themselves, who lack self-esteem.” She argues that this preoccupation with self esteem “has to go” and in its place, “parental involvement” is key; if ‘bullying’ is a problem “then the parents... are to blame” (Martinuk, 2002, p. A16).
1998; Hoffman, 1996). But, while this discourse may hold mainstream credibility (e.g., in the media), its explanatory power show cracks when applied to ‘real life.’ For example, one participant (the youngest participant in this study who was only a few years out of high school) discussed her own painful experiences with violence in school throughout her interview. Reflecting on the “daily torture” she endured as one of only a few Black students in her high school, she stated, “Yeah, I know why I’m being singled out” (Calla, CBE). To trace her experiences of racism back to family traits that encourage so called ‘victim behaviour’ is both misguided and harmful. Within these studies that position families as a site of blame, researchers fail to examine how family roles and relationships are embedded in a larger historical, social and political contexts.

**Bad, bad mother and bad, bad kids**

This discourse of production and reproduction becomes even more disturbing when the positioning of mothers is examined. Within the literature on violence and bullying, parenting is too often conflated with mothering and mothers are the focus of special blame and scrutiny in the creation of bullies and victims. Randall (1997), in research about younger children and bullying, places the responsibility solely on mothers asserting that that mothers of bullies have an ineffective parenting style that “dooms [their children] to failure and is associated with later poor development of interpersonal...skills” (p. 8). Olweus (1995) concurs and writes that “the basic emotional attitude of the parents, mainly that of the primary caretaker (usually the mother), towards the boy is very important” (p. 39). He substantiates this rationale of mother-blaming writing that:

Victimized boys had closer contact and more positive relationships with their parents, in particular with their mothers…sometimes perceived by teachers as overprotection on the part of the mothers. It is reasonable to assume that such tendencies towards overprotection are both a cause and consequence of bullying. (Olweus, 1995, p. 33)
In her book titled *Sex, Power and the Violent School Girl*, Artz (1998) illustrates her theory on an intergenerational 'passing down' of dysfunctional behaviour and also demonstrates how parenting and mothering are conflated. She goes back and forth between talking about 'parents' and 'families', then slips into targeting mothers and one is left to assume that even when she refers to 'parents,' she primarily means 'mothers.'

The mothers seemed unable to make the connection between life as lived within the family and their daughter's involvement in violence...I saw families in deep trouble, families with multiple and serious problems, who were constructing...ways of dealing with life that transmitted to their daughters' way of being. ...And while these families were engaging in this sad and sorry game of "pass it on," they were also looking around for someone else to blame and punish. (Artz, 1998, p. 165)

Hoffman (1996) provides another example of how a discourse of production and reproduction is linked to the 'bad mother' in his book, *School, Violence, and Society.* Correlating violence in the home with violence in schools, Hoffman traces the production of bullies and aggressive children to a history of domestic violence. He writes:

mothers who leave violent homes and turn to shelters may have greater internal or external resources, and examining children who are being raised by these mothers may underestimate the consequences that are experienced by children with less capable [italics added] mothers. (1996, p. 88)

In other words, domestic violence begets bullies and escaping from violence in the home (and, consequently, preventing violence in the schools) becomes an issue of personal capability and not one of systemic barriers or structural inequality. Domestic violence translates into a mother’s failure to leave and, in turn, a failure to break the cycle of violence.

Taking a blaming mothers approach further, this discourse aims a critique at parents/mothers who work outside the home and in the process implicates feminism and the autonomy of women into the social problem of bullying. After conflating parents with mothers, Olweus (1995) goes on to blame parents/mothers who are “preoccupied with the
pursuit of professional careers” (p. 51). This is similar to the earlier quote cited from *The Globe and Mail* promoting the stay-at-home parent (read: mother) who refuses to sacrifice time with her child for career advancement as the answer to bullying (Mate, 2002). Here, one example of how bullying intersects with panics about feminism and family breakdown can be clearly seen when parenting is reduced to mothering and having a career outside the home is conflated with family dysfunction.

Parenting styles have an effect on behaviour and personality; I am not arguing against this; nor am I arguing for the separation of violence that happens in the home with violence that happens outside the home. However, I do want to trouble the reductive and oversimplified correlation between ‘bullying’ and the ways in which violent behaviours are definitively traced back to the alleged faults and weaknesses of mothers.

**Poverty ‘red flagged’**

This discourse on family dysfunction also specifically targets those who are economically disadvantaged, and these families living in poverty are further blamed for perpetuating bullying and producing bullies. In *Bullying: Home, School, and Community*, the authors write:

Bullies are not born, they are created by those most influential in their lives--and the persons providing the most influential role modes in a child’s formative years are parents....Therefore prevention is again the best approach, that is provision of appropriate early education to negate aggressive tendencies, especially for children who are regarded as ‘at risk’ because of socio-economic circumstances of the family. (Tattum & Herbert, 1997, p. 2)

Similar to the ‘bad bad mother’ frame which conflates parenting with mothering and fails to critique the construction of ‘good parenting/mothering,’ economic disadvantage is conflated

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49 See p. 61.
with dysfunction. In a discussion of anti-bullying prevention measures, Rigby (1998) proposes that:

child care centers be freely provided for parents living in selected disadvantaged areas....Parents would, however, be required to make *some* commitment to participate in the work of the centre...the children would learn to develop more positive ways of interacting with both peers and adults....Although success is by no means assured, parents involved in such a plan often do show a remarkable capacity to learn. (p. 248, emphasis in original)

There is a three-fold assumption within this research on poverty and bullying. First, bullying is partially caused by socioeconomic disadvantage. Second, socioeconomic disadvantage can be solely attributed to family deficit and individual circumstances. And third, poverty is synonymous with ineffective parenting. As an example, Craig, Peters and Konarski (1998) report that “social policies aimed at developing school-based anti-bullying programs, supporting families with low incomes and educational levels, and providing parenting education would facilitate reducing this societal problem” (p. 24). While social policies that help to alleviate poverty are good and necessary measures, the link between poverty and bullying is never explicated. Thus, being poor—in and of itself—produces bullies and victims. There is no room here to interrogate the various systemic reasons families might find themselves poor; the role of global economics or structural unemployment in creating poor families and/or disenfranchised young people is shunned in favour of an explanation in which “the family is routinely analyzed in an attempt to find its contribution to situations of poverty, juvenile delinquency...and so on” (Mullaly, 1997, p. 122).

**The life cycle of bullying**

As discussed, this discourse places family as a central site for analysis: parents and family members play a pivotal role in the perpetuation of bullying by role modeling
‘bullying’ behaviour, failing to discipline those young people who have fallen off a path of
goodness or, in the case of victims, failing to equip their children with the skills to avoid
being victimized. But, the discourse of production and reproduction extends this cycle further
with the notions that ‘victims’ transform into ‘bullies’ or in other words, bullies produce
bullies. Referring to a body of research on the “victim bully cycle,” Ma and colleagues (2001)
argue “some of the most extreme victims of bullying are also some of the most aggressive
bullies” (pp. 255-256). Again, a BC Ministry of Education (2001b) resource provides an
example of this theme of transformation from bully to victim:

And so the stories go. Teens who are harassers generally have a history of bullying
others….it didn’t happen overnight. As elementary school children they may have
learned early how to take unfair advantage of a weaker child through minor
acts….However, it’s important to note that many harassers may have been victims of
bullying themselves. They have learned that life is a game of survival. (p. 6)

Further on, this discursive position is taken up again:

Harassers are often victims too. They may have learned their behaviour by being
bullied themselves by another child, sibling, even a parent, coach or teacher. (p. 8)

Thus, the cycle of bullying is complete. Family dysfunction and disadvantage breed both
bullies and victims, bullies produce victims, victims turn into bullies, and young bullies grow
up into adults bullies who become parents, politicians, criminals, and so forth, who pass this
on again to the generation following (Moy & Polukoshko, 2002). This discourse has become
‘common sense’ and oversimplifies the remedy: breaking the cycle—whether through
parental support, family counselling, parental surveillance and punishment50—becomes the
cure-all for bullying.

While this discourse identifies a wide range of ‘bad families,’ the ‘good’ remains

50 For example, there is the notion that parents be held criminally and financially responsible for their children
who ‘bully.’
interpersonal relationships, divorce, psychiatric illness, alcohol problems etc." (p. 46), can be pinpointed as the cause of bullying, but it is only a certain type of family/certain type of mother that is problematized; a model of good and effective parenting is assumed. As an example, while this discourse targets families who are poor, there is a particular silence surrounding those families who are wealthy or economically advantaged. In a powerful illustration of how a good/bad parenting discourse is shaped by race and class, one community-based educator, who works in an affluent community, discussed the Rockridge ‘bullying’ incident in which the supposed perpetrator (an Asian student himself a target for racism) reacted to his own harassers by slashing another student’s throat. This participant pointed out how the parents of the Asian student who were living abroad and had mental health issues were labelled as ‘bad parents’ by the school and the media. Yet, at the same time, and at the same school and surrounding schools, Jasmine told me of girls,

> who for their 16th birthday, their mom and dad were paying for a boob job for them... in Mountview City, it’s like a rite of passage. What are you getting for grad? Oh my mom got me a Mercedes, my dad got me this, or I’m getting a boob job. (Jasmine, CBE)

Jasmine referred to the ‘passing down’ of other behaviours that, although worrisome and disturbing, are not constructed as social problems relative to the gaze that poor parents receive. As she explained, “Mom is getting a boob job, nose job, facial lift, whatever. It’s huge” (Jasmine, CBE). But this type of parenting or role modeling in which young women are given ‘new bodies’ by parents with financial means is rarely critiqued. Similarly, she cited another example in which financial success provides a type of protection from being associated with a social problem and how the intergenerational ‘passing down’ of behaviours is only problematic in ‘bad’ families.

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51 All names of cities, regions, municipalities, schools, organizations, and so forth, in which the participants work have been changed.
It's the same [in Mountview] with substance misuse. They're really starting all these different subcommittees and committees and developing an attitude of 'We're here to help',...and the conclusion is Mountview doesn't have a drug issue. Well, yes, we do have a huge rampant drug issue but when you don't have to steal a vehicle to trade it for funds to buy drugs or prostitute yourself, you don't see it. When you take your hundred dollar ...allowance and go buy crack or heroin or whatever, then, no, it's not a drug problem. And that's the message that's being sent. I've sat in on disciplinary hearings for students and the parents are like “Well, I told my son, don't show up for school high.” The message is, ‘Well, you do it at home.’ And where do they obtain those drugs? Well, from mom and dad. Their message is, ‘We don’t go to work high. You can use but don’t go to school high’.... Because these are really successful people, right? So, so what if they come home and drink every night? (Jasmine, CBE)

In other words, Jasmine challenged the pathologizing and othering of poor people by flipping the critical gaze towards affluent families. In so doing, she highlights the influence of race and class in determining good parenting and bad parenting and unearths the role that socially constructed identities play in identifying what is deemed to be a social problem.

**Discourse Three**

**Playing with ‘Lego’: Discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration**

*This is why I’m so bugged with bullying.....I’m bugged that everything is bullying.* (Clint, SBE)

The psychologizing discourse of deficit and deviance produces a reified and essentialized bully and victim and thus implies that the bully and victim are easily recognized and identified. This ‘Lego’ discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration builds on this with a focus on the ‘acts’ of bullying. Similar to toy structures built with defined building blocks, this discourse assumes that bullying is something distinct and tangible constructed by smaller, interlocking discrete units which can be shifted, combined, added to, and built upon. Fundamental to this discourse is the notion that actions and forms of violence are ‘neat and tidy’ and easily distinguishable from one another. This third discourse is also founded upon three central and overlapping assumptions and these are explored below.
The taxonomy of bullying

The first assumption is that bullying is something that is easily defined and therefore recognized, named and catalogued. Bullying is composed of direct behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, or hitting (Banks, 1997) and can cover a range of behaviours and actions ranging from ‘mild’ to ‘severe.’ In other words, bullying is used to refer to everything from gossiping to being assaulted with a weapon (Tatum & Herbert, 1997).

This discourse posits that any form of intimidation or violence can be incorporated into the model by adding on more categories or distinctions. In one common example, bullying is divided into the physical and verbal. Physical bullying includes “hitting, pushing, holding and hostile gesturing” whereas verbal bullying includes “threatening, humiliating, degrading, teasing, name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm, taunting, staring, sticking out the tongue, eye-rolling, silent treatment, manipulating friendship and ostracizing” (Ma et al. 2001, p. 249). In another example of the ways bullying actions are catalogued, Rigby (1998) utilizes three categories in classifying the motivations behind bullying: “malign bullying,” which is the deliberate intention to hurt someone; “non-malign bullying,” which is considered “mindless” bullying; and “educational bullying,” which he writes can potentially be seen as being for the person’s good (pp. 17-18).

The spectrum of bullying

The second assumption underlying this discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration is that bullying includes many different types of categories or behaviours, and if a ‘less serious’ action or behaviour is left ignored or unnoticed, incidents deemed to be more serious and violent will result. A spectrum of bullying behaviours can be graphed out
illustrating discrete ‘sets’ of actions (e.g., name-calling, teasing, isolating) and it is assumed that each action can somehow be differentiated from another.

Indicative of a recent trend to rank ‘bullying actions,’ two examples\(^{52}\) of this ‘spectrum of bullying behaviours’ can be found in the BC Ministry of Education’s (2001b) resource, “Helping Kids Live Violence Free.” Both examples illustrate how these publications construct bullying in such a way that a genuine or thorough discussion of social justice is hindered. In one document titled “The bullying behaviours chart,” “ethnic slurs”—a reference made to discrimination based on social hierarchy within this chart—is deemed “moderate” in terms of severity. All other “bullying behaviours” (e.g., threatening with a weapon, defacing property, malicious exclusion, etc.) are seen as separate from one’s social identity, and one can assume, have nothing to do with identity or inequality. In this first example, racism and other forms of oppression become subtopics and are subsumed under the overarching concern: bullying. Bullying gets the full spotlight and masks any discussion of oppression or systemic disadvantage that might be the basis of violence.

In the second example of a spectrum of violence found in the same BC Ministry of Education document (2001b), bullying is treated somewhat differently. Rather than all actions being categorized under bullying, bullying is now seen as its own discrete category located between “trash talk” and “pushing.” This is contradictory to the first example but aligns itself with the notion that bullying—in whatever way that might be defined—is a precursor to more serious criminal behaviour. This example then indicates another flaw or difficulty within the dominant discourse ‘logic’ in that it assumes that an educator,

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\(^{52}\) While I cite two examples found in BC Ministry of Education documents, an informal ‘Google’ search for ‘bullying behaviours charts’ produced a number of similar examples.
administrator, parent, or young person can always differentiate between what may be bullying or what may supposedly be a less serious or more serious act.

**Difference as add-on and anomaly**

The third assumption points to the risks that can happen when examples of group affiliation or identity *do* appear in bullying texts through the token and ‘add-on’ discussions about difference. Similar to above points, there are two patterns here. The first is to engulf discussion about discrimination within an overarching discussion of bullying and the second is to position racism, homophobia and so on as ‘anomalies’ or severe cases of student harassment. Illustrating the first pattern, Rigby (1998) writes, “harassment is a *kind of bullying* [italics added], usually of a non-physical nature, wherein the victim is repeatedly treated badly … because of his or her membership of a social group” (p. 22). Here, racism, sexual harassment, ableism, classism and homophobia share a commonality with each other only because they are all somehow indexed through bullying; all can be added on at any point as subcategories of bullying.

The second trend of addressing difference is to treat racism (as an example) as the most exceptional or deviant cases of bullying. In “Helping Our Kids Live Violence Free” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001b), it can be seen how racism and homophobia are addressed but relegated as extreme ‘off the chart’ behaviours. In a telling example, intolerance (in which racism and homophobia are included) is found in the same category as hate groups and positioned between gang involvement and drug and alcohol use (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001b, p. 9). Intolerance to difference is located within the extreme or ‘pathological’, located outside of bullying frameworks and relegated to the realm
of the 'criminal'; "intolerance" and "hate groups" are conflated into one category, which is then identified as an anomaly. In either case—whether discrimination is placed as a small component of bullying or situated as a pathologized exception to the norm—schools are able to detach themselves from the need for social change.

In this way, this discourse provides an escape hatch for schools seeking to avoid more controversial and contentious topics; given "intolerance" is positioned within the extreme, schools are then able to divest themselves of any responsibility to address and discuss racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and classism. Systemic inequality and violence is placed outside the mandate of the school system. Drawing from this example further, this document encourages parents of victims of homophobia to call PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). And, similarly, parents of victims of racism are directed to contact the BC Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001b, p. 9) and provides the number for this Ministry’s general switchboard. In neither case are parents of students who are discriminated against directed to programs or services within their own school, individual school district, or the provincial Ministry of Education. In other words, situating ‘intolerance’ within the category of ‘hate group’ removes intolerance as an issue of bullying and consequently, positions intolerance and inequality as peripheral to a school’s responsibility.

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53 I was discouraged to find yet another example of a pathologized intersection of race and bullying. In this case, race was indexed with bullying and school violence only through a discussion of emerging youth gangs and weapon use (see Hoffman, 1996).

54 At the same time, there is a silence here surrounding support for victims of harassment based on ability, gender or socioeconomic status.
An example of amalgamation and conglomerations: ‘Disappearing’ sexism and gendered violence

*We’re using the term bullying to cover huge sexual behaviours right now.* (Rosemary, SBE)

In 2005, fifteen Toronto high school students from James Cardinal McGuigan Catholic High School were charged in connection with allegations of repeated sexual assaults on a fellow female student. Four individuals were charged with sexual assault and forcible confinement after male students sexually assaulted the female student in a bathroom and in a stairwell at school. *The Globe and Mail* reported that Constable Peter Duncan of the Toronto Police Force, when asked about the allegations, stated “the case may have been one of school bullying that went to the extreme” [italics added]” (Friesen, 2005).

The labelling of multiple sexual assaults against a young woman as a case of ‘extreme bullying’ demonstrates the authority or clout of this discourse and the degree that a range of actions and behaviours are amalgamated under ‘bullying.’ While gendered violence in high schools is clearly a broad and important topic that deserves far more detailed attention than this brief critique can provide, my intention here is to draw attention to the ways in which discourses of bullying position and engulf a discussion of sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender relationships and sexism. My point is two-fold. First, continued notions that bullying can be differentiated from sexual harassment or that bullying is a ‘lower form’ of sexual harassment perpetuate what Herbert (1989) calls the “hidden curriculum for female students” (p. 21). Second, the above example of the high school in Toronto illustrates how an additive discourse positions violence (in this case, violence against young women) in such a way that a more critical analysis (e.g., the analysis of sexism) disappears.

55 For a more thorough discussion of the relationships between sexual violence, heterosexism and masculinity, see Herbert, 1989; Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997; and Mandel & Shakeshaft, 2000.
Recounting her own high school days, one participant talked about the reluctance of high schools to name sexual harassment:

_There was a hallway along a row of lockers where all the football guys hung out...and it was [the] main thoroughfare...to get from [one] wing of the school to the other...and the football guys would always be there and girls were intimidated to walk down that aisle because they were leered at and you know sometimes rated on a scale of 1 to 10._ (Violet, CBE)

Violet went on to explain that “in retrospect, that was sexual harassment ... clear and simple... and yet it was a daily occurrence that went on for like months and months.”

Another participant, Nina, referred to the continued existence of this same type of “hallway” and told me that “at one of the other schools I was at, some girls they said that there was a hallway in the school where it was known that girls would...be rated” (Nina, CBE). While many participants cited examples in which girls were targets of explicitly sexual language and demeaning and violating comments about their body and sexuality, participants were also quick to note that “there’s not a lot of attention given to the dynamics of ...sexual harassment” (Liv, SBE) within schools.

Equally disturbing to the longevity of disturbing practices such as ‘the hallway’ is the ways in which these practices are amalgamated with bullying. For example, comments about breast size and sexual reputation are termed verbal bullying or sexual bullying (see Duncan, 1998). Even texts that posit sexual harassment as a form of unrecognized gendered violence in schools fall prey to the additive approach and the corollary assumption that sexual bullying can somehow be distinguished from sexual harassment. For example, Stein (1995) writes that “the antecedents of peer sexual harassment” in schools might be located in ‘bullying,’ and that “…left unchecked and unchallenged, bullying might in fact serve as fertile practice ground for sexual harassment” (p. 150). As more than one participant commented, the effect
is that adults teach young people that the violence they endure is less than or different from that which adults experience. As Julia noted,

> *It's never; well it's never considered sexual harassment amongst students... I think because they're kids we don't consider it sexual harassment, whereas three of four years from now when they're legally 19 we would consider it sexual harassment so it's, you know, rather stupid that we don't use that language [and] teach the children that language....we're just going to call it bullying. (Julia, SBE)*

Ultimately, a discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration makes it difficult to read gendered violence in schools outside the talk of bullying; the pervasive belief that sexual bullying can be differentiated from sexual harassment means that 'bitch,' ‘slut,’ and ‘ho’ can be treated as name-calling or teasing and that sexual assault is amended to a case of uncontrolled or extreme bullying. The result is that sexual harassment can be swept under the carpet along with a critique of gender relationships and gender constructions. As Luschen (2001) writes in her critique of the ways in which girls in schools are scrutinized and monitored, “as long as the interwoven construction of gender and sexuality are not interrogated in schools, …there will continue to be repercussions for women as victims of harassment and violence” (p. 11).

This ‘Lego’ discourse has several repercussions. First, bullying is reduced to locating, identifying and categorising actions. Is the action physical or non-physical? Is it a case of threatening, name-calling, or punching? Is the violence perpetrated by one student or three and is it a single event or a repeated event? Is this a case of ‘malign bullying’ or ‘non malign’ bullying? Did a particular action constitute bullying or homophobia? As a result, this leads to a focus on actions over attitudes and forces educators to classify and rank the severity of the action. Consequently, students are given the two part message: first, name-calling (or other designated ‘lower forms’ of bullying) is perceived as less serious than other forms of
bullying; and second, they are told that when a student is called a ‘chink,’ or a ‘fag,’ it is the name-calling that is wrong and the attitude of targeting someone’s identity is left unchallenged. In a telling example of how actions receive primary attention at the expense of the opportunity to contextualize the actions within broader analysis, one participant talked about the treatment of ‘graffiti’ in her schools:

A lot of the lockers had been tagged ‘homo’ and ‘dyke,’...so you’d be trying to find out who’s responsible, but it always seems like it’s more about who defaced the school property....Nothing’s been done... to combat the values and the beliefs. (Rosemary, SBE)

This focus on action over context has another potential consequence when combined with the bully/victim binary. More specifically, within discourses that pose ‘bullying’ as actions that one individual does to another individual, the history or context of the relationship between these individuals/groups of individuals gets erased (or becomes secondary). To illustrate, several participants talked of instances in which victims of long standing harassment begin to physically defend themselves and, in turn, get labelled as ‘problems’ or ‘bullies.’ One participant, Calla, shared an example of what she did in grade ten after enduring sexual and racial harassment for two years:

You ignore it and it stays the same. At one point, I got so fed up I started kicking people in their shins.... I do nothing it stays the same so...I’m going to do something. There was this one guy who had bruises from his knee to his ankle. Because every time he did something I was like this is what I’m going to do to you. And one of the teachers pulled me aside and said that maybe I had to relax or...take it easy. (Calla, CBE, her emphasis)

Another participant, Cam (CBE), pointed to this dynamic in his discussion of his interpretation of the case at Rockridge.56

Yeah, the kid with the knife... was called a chink and that was maybe mentioned once out of eight or nine articles that I read. It wasn’t an unprovoked attack. It was an over the top reaction. I mean the kid was alone, they were chucking around his cell

56 See Chapter One (footnote 17) for an overview of this incident.
phone, basically the kid said ‘You know what, screw this’ and he takes a knife out and stabs the kid. But...the focus was on the kid who was stabbed.... I'm not condoning this at all; I'm not saying this was a great response to it. But, [the racism] was definitely not connected [in the media]. In fact, because he got stabbed, he got a lot of sympathy as being the victim.... Yeah, it was an unfortunate spin on it. That's from my understanding. That's what I've been able to piece together. The kid was being bullied, they were tossing around his cell phone, he got called racial slurs, left, came back and slashed the throats of their kids. (Cam, CBE)

Mo (SBE), also recounted a similar tale in which ‘Mike,’ a student with a disability gets disciplined after handling the harassment he endures ‘inappropriately’:

Mike was an easy target. And he was targeted by a guy in his Socials class. Mike would make a loud popping sound when he was being teased. This guy realized that and pushed Mike every day so that he’d make these high popping sounds. And then Mike would go into a tantrum and the principal would intervene and would have to discipline Mike. (Mo, SBE)

In all of these examples, the bully/victim binary falls apart, and while this could draw attention to the poor or failed logic of the artificial binary, what instead happens is that a focus on the individual ‘act’ of violence is jumpstarted and redirects the gaze: bullying is seen through a lens of isolated acts and individuals who are targets of racism, sexism and ableism (or other forms of oppression) get re-casted as ‘the problem.’ The end result is that the discrimination that may have underscored the relationship and actions between students is made invisible.

The second implication of this additive discourse is that violence is collapsed and incorporated under bullying; every form of violence can somehow be traced to bullying and/or be substituted with bullying (i.e., name-calling equals bullying, sexual harassment equals bullying, racism equals bullying, murder equals bullying). As Loach and Bloor (1995) observe, the differentiation between bullying and an act of ableism or racism or other forms of discrimination cannot actually happen in practice, “so...we are left with...the ‘knowledge’ that when one child hits another, then that is an act of bullying not an act of racism or sexism...
or ableism" (p. 19). Hence, bullying becomes an over-generalized and overused word that blankets or engulfs and ultimately diminishes all conflict and violence that occurs between young people. At the end, “bullying” becomes a discursive site for the amalgamation and conglomerate of all the forms and reasons for violence that happens between young people and “a convenient way for institutions to acknowledge the fact of conflict within their walls without having to face the meaning of that conflict” (Loach and Bloor, 1995, p. 18).

**Discourse Four**

*The superficial nod: Discourse of tokenism and tolerance*

How do we begin to rewrite the story of what it might mean to be a disabled citizen, where the language of activity, productivity and capacity become transformed? (Meekosha, 1997, p. 67)

An exploration of the fourth dominant discourse begins with a discussion of ‘disability’. While this discussion of ‘disability’ may seem like a puzzling detour, this detour has a purpose; this exploration or centering of disability paves the way for the fourth and final dominant discourse covered in this chapter, a discourse of tokenism and tolerance. In reading through the interviews and literature on school violence for the analysis for this chapter, it became quite apparent that ‘disability’ only occasionally intersected with theorizing about bullying and, consequently, this represented a significant void worthy of further exploration. Miller (1993) notes that “ways of saying and knowing [are] silenced and discredited by dominant discourses and practice” (p. 353) and, therefore, silence can symbolize, or point us towards, marginalized claims. Consequently, I became quite curious about the marginalization or subordinate positioning of disability within bullying discourses and interested in what this relative silence could teach me about the different forms of violence, both recognized and not recognized, within schools.
Disability and the path less taken: The triumvirate elite

As is usual in discussing the oppressions for which ‘isms’ become shorthand, disableism does not merit inclusion. The reason for this is simple; even those writers who have specifically examined oppression have internalized the dominant, individualized world view of disability and have failed to conceptualize it as a social oppression (Oliver, 1996, p. 133).

Two reasons pushed me to a specific exploration of disability. Over the past few years I have been spurred on many fronts by important lessons and individuals important to me, to rethink my own relationships with ‘disability.’ Stark examples of the ways in which disabled people are alternately constructed as needy and passive and recipients for charity and benevolence have been too glaring to ignore. Similarly, the numerous examples of the slippery ground upon which disabled individuals are cast as deserving and undeserving dependents have served as a significant motivator for rewriting the priority and meaning I attach to disability as an arena of learning, practice, and reflection in my own life.

At the same time as I was drawn to a closer analysis of disability in areas of life and learning outside this dissertation, an incident in Manitoba gathered nationwide attention. In October of 2006, a fourteen year old boy born with spina bifida was locked in a burning shed by two boys while approximately ten other kids watched, and it was only after a nearby adult intervened that the boy inside the shed was rescued. The coverage of this event highlights many of the discourses previously discussed: the labelling and quick reference of this violent act as bullying; the demonizing of the poor (e.g., Friesen, 2006, in The Globe and Mail, cited the neighbourhood unemployment rate and described the local large scale social housing projects); the almost immediate assumption of poor parenting (e.g., the provincial Minister of Family Services and Housing visited the neighbourhood within a week of the incident to

57 For example, in 2002, the BC provincial government initiated a review of disability benefits and disability designation which threatened the income and support for over 19,000 people with a disability in the province (for a thorough critique of this review process, see Frieur, 2006).
announce a plan for parenting programs); and alluded to the transformation of victims into bullies (e.g., one of the perpetrators of the violence was reportedly a target for violence in the past).

Despite these significant and disturbing examples of the dominant discourses ‘in action’, I found the most troubling aspect of the media coverage to be the absence of any real or critical discussion of the role that ‘disability’ may have played. Although the *Globe and Mail* (Friesen, 2006) cited that the boy locked in the shed was often called “Cripples” by other young people and made specific reference to his “slow, rhythmic lurch” and “fragile legs” (p. A1), this seemed to be offered up as mere descriptors to add emotional currency to the story and not presented as points worthy of deeper exploration. In fact, I was unable to find any analysis, critique or connection in any of the major news stories that covered this incident to the ways in which disabled children and teenagers are targeted, alienated, excluded, and terrorized because they are cast as ‘other’ or ‘less than’.

A closer reading for the times and ways in which ‘disability’ appeared and disappeared in texts about bullying resulted in several overlapping concerns. First, while there is a small body of writing that argues that students who are disabled are targeted more frequently for bullying (Marini, Fairbairn, & Zuber, 2001; Torrence, 2000), I find many of the findings and recommendations from these studies which cite a relationship between ‘disability’ and ‘bullying’ troubling as they are premised upon the same discourses and assumptions I have critiqued in this chapter.58 Second, unlike other aspects of social

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58 For example, the study by Marini et al., (2001) categorizes and psychologizes bullying, while both Mishna (2003) and Sheard, Clegg, Standen and Cromby (2001) are examples studies which subscribe to Olweus’ (1995) framework of the ‘passive’ and ‘provocative’ victim. All of these examples fall back on individual reform or interpersonal skills (i.e., with a narrow focus on families or individual relationships between students) as primary remedies. There is no specific analysis regarding ableism or disability/ability. To illustrate, after arguing that learning disabled students are at risk for more ‘bullying,’ the only two suggested remedies are social skills training for disabled students and individual, group and family counselling (Mishna, 2003).
identity—for example, race of gender—that are occasionally present, albeit in a questionable or worrisome way, (e.g., the additive discourse accounts or acknowledges so-called ‘sexual bullying’), disability receives only fleeting and intermittent recognition. Moreover, when disability does receive mention, disability is acknowledged in ways that can be read as an afterthought or in ways which fail to query disability beyond that of individual deficit. More specifically, disability is viewed solely through the medical model of individual impairment and not through a more politically charged lens which questions the social values attached to disability/ability. In other words, within the dominant, common sense and traditional frameworks of bullying, and in relation to other aspects of identity, disability takes a ‘backseat’ role.

But, perhaps more surprising, a critical analysis of disability was for the most part, the path less taken by many of my participants in the interviews. This reflects another concern around disability: the marginalization of disability and the failure or reluctance to subject disability to the same critical analysis as other social justice issues in discussions about school violence. There was a relative silence around disability in the face of the ‘triumvirate’; in other words, disability was, in the majority of interviews, relegated to the shadows of race, gender and sexual orientation. Throughout a number of interviews, race, gender and sexual orientation are repeatedly linked together in theorizing about the roots of hierarchy, status and school violence. As Nina (CBE) explained, “we should talk about harassment but...what we really need to be talking about is sexual harassment and racist harassment and homophobia. Those are the three key things that I think that schools need to start talking about.” Similar theorizing was shared by other participants: Johnson (CBE) said,

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59 As an example, in some anti-bullying resources, disability is mentioned in no part of the text but only included within a list of resources (see BCCPAC, 2003).
“what we do is make a list of all the groups of people that are discriminated against in our society based on race, gender, sexuality” and likewise, Cam (CBE) stated that we need to address “the underlying causes, which could be many. Not just racism, but also homophobia, classism, sexism and all that.” This relative exclusion of ableism from the central discussion of identity and violence was common in numerous interviews which positioned race, gender, homophobia (and, to a lesser extent, class) as the major ‘bastions’ of prejudice and violence. Here, I need to reiterate an important point mentioned in Chapter Two: this is not to place blame solely on the participants for failing to include disability but perhaps points to the subordination of disability within social justice theorizing (Meekosha, 1997; Oliver, 1996).

In view of the dominant discourses about bullying already discussed, further analysis of the texts and interviews, sheds more light on the ways in which disability is discursively contained. As previously discussed, dominant discourses tend to focus or privilege overt and physical violence, but as one participant points out, there is a social ‘taboo’ about physical violence towards disabled individuals:

I think that there is an understanding around kids with disabilities, you know, that [physical violence] is taboo. You don’t pick on kids with disabilities, there’s an obvious social disadvantage there. Obviously there’s a physical disadvantage there and...you’re going to look bad because you’ve chosen to pick on a person who obviously doesn’t have the same abilities as you. (Julia, SBE)

In a clear example of how students with disabilities are, in part, seen as ‘protected’ from bullying (in the form of physical violence), another participant states, “I don’t know how many [students with disabilities] are bullied because there’s a special ed teacher always with them” (Liv, SBE). In other words, many of the social justice educators, despite their ability to speak in great depth about the role that social identities play in exclusion, violence
and alienation (as will be discussed in the following chapter), seemed to fall into the
‘bullying = overt action’ trap when theorizing about how disability intersects with ‘bullying.’

Consequently, I have two main worries here. First, I am concerned about a skewed
perception that disabled students are not at danger in schools. However, it is evident from
stories shared by a few participants that disabled students are at risk in schools for violence
and exclusion. Mo and Julia, both learning support teachers in schools, provided examples of
the ways in which disabled students were easy targets for mockery and alienation. As Julia
explained, “When I shifted and went from being only a science and math teacher to teaching
special ed. It was like ‘oooh,’ these kids; these kids are really taking a lot of shots.” She
expands further:

There’s all these kinds of victimization around kids with special needs and they’ll get
them in a group and they will, for attention, the child with a disability will do all
kinds of things that, you know, you shouldn’t be doing, like taking off clothing or
dancing things that are really inappropriate but because they have the group sitting
around them and they’re being egged on and because the person with a disability
thinks, “Oh these are my friends, I’m popular”….It’s sad.

My second worry is this: the fact that there is not a sustained critique when students
with disabilities are alienated, positioned as ‘hallway entertainment,’ or, as in the example
cited earlier in the chapter, almost burned to death by peers, suggests that the targeting of
these same students is accepted practice. Regardless of whether students with disabilities are
wrongly interpreted as ‘immune’ to violence in schools, or, if the violence and mockery that
happens to students with disabilities is ‘taken for granted,’ the risk is clear: in a time when
schools are highly sensitive to incidents deemed to be ‘bullying,’ practices that are
discriminatory and problematic—but seen to be unrelated to bullying—can easily escape
interrogation and thus remain ‘normal’ or ‘off the radar.’ To argue this further, despite the
authoritative clout held by a discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration (in which a wide
spectrum of violence in schools is housed under the umbrella of ‘bullying’), the treatment that disabled students are subjected to in schools fails to find a ‘home.’

Schooling ‘disability’

We need to constantly trouble our boundaries so that we are not excluding the very people we wish to include. (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 10)

At the same time as it is important to see how disability is positioned or marginalized within discourses of bullying, the scope of this discussion needs to be momentarily expanded to include a brief exploration of some of the ways in which disability issues are taken up within schools in order to further contextualize a discourse of tokenism and tolerance. First, as Rizvi and Lingard (1996) assert, disability issues have been narrowly defined as ones of access and accommodation. Inclusion and equality have been reduced to mere attendance in ‘regular schools.’ But, as these authors argue, “it is not sufficient for these students simply to have access—their engaged participation is necessary; it should be not merely symbolic but real” (1996, p. 21).

Second, as Meekosha and Jacobowitz (1996) discuss in a broader context, strategies for overcoming ableism are still rooted in appealing to compassion and individual change. While disability is definitely recognized as an ‘uneven playing ground,’ the resolutions remain individualistic and reflect a restrictive model in which change is induced by sympathy.

Third, disabled individuals are cast as symbols of heroism and triumph (Linton, 1998) in which schools, in their effort to promote acceptance and challenge stereotypes, take actions such as “having guest speakers...who are semi famous and disabled” (Nina, CBE).

Examples were provided that detailed the various ways the marginalization of disabled students is taken as a given. For example, participants discussed the ways that the exclusion of students with disabilities in classroom activities and out of school social events, school camps and field trips, extracurricular activities, etc. was expected and normalized.
Fourth, students with disabilities are firmly entrenched as symbols of rehabilitation who are targeted for ongoing social skills training\(^\text{61}\) (Meekosha & Jakubowicz, 2002; Linton, 1998). Closely related to this is the notion of a hierarchy of disability (Chappell, 1998). For example, while discrimination of students with mental health issues garners very little attention or empathy, one participant noted that “a child with Down Syndrome or another genetic disorder where there [are] physical characteristics, is…more obvious, so that is almost an advantage because there’s less of a probability that they’ll be targeted” (Julia, SBE). The cautionary warning here is that a hierarchy exists which divides those deemed worthy and deserving of protection or sympathy from those who are not.

Consequently, disability has been compartmentalized or contained in the literature about bullying; it is both treated separately and differently than other aspects of identity. Disabled students are perceived to be objects of compassion and sympathy, and in the process, disability is—as Meekosha and Dowse (1997) write—anchored “in a ‘duty of care’ rather than human and citizen rights” (p. 61).

While the following chapter explores in more detail a counter or oppositional discourse about school violence which takes into account who is ostracized and alienated within schools, the following point is made here. If, as the participants state, it is primarily overt or physical violence that garners the most attention in schools, then schools can be complacent and thus freed from pressure to rethink their view of disability. But if, as argued by the participants, ‘bullying’ needs to be replaced with a definition of violence that takes into account who is excluded and viewed as outside the social fabric of a school, then this would force schools to re-examine how students who are disabled are represented as charity,

\(^{61}\) I am not suggesting here that these are not valuable educational goals or services; however, I am critical of skills training as a sole response of the school in addressing ableism.
service user, invisible, and a target for institutionalized exclusion. At the same time, a
critique of the ways in which students with disabilities are positioned as unworthy ‘non-
contributors’ would force educational systems to rethink how the current “reigning common
sense” (Kelly & Brandes, 2008, p. 69) that accompanies large scale assessments of
classrooms and students, institutionally cement students with disabilities on the bottom rungs
of an ability-based hierarchy in schools (Kelly & Brandes, 2008).

This is not to say that other systems of oppression are less important—indeed, they
are not—but the concern here is that disability is only peripherally positioned in discourses of
school violence. When appeals to sympathy and compassion are invoked as a response to
ableism, disability remains, in comparison to racism, sexism, heterosexism or classism,
firmly anchored in the “sphere of privacy” (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997, p. 67) and only
tangentially related to critical discussions of school violence and social justice.

A turn to/for tokenism and tolerance

This discussion of a discourse of tokenism and tolerance begins by returning to two
central points made in the previous section. First, disability, within discourses on bullying
and within schools in general, is only marginally acknowledged and represented. Second,
when issues surrounding ‘disability’ do emerge, they are bounded within a discussion of
rehabilitation, sympathy/charity, access, and heroism. In other words, narrower or more
limiting discourses become substitutes for a more critical analysis of power, engagement, and
genuine inclusion. These two points provide a catalyst for introducing and contextualizing
the fourth discourse. Similar to the ways in which disability is taken up by schools, a
discourse of tokenism and tolerance acknowledges difference within relationship dynamics in
the school. However, the important point here is that the critique of difference is not
sustained. Much like how 'disability issues' have come to be oversimplified or made synonymous with access and accommodation, the attention to difference within a discourse of tokenism and tolerance slips away to be replaced by a more liberal or depoliticized analysis.

Simply, the discourse of tokenism and tolerance incorporates a discussion of identities, difference and discrimination but, unable or unwilling to sustain a critical focus, gives in to individualized notions of caring and respect (or, in some cases, even more conservative responses of surveillance and punishment). In one document, “Focus on Harassment and Intimidation” (British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2001), one of the provincial resources on bullying in secondary schools, ‘Caring’ is given centre stage as the “cornerstone of a school community environment that is free of harassment and intimidation” (p. 1). While the reader is instructed that “taunts about a person’s body, disability, religious attire, age, [and/or] economic status” (p. 8) could underlie all ‘bullying’ behaviours, the solution to this rests in “caring” and modeling “respectful behaviours” (p. 2). Tolerance is key and plays a central role in building a “welcoming climate where people exhibiting problem behaviours are nevertheless accepted and included” (p. 1). However, what constitutes “problem behaviour” remains undefined. There are two implicit messages: first, ‘respect’ and ‘caring’ are universally understood and, as such, do not need to be anchored within a definition but can be individually applied by each of us; and, second, the building of tolerant, “welcoming” or “positive” (p. 2) climates (also undefined terms), are key in resolving social inequality and violence.

In other words, despite the fact that this text names prejudice and discrimination as reasons for violence, more normative or dominant themes of bullying pervade. This resource
eventually falls back upon a model of psychology and skills deficiency asserting that
“schools can substantially reduce harassing and intimidating behaviour by helping students
learn pro-social skills such as anger and conflict management, stress management,
responsible decision making, and effective communication” (BC Ministry for Public Safety
and Solicitor General, 2001, p. 10).

While this discourse may appear to heavily overlap with a discourse of psychology, it
differs in subtle but important ways. Diversity is addressed, as are oppression and inequality,
but the assumption is that oppression and inequality “function at the level of individual
circumstance—not as larger social issues” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 18). Whereas the
psychologizing discourse locates the source of the problem, as well as the solution to the
problem, within the realm of the individual, this discourse of tokenism and tolerance
acknowledges the role of difference in school violence but eventually falls back on the
assumption that we all, as Kincheloe and Steinberg write in their critique of multiculturalism,
“share a natural equality and a common humanity” (p. 4).

This superficial treatment of difference was the source of much heated critique
amongst the participants. As Ellen (SBE) made clear:

(School boards) don’t want to deal with difference. They want to deal with
commonality....They don’t want to deal with difference at all. Dealing with
difference is scary. So what they [say] is, “How can we teach about bullying but
saying everyone has feelings. We’re all the same. Down deep we’re all human. So
let’s emphasize the human factor and we all get our feelings hurt”...And, of course
you do have to understand people’s feelings and have empathy and you do have [to]
deal with...commonalities but I think the big mistake though is that we don’t truly
celebrate difference. We might tolerate difference....This whole idea that we’re
inclusive and that we include kids with multiple mental and physical challenges into
the classroom—it’s a joke. If those kids don’t come with an aide who worked beside
them at every single minute, they wouldn’t be able to participate in anything....But
the real inclusion stuff, we’re... just at baby steps that way. (Ellen, SBE)

Similarly, Liv (SBE) voiced her own frustration about the rhetoric of respect:
What is this "be respectful of everybody" going to do...unless you're actually going
to start to name it.....well no, no, no, we don't do any of that. It's "be respectful."
You don't ever... say, here is how...disrespect looks. (Liv. SBE)

Another telling example of this discourse, in which a nod to difference gets usurped
by more hegemonic frameworks, can be found in the provincial report, "Facing our fears--
Accepting our responsibility" (British Columbia Safe Schools Task Force, 2003). In this
report, the authors write “We have learned that bullying behaviour is often founded in
discrimination based on perceived differences” (p. 9), and recognize in other parts of the
report that racism and homophobia may be factors in violence. While this may seem to be an
encouraging move towards an oppositional discourse, this analysis is couched within
plaitudes and rhetoric of respect:

Making our schools safer will take a fundamental shift in our school culture. Each of
us must demonstrate a renewed respect for the diversity of our people. We have to
ensure that the values and principles that are the cornerstone of Canadian society are
honoured, respected and taught in our school system. (British Columbia Safe Schools
Task Force, 2003, p. 1)

The abandonment of a critical analysis in favour of more comfortable or normative
themes becomes even starker as the report unfolds. Despite drawing a connection between
school safety and, for example, homophobia, this attention to social groups, difference, and
discrimination all but disappears within the task force recommendations. Instead, the
recommendations are telling examples of the ways in which “difference” serves as a fleeting
token mention and demonstrates how critical themes are clawed back; rather than tackling
issues of homophobia or other forms of discrimination, the report reinforces vague notions of

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62 Three provincial MLAs wrote a report after conducting province wide community consultations about
bullying, harassment and intimidation in BC schools. These three MLAs constituted the BC Safe Schools Task
Force that was created by the provincial government and chaired by Lorne Mayencourt. The purpose of this task
force was to consult with parents, students and educators throughout British Columbia about violence in
schools.
“positive behaviour” (British Columbia Safe Schools Task Force, 2003, p. 31), advocates stricter surveillance, encourages the implementation of school “safety zones to help shield students” and promotes “school dress codes” (p. 32) within their list of recommendations.

To explore this example further, this same Safe Schools Task Force report served as a springboard for another provincial document, “Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2004). The central purpose of this document is to act on recommendations made by the initial Safe Schools Task Force report by providing “provincial standards for codes of conduct, and identify[ing] attributes of safe, caring and orderly schools” (p. ii). The title of this follow-up report is telling in that “safety” is no longer attached to any grounding in a critical analysis but is instead merged with ‘caring’ and ‘orderliness.’ The watering down of a critical analysis is further evident. While the initial report explores, albeit briefly and marginally, a critique of social relations and violence, the follow-up report gives rare mention of social relations (outside of briefly citing a section of the BC Human Rights Code) and only gives passing attention to diversity. Rather than sustaining even the ‘token nod’, the follow-up report falls back on a cliché:

In a safe, caring and orderly school community, the deep, personal commitment of its members to create and maintain a respectful, welcoming and nurturing environment is explicitly stated....British Columbia schools are striving to develop positive and welcoming school cultures....They focus on...fostering respect, inclusion, fairness and equity. They set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectation of acceptable conduct. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 9)

Ellen, a school-based educator, provided another powerful example of the ways in which a critical analysis is sacrificed for a more general depoliticized perspective.63

[The British Columbia Ministry of Education] pulled me in at the last minute to help them write [a provincial curriculum for bullying] and when I looked at them I said

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63 At the same time, Ellen’s example is a good illustration of multi-discursivity; this incident also points to a discourse of amalgamation and conglomeration and the ways that power relations are subordinate to a discussion of actions and behaviours.
"Well, there's absolutely nothing in here that deals with any of the 'isms,' any of the oppressions and... we all know that a lot of name-calling comes from there. They said, "Well, do up some lessons." So I wrote up some case scenarios of a kid calling another kid gay and teasing him on the way home and how they dealt with it. So, the Ministry actually removed that from the program and just put in that the kid was name-called on the way home.... So, even though they identify homophobic, and racist and sexist name-calling,... they don't put out resources that specifically deal with them. (Ellen, SBE)

Ellen's examples illustrate how a potential critical framing of the problem is flirted with, but ultimately the course of action betrays mere 'lip service.' If more respect is the 'cure,' then the problem is over simplistically reduced to one of disrespect. So, although it could appear that this discourse, in comparison to the other dominant discourses, is initially more palatable, it carries with it its own set of risks. One particular risk of this discourse is that the mere mention of difference or discrimination gets interpreted as a critical analysis. In other words, a critique of the discourse of tokenism and tolerance warns against texts which appropriate the language of justice yet maintain the central notions of the dominant discourses already discussed (e.g., individual deficit, family dysfunction). Initially pointing us towards the semblance of social change, our gaze is ultimately directed towards more neutral ground. In this way, anti-violence work gets articulated as a narrower or diminished form of social justice "making it largely synonymous with a notion of fairness for each individual" (Rizvi and Lingard, 1996, p. 15).

Regardless of how innocuous or 'in the right direction' this discourse might initially seem 'on paper,' the participants were able to identify the risks or pitfalls associated with this discourse and oftentimes 'talked back' to this discourse with much vehemence and anger. Calla shared her own reading of the token response to the racism she experienced in high school:
You know there were always these big multicultural posters you know “get to know other people and their cultures.” All this stuff and it was just...it was just complete bullshit. I mean, I went to a school...it was just you know a lot of upper middle class White kids. By the time I was in grade twelve, there were about eight Black kids, maybe nine. And, there’s this big thing on multiculturalism but at the same time there wasn’t anything really done at the school. So, you’re a multicultural school because you have kids from Korea, Japan, and mostly Vancouver and you’ve got a couple of East Indian kids and a couple of Black kids? But...no, you’re not. (Calla, CBE)

The impatience with the token treatment of diversity and difference is understandable, perhaps because this discourse nudges up against a critical analysis that slips away or because it raises hopes up only to have them disappointed upon discovering that the hoped for critical analysis is, instead, ‘business as usual.’ Drew (SBE) describes one such example:

There is a safe and caring school committee, but it was all just lip service from my perspective. It was a waste of time, like we have flags [of different countries in the world]...and now we have like 50 to 70 flags in our school which is great. I love it but it doesn’t... get to the heart of it. (Drew, SBE)

Liv (SBE) gave another example. Initially excited at the ways in which her school’s social responsibility committee64 might address school violence in a critical way, she shares her eventual dismay:

But, you know what? The social responsibility committee is conservative.... The people who get attracted to it are the ones who are trying to measure this behaviour and it’s kind of a virtue based approach or it’s kind of a smarten up approach. It’s not a social justice approach. It’s a behavioural approach,... liberal or worse....The social responsibility committee, we discuss lates and absences. Conformity. So it’s conservative more than it is liberal. What’s the other big word—compliance behaviour. So anyway, I said that I’m taking myself off...the district social responsibility committee. (Liv, SBE)

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64 In 2001, The British Columbia Ministry of Education developed a framework for social responsibility for voluntary use in classroom and school activities. The framework consisted of four categories or standards: contributing to the classroom and school community; solving problems in peaceful ways; valuing diversity and defending human rights; and exercising democratic rights and responsibilities (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001a). As a result, many schools and school districts formed social responsibility committees to oversee the ways in which social responsibility was promoted within a school or district. Participants referred to social responsibility curriculum as one potential avenue to explore social justice topics. Many of the participants had discussed their hopes at the possibilities that initially accompanied the social responsibility initiatives and, with the exception of one participant, their varying degrees of disenchantment with the framework after seeing potentially progressive curriculum get co-opted. See Kelly & Brandes (2008) for a discussion of the relationship between the Framework for Social Responsibility, social justice education and classroom assessment.
Calla, in speaking about the reluctance of schools to discuss difference, violence and identity in a meaningful way, perhaps captured this discourse of tokenism and tolerance best through metaphor:

*Did you ever watch these old TV shows and when they talk to the guy it's all really clear blue but when you look at the woman it's all soft lights and pretty and through rose tinted glasses...and the trick they used was to put Vaseline on a camera lens to make everything look softer.* (Calla, CBE)

This discourse of tokenism and tolerance serves the same purpose: to make violence in schools look less threatening and make the responses to violence more palatable. Hopefully, a critique of this discourse translates into a metaphorical “wiping off the camera lens” by forcing “us to think carefully and systematically about what treating each other with respect...actually means in different contexts” (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 472), and, ultimately, helping to sustain a meaningful critique of difference, diversity, violence, and social relations.

**Discourse dangers, implications, and consequences**

*When* the word bullying surfaced, it gave language to some of the conflicts that were existing within our school system....It raised the issue of safety. It opened up possibilities to begin to talk about some of the roots of safety and I guess I saw it as an opportunity to begin to speak about creating relationships...and community within our schools. So in the beginning it was good that it got this press...now I'm very worried that it seems to be co-opted, taken over. This zero tolerance and you know, it got trapped in its own violence....In the beginning I was glad that it had surfaced. I thought it would engender dialogue which would be deep and thoughtful and reflective, but slowly it became co-opted and hijacked by metal detectors. (Mo, SBE)

If ‘bullying’ is the catch all label for a wide range of actions, behaviours, and forms of violence, then ‘anti-bullying’ translates into a variety of questionable initiatives. Since bullying is framed as a problem of individual pathology, social skill deficiency, disrespect and relationship dysfunction, schools have responded in kind by strategizing numerous ways
to control and shape the actions and behaviours of students. Anti-bullying becomes a cover
term for surveillance and monitoring programs (e.g., metal detectors, zero tolerance policies,
security guards), awareness programs that preach respect and tolerance, conflict resolution
programs, mentoring programs, and programs that reform parents and individuals (e.g.,
through self-esteem, assertiveness and interpersonal communication workshops, and family
counselling) (Craig et al., 1998; Glover, Cartwright, & Gleeson, 1998; Goldstein et al., 1994;

The implications that arise as a result of the dominant discourses are disheartening
and in light of the escalating moral panic that surrounds bullying, the need to identify and
interrogate these implications becomes more urgent. In so doing, several overlapping
‘dangers’ are evident which have far reaching implications. This section traces the influence
of seven implications or ‘by-products’ of the four discourses critiqued in this chapter.

**Blame and reform**

First, the understanding of bullying has been constructed in a way that posits
individual and families as the objects of critique and reform. Bullying is a private issue in
which students and their families become the objects of a critical gaze. Bullying can be
sourced back to skill deficit (e.g., poor communication skills), pathological behaviour
patterns (e.g., aggression) and ‘dysfunctional’ family relationships (e.g., overprotective
mothers). Located within the realm of the individual, the young person (or their family) is
held accountable and responsible for change. Nina pointed to the function this serves for
schools,

*I think that bullying is really comfortable for schools because it locates the problem
in the individual...so it's easy for the schools to say, okay there are some things that
the bullies are doing but there are things that the victims do too,...to bring it on
themselves...It's really convenient because it totally individualizes what's happening*
and makes it about a couple of kids who are, one or two kids....And it allows the schools to totally escape dealing with the serious problems of sexism and racism and homophobia that exist in their high schools. (Nina, CBE)

When individuals and their families are problematized and ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’ are reified as fixed sets of characteristics, there is little room for discussing complex social identities or focusing on social change. Instead, an ideology of expertism is created and reinforced in which public issues are turned into private troubles, issues of educational reform are liberalized and depoliticized, vulnerabilities and weaknesses of individuals are emphasized, and ‘experts’ and professionals are positioned as powerful and authoritative (Troyna & Vincent, 1997).

An issue of ‘bad-ness’ and ‘bagging it’

Building on the first point that dominant frameworks about bullying are characterized by an ‘othering’ process which holds individuals responsible for personal behaviour, families responsible for producing ‘violent’ or ‘passive’ individuals, and schools responsible for containing and resolving violence, the second implication looks at how the dominant discourses about bullying create ‘bad-ness.’ Bullying becomes a problem about ‘bad schools,’ ‘terrible parents,’ and ‘problem kids.’ As many of the participants discussed, the stigma of being identified as a ‘bad’ school is fierce and is a label to be avoided. Anderson, a community-based educator, explained, “Schools are scared. The administrators are scared. The legal structure of the school is scared. It’s not a good thing for a school to be known as this school that’s full of violence...the problem school.”

However, while dominant discourses position schools as a primary site of responsibility in terms of responding to bullying, the dominant discourses also provides both a rationale and means for dealing with these ‘problem’ students. In what one participant
termed “bagging it” (Mo, SBE), bullying frameworks which blame students allow schools to contain and “ghettoize” (Anderson, SBE) the problem. Mo gave an example of this when talking about a student who, as he described, was “dangerous” and at risk for “running wild.”

I mean we had a choice probably at one point; it’s like—Bag it. Forget it. Let him go. We could contain him. I could tell you what it looks like—you get a TA. You protect other kids. You put up with him...it’s that idea of tolerating diversity. (Mo, SBE)

As another participant further argued, when ‘bullying’ is a means of problematizing individuals and their behaviours, suspension and expulsion become logical and necessary steps thus giving administrators an ‘out’ for dealing with the so-called ‘bad kids.’ Drew (SBE), in one of the focus groups, referred to this: “[There are] a lot of roadblocks around wanting a quick fix. We don’t really want to deal with it. We’re moving you to a new school. Good bye. Problem solved.” Anderson, a community-based educator, picked up this theme further on in the group interviews and rhetorically asked the group, “How many different schools can we send a kid to in order to create order? Or do we just get a school for bad kids?” Likewise, Liv (SBE), in a discussion about racism at the school in which she works, also gave an example of “bagging it.” Telling me of an Asian student who was spit on by “two of the hardest nosed kids,” she said, “I mentioned it to the VP and he said, ‘I’ll make a note of it,’ but they didn’t follow up on it. They’ll make a note of it because they’re working on those kids, you know, to eventually get them out of here.” In other words, talking about bullying in an individualistic and atomistic ways allow a dual purpose escape route; a focus on bullying means that schools avoid talking about social justice at the same time as it provides a rationale for disciplining and ‘getting rid of’ problem students.

The flip side of this is that students not deemed to be ‘problems’ in their school, are in contrast rarely called ‘to task’ for what is deemed bullying. Jasmine, a community-based
educator who has worked in various schools and communities on violence prevention programs, pointed to this discrepancy saying:

There’s never been an expulsion that I know of or any meeting called [for]... a football star who is ....victimizing girls.... I know of football stars who have been suspended because they were drinking on the school bus but grabbing a boob, it’s... “Oh, but they’re hormonal.” (Jasmine, CBE)

Calla (CBE) notes a similar observation in her interview:

But the kids who aren’t labelled ‘bullies’ are the kids who come from good families...who you know get 120 bucks allowance...and those are the kids who everyone says, “Oh those are good kids, they come from good families. They can’t be racist because they’re the good ones.” (Calla, CBE)

Here, as Fine and Smith argue (2001), we are “witness[ing] two versions of adolescence and young adulthood,”—one in which mistakes are permitted, overlooked and forgiven and another in which “mistakes become life-course tattoos” (p. 257).

Getting tough and creeping criminalization

The third implication centers on the uneven ground upon which bullying discourses are situated. Alternately positioned within liberal rhetoric of respect, tolerance and diversity and more hard-lined, ‘get tough’ approaches; the problem of bullying is increasingly vulnerable to neoconservative appropriation, interpretation and action. In times of moral panic, in which bullying is perceived to be ‘out of control,’ increased surveillance, stringent and narrow codes of conduct, stricter discipline and harsher punishment seem logical and necessary. Incidents which are overt and physical “get...a straight line to the top” of administrative agendas (Liv, SBE). In response, schools are under pressure to ‘look tough’ and to exercise social control by instituting metal detectors, zero tolerance policies, security guards, public expulsion ‘courts’ in schools, and increasingly rigid rules (Noguera, 1995).
Ultimately, this “militarization of educational space” (Akom, 2001, p. 55) then becomes synonymous with safety.

This pressure to look and be ‘tough’ has brought about a ‘creeping criminalization’ in which punishment and action is increasingly tied to courts and police. This is not to argue that violence and hate crimes should not be addressed by appropriate legal or human rights institutions but, as Nina (CBE) discussed, this brings about new and difficult concerns.

Instead of reducing the amount of violence in our schools, what [zero tolerance policies] have done is...brought the criminal justice system in[to] our schools. Now problems that would have been dealt with [in] the schools, maybe not that effectively... are now being farmed out to the criminal justice system and being criminalized...[and the criminal justice] system...is even less equipped to actually deal with the roots of what is happening. (Nina, CBE)

While the impact of the courts and human rights tribunals on school violence is an important issue and one that cannot be fully addressed within this dissertation, the point here is that anti-bullying measures already critiqued for being aligned with rigid and inflexible, risk being further aligned with discourses of deviance, pathology, or criminality should the legal system become a primary site for responding to school violence.

One size fits all

Fourth, if ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’ can be cast into typologies, and bullying behaviours are translated into checklists, then it follows that anti-bullying responses become formulaic and prescriptive. These reflex or reactionary solutions—in the form of curriculum, policies and procedures—are a generic ‘one size fits all’ approach. Speaking about the application of generic solutions, Ellen (SBE) refers to, “the BC Schools web sites and stuff, they don’t talk about the systemic stuff....They have this safe schools tool kit that they sent to every school and of course it gets filed on the shelf and no one uses it.” Mo elaborated on these universal solutions:
all talk about consequences and there is so little time and there is so little
reflection going on about the behaviour itself and particularly, the antecedents...or
the communities that we build, all the other things that are going on in that school...
most of which are mystical and complicated and demand thought. It calls for deeper
consideration from the teaching body which simply has no time because they are
heading straight ahead with math 10, and so what [comes] out of that? The lack of
context, the one solution. Something...comes out of the Ministry and they just apply it
to their school because they haven’t had a deep thought about what it means to build
a space where kids feel safe. (Mo, SBE)

Referring more specifically to zero tolerance policies, Nina drew attention to the
pitfalls of a decontextualized and ‘one size fits all’ policy:

We then have schools and school boards and Ministry offices who make broad claims
to be doing something about violence in schools but yet their response to zero
tolerance is totally decontextualized of the social and political context such that if you
have a student [who] is being harassed for being gay and her or she...reacts in any
way to that, that zero tolerance policy means that both of those students will
experience the same consequence. (Nina, CBE)

Nina’s concerns point to another fall out from ‘ready to use’ responses. Constructed as ‘the’
response to bullying, a standardized or generic school violence solution gives the impression
of action. Liv (SBE) referred to this asserting ‘sometimes,...with adults in schools, it is the
rush to cover our ass...so that if something happened, you’ve covered it.’ Calla (CBE), in
reflecting how her own experiences of violence in schools intersected with bullying policies,
made a similar argument: “[Schools] believe that just because they have these policies, that
it’s not happening...they’re not remotely responsible for the after-effects of what happens
because they sit there and they say, ‘but we have these no tolerance policies.’” But her
experience clearly contradicts this, and in speaking about these policies, she compares them
to “restraining orders. They’re flimsy pieces of paper that do absolutely nothing” (Calla,
CBE). The participants, in effect, argued that these anti-bullying policies—promoted as
measures that safeguard students—are instead safeguarding the institution from allegations
of inaction.
Moreover, these universal 'top down' solutions—seen to be "so far removed from the daily day to day lives of students" (Johnson, CBE)—provide an 'easy no' for those schools who are against implementing anything deemed the least bit controversial. For example, Rosemary (SBE) cited a situation in which an anti-violence workshop for high school students was vetoed by administrators because it, at one point, referenced homosexuality. In a letter written to the participant, the administrators stated:

Thank you so much for you know performing for us...and we really loved what you had to show us and...and blah, blah, blah...and by the way here's a copy of the present family life curriculum...which she you know underlined where it says um...you know...homosexuality can't be taught until grade eleven — so basically I think she was saying...you know keep your mouth shut. (Rosemary, SBE)

But, as she explained further on in her interview, more generic bullying procedures and policies in place within the school could be pointed to as evidence that bullying or school violence was being taken very seriously.

A question of ethics and doing more harm

Fifth, a critique of the dominant discourses exposes a set of ethical consequences that are created when systemic disadvantage goes unrecognized and blame and responsibility for the violence they experience is placed on individual students. Here one participant discussed, "how defeating and hurtful it is for young people to be told 'ah, all kids are bullied'" (Julia, SBE). Another participant, Anderson (CBE) talked about the danger and consequences of pushing a framework borne out of what he calls "a real naïve sensibility" onto young people who are gay only to send them into a homophobic and violent society:

[There are] kids being beat up and going into this huge crisis because they've been taught that this approach is going to work...and so...they're there with this kid who beat them up ...and they go "I don't like the fact that you're disrespecting me"— Wham!... "Well, I don't really like the fact that you just hit me—that wasn't very nice"...Wham! (Anderson, CBE)
The suggestion or argument here is that if it is suspected that dominant frameworks fall short of protecting young people, then the passing on of the ‘myths’ perpetuated by dominant discourses is unethical in that these lessons may, in fact, cause more harm. In a powerful example of the ‘logic’ or course of action that happens when violent incidents are not ‘read’ for systemic inequality or power relations, Calla relayed a story to me from her elementary school years when she, after physically maturing earlier than other students, was the target of many sexual comments:

*One time in elementary school this guy was just bugging me and finally I just got up and yelled at him in class and in response the teacher stuck me and him in a room, in the supply closet, and told us to work it out, like locked us in there and I just sat there sitting in the corner trying my hardest not to cry. I told my mom and she flipped out like completely. Like, “what the hell are you doing blah, blah, blah my daughter is not the one who did anything wrong.” (Calla, CBE)*

I argue that this is a significant example: an approach which fails to account for the ways in which identity and social inequality structure violence but instead promotes life skills for students to ‘work it out themselves’ potentially exposes the students to more violence and trauma and, as such, is ethically compromising.

**Blaming kids/Trivializing kids**

The sixth danger of the dominant discourses, and closely linked to the question about ethics, is the argument that the dominant discourses significantly trivialize the violence that happens between young people. Discourses about bullying imply that the violence that happens between young people is somehow, ‘less than’ the violence that happens between adults and “something that just kids are engaged in” (Violet, CBE). As discussed earlier in this chapter, ‘bullying’ is used as an blanket term to cover murder, sexual assault and a myriad of violent incidents and exclusionary relationships that young people experience. And, as one participant
queried, “What is preventing us from calling it violence? Are we afraid to call it violence because they’re kids?” (Anderson, CBE). Cam, a community-based educator, questioned this further arguing, “When we talk about bullying, we are exercising our power as adults to impose what we want to see. At the end, it’s not about [youth], it’s about us.”

There is a double hypocrisy at work here; at the same time as the violence that happens to young people is not afforded the same ‘esteem,’ status or attention that violence between adults incurs, “every misstep by our young no matter how rare in comparison with the transgressions of the adult world becomes a focus of media attention” (Buell, 2001, p. 37). It is an ironic and troublesome hypocrisy that violence between young people is trivialized yet stories of extreme violence in schools gets read as a spectacle reaffirming a moral panic. In this, “erased are the adults...the social history and continuity of raced and classed oppression” (Fine & Smith, 2001, p. 257). In other words, a narrow focus on a watered-down version of school violence, immunizes the rest of society from any meaningful anti-violence work.

**Shrinking social justice**

Last, as the dominant discourses become more entrenched and authoritative, the space in which to talk about social justice collapses. Clint drew attention to the shrinking space for social justice work within a discussion of his own efforts to draw attention to racism:

*We used to have multicultural clubs in the school...and for two years, I was in the classroom and I was the multicultural, anti-racist [contact] teacher. All of a sudden, I was back in the classroom and there were no anti-racist teacher contacts. And then I notice that they brought in someone who was going to be the Safe Schools coordinator...and then we had this anti-bullying stuff all over the schools and then the multicultural club was in the background and now we don’t have any [multicultural or anti-racist] contacts. (Clint, SBE)*
The risks for social justice work are several. First, as Clint pointed out, the
moral panic surrounding violence in schools positions bullying as the ‘hotter’ issue,
thus drawing attention and resources away from social justice initiatives. Second, as
outlined previously, bullying subsumes more controversial topics; discussion of
homophobia can be masked as student conflict and bullying. Third, when racism,
ableism, classism, heterosexism, and other oppressive relationships are housed under
‘bullying,’ these social justice concerns risk being ‘swept under the carpet.’
‘Bullying’ is, as Clint termed it, “the flavour of the month” and when schools are
declared ‘bully free’ or funding for anti-bullying work disappears, even the restricted
opportunities to talk about social change in an ‘add-on way’ are uncertain.

I argue that as the moral panic around bullying has grown, the possibilities of anti-
violece work should have also increased. This has not happened. In other words, the
ideology of individualism has trumped a discussion or understanding of how violence is
relational and represents, as well as constructs, social hierarchies (Hill Collins, 1998). As a
result, a distributive or ‘weak’ liberal approach to justice reigns in which justice is reduced
and restricted to “the power of surveillance, control and discipline [of] others” (Gewirtz,
1998, p. 476) and it becomes evident how ‘bullying’ becomes a slippery slope towards
reinforcing systems of oppression.

**Concluding Remarks**

The term bullying will never be illuminating; it will always mystify and mask the true
meaning of conflict...what we are suggesting then, is that the only way forward for
those interested in...anti-oppressive practice is to advocate never using the term
“bullying” in schools at all. (Loach & Bloor, 1995, p. 19)
Within this chapter, I set out to critique the dominant discourses of bullying and highlight some of the injustices of these bullying frameworks which discursively set young people as dangerous threats and pathologized victims and where systemic disadvantages go unrecognized. My intent was not to argue that there is not an individual or family component or that caring and respect is not at some level important but to argue that there are numerous risks in relying on simplified or reductionist frameworks. It is important to critique the impact of these discourses in view of social justice goals and to interrogate the messages and meanings that these discourses send about, and to, young people. I approached this analysis with the assumption that if the various discourses can be made more visible and as a result, demystified or complicated, we can begin to understand how the discourses position and constrain us in particular ways as 'bullies,' 'victims,' students, educators, parents, administrators, and would-be allies. At the same time, I am hopeful that this critique becomes fertile ground for nurturing counter discourses in which school violence can be seen as an issue of social justice and counter-hegemonic practice.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE ROOTS OF AND THE ROUTES TOWARDS AN OPPOSITIONAL DISCOURSE OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Not all discourses will carry equal weight or power. Some will account for and justify the appropriateness of the status quo. Others will give rise to challenge... existing practices from within or will contest the very basis of current organization and the selective interests which it represents. (Weedon, 1987, p. 35)

Introduction

We have to figure out how [we can] create capacity in this school so that everyone is honoured.... It's going to be hard but we're going to have to find a different way of...creating pride beyond elitism and competition.
(Mo, SBE).

While a critique of the dominant bullying discourses is essential to the development and momentum of an oppositional discourse, it can be discouraging if not balanced by an alternative, more promising vision of theorizing and practicing against violence. Despite the hegemonic influence of the four dominant discourses, interviews with the participants in this study reveal a discourse of resistance. Whereas the previous chapter highlighted the various discourses which constrain and discourage the anti-violence work of social justice educators, this chapter takes a different path and explores the seeds of a more hopeful discursive space in which violence and safety in schools can be re-imagined. This oppositional discourse is perhaps not yet as loud, unruly, or authoritative as it may one day be. However, as my theoretical framework in Chapter Two reassures me, this is okay since critical discourse analysis (as adopted within this research) sets its purpose on “dismantling or subverting hegemonic discourses, challenging traditional epistemologies and re-establishing marginal discourses” (Brooks, 2000, p. 42).
**Evolving resistance: Exploring tenets of an oppositional discourse**

This chapter centers on the ways in which the fifteen participants reformulate the dominant discourses as they ascribe meaning to what they view as violence in schools. Ultimately, this chapter looks at the question, “If not ‘bullying’ as the explanation for school violence, then what?” Disenchanted with hegemonic notions of bullying, it can be seen here how the participants flex the meanings of violence in schools and draw theoretical connections between themes previously unauthored within the dominant discourses. The participants are exploring a seedling oppositional discourse grounded in a critique of individualism, competition, and superficial notions of safety, respect and difference while simultaneously invoking themes about identity, oppression, relationship, difference, exclusion, and belonging. These participants, as Giroux (2002) writes, are in the act of defining not only what they are *against*, but what they are *for*.

Against the often uncomplicated and ideologically charged discourses of the dominant,...educators must use whatever relevant resources and theories they can as an important tool for critically engaging and mapping the important relations among language, texts, everyday life, and structures of power....

(p. 1156)

**Critical incidents beget ‘critical incident’...**

First, I will expose my own research naiveté in disclosing that my initial plan centred on the hope that the participants—individually and collectively—would produce a fully articulated and soundly theorized rebuttal to the dominant discourses. I expected, perhaps even assumed, that my discussions with the participants would provide me with a neatly-packaged counter discourse which would confidently explain that “violence in schools can be defined as ABC, and XYZ is what we need to do....” With hindsight, I admit that I had initially hoped for a blanket, totalizing discourse that could and would account for each and
any situation of violence between students. I assumed that in critiquing the dominant
discourses, there was both the need to explain away all the complexities which fall under the
wide umbrella of 'school violence.' But, as a neophyte student of post-structuralism, I soon
learned the theoretical implausibility and unattractiveness of this expectation. As appealing
as it may have first appeared to me, the premise and promise of a totalizing cohesive
discourse—even one which lay claim to a social justice perspective—that could critically
account for each and every situation of violence between students, was the very thing that I
had set out to trouble.

Consequently, my initial wish list for a tidy social justice-oriented package had to be
revised and only later did I learn that, for the purposes of this research, the re-theorizing of
violence needed to take a sideways and roundabout detour. During the first individual
interviews with the participants, I asked each educator if they could identify or reflect upon
those moments in their practice when either traditional notions of bullying 'fell apart' for
them or new ways of looking at violence appeared. I was curious here about a catalyst or
incident which revolved around meanings of violence and "potentially interrupt[ed]
institutional meaning management and invite[d] reflection on business as usual" (Herr, 2003,
p. 422). Many participants were able and willing to talk about many such moments.

In one example, Liv, a school counsellor, told me about an incident that demonstrated
to her what gets left out of the dominant bullying discourses:

_I was really upset in our school last year. They had a grade eight retreat and... there
was a grade eight boy who was new to our school who was put into a pre-
employment class...not as low as what we call 'access' kids, but it doesn't matter
because he wasn't invited to the grade eight retreat. That poor boy... his whole class
was gone. All grade eights are gone and he's not. That shouldn't have happened.
Welcome to our school. (Liv, SBE)_
In another interview, Drew, a school-based drama teacher, explained the failings of bullying discourses to account for the “natural and organic” process of anti-violence work and provided me with a second example of an ‘aha’ moment. In this incident, a group of drama students start excluding and gossiping about another smaller group of students who have been chosen to represent the school in a larger event:

*I had to really blast my grade eleven class... we didn't do anything for three classes. We just sat in a circle and talked....A few of my kids were really jealous of these kids and instead of owning that they were jealous they got petty and just gossiped and it just, it just had this negative energy.... So we just sat and talked about it. I was really angry at them..... why do you keep knocking down these four kids that are doing really, really well.... And the whole thing came down to... “We feel like you favour them,” and they just want[ed] to shine. They want their moment too. (Drew, SBE)*

Similarly, in the context of a discussion about the irrelevance of the actual word ‘bullying’ for young people, Mo, a learning support teacher, shared a key incident that helped point him towards what he calls the “dangerous, hard things” facing young people. In this example, he told me about having been a new teacher, passionate about challenging the isolation facing his students with moderate disabilities.

*It was up to me as the teacher to, to find links... to bring them into the social networks of high school life. Otherwise, their isolation simply continued and they were surrounded by paid adults. So, I began a system of peer tutoring...where non-handicapped kids were invited to come in....We began to look at larger issues of youth and safety...and the pursuit of perfection...how elusive it is...and how impossible it is....I was coming at it with some popular disability themes. The difficulty with perfection. What does it mean to be normal?...The importance of friendship and...the importance of community and it was...non-handicapped youth...that made me realize that these issues that I thought were only disability issues were far broader and far more real in their lives...It was at that point that I began to see some of the pains that they were living as well in their own little lives of social isolation. This wasn't about little guys with Down Syndrome....Many of [the peer helpers] were absolutely convinced that they were not pretty enough, not smart enough, not cool enough....At that point...my eyes began to see the broader picture and be more sensitive to some of the some of the dynamics that were going on subtly in that school that were hurting kids and isolating all kids...and making our school an unsafe place....I went in thinking that the only people...who were vulnerable were*
these kids with moderate mental handicaps....These kids taught me that...they were all in the same soup. (Mo, SBE)

While the meanings and messages about identity, membership and difference contained in these three incidents are explored throughout this chapter, I want to highlight the fact that these stories did not centre on physical violence nor did they revolve around psychological explanations, panics in the media, or major crises in schools. In fact, it did not initially resonate with me that these stories were really about violence at all. However, reading and re-reading the 'critical incidents' of others brought upon my own epiphanic moment or opportunity for reflection further on in the analysis. More than what they explicitly described as violence, these critical incidents directed me to the intersections between social justice and violence that the participants were 'pilgrimaging' towards. I realized that in asking the participants about the ways in which they made sense of violence in schools, I was also, perhaps more importantly, being given the opportunity to instead hear about the ways in which they envisioned an alternate landscape. In telling me about pivotal moments, participants were, in different ways, also presenting their individual vision of the 'underside' of violence—peace and safety—upon which a more progressive discourse on school violence could be nurtured.

As will be further explored in this chapter, the participants define a discursive space in which several overlapping discourses are summoned and explored. As a result, difference, identity, masculinities, citizenship, and community become the major tenets of an oppositional discourse from which the participants talk back to, and act against, violence in schools. Using these same themes as touchstones to envision critical notions of safety and violence, the chapter concludes with a review of some of the implications of a counter-hegemonic discourse.
Difference and hierarchy matter

The chilling effect of being in a school where individuals hurt each other for fun is bad enough. The chilling effect of being in a school where individuals hurt each other by picking on aspects of their self identity is, arguably worse. (Griffiths, 1998, p. 229)

All participants, at some point during each of their interviews, articulated the need to thoroughly examine the role that difference and power dynamics play in issues of school violence. Given the propensity of the dominant discourses of bullying to frame the social locations of students as token, inconsequential, or worse yet, a source of pathology, it is not surprising that an oppositional discourse articulated by participants is grounded amidst the ways social identities inscribe and reinforce violence. This first assumption, that difference matters, underscored all the interviews and was an ever present touchstone to which the participants returned. For the participants, difference and power extended beyond the simplistic examples referenced by dominant discourses in which difference is equated with wearing glasses or having red hair and power is narrowly defined as physical strength (Olweus, 1993). Instead, participants referred to difference based on “social power that comes from social status” (Liv, SBE), that, in turn, determined which social groups are positioned “outside of the mainstream” (Cam, CBE).

This concern with difference, in and of itself, is not so illuminating since all participants accepted for this research project had a stated interest in looking at issues of inequality and social location. But the myriad of connections that these participants make—systematically glossed over in the dominant discourses—between violence, exclusion and difference shed light on the importance of a sustained focus on critical notions of difference. This is made all the more difficult, Nina (CBE) argued, during current times when “there’s a lot of work invested…to make schools seem like a cohesive team, like there’s this kind of
nationalism that happens in high schools so [schools] don’t really want to talk about difference.”

Overwhelmingly, the majority of the stories the educators shared, in which they described the pain and hurt young people experience, centred on the ways in which socially located different-ness ‘marks’ students: the First Nation student curricularly and socially marginalized in the school (Ellen, SBE); the young woman stuck with the label “slut” which “follows her from year to year to year to year” (Violet, CBE); the “kids who come from trailer parks” who are the targets of mockery in newly gentrified schools (Mo, SBE); the student who is gay who discovers ‘dyke’ has been spray painted on her locker (Rosemary, SBE); the only three Black students in a school who are “attacked and called nigger and bitches” (Rosemary, SBE); or the disabled student who is “egged on” by other students into “taking off clothing and dancing” and being made into the “hallway joke” (Julia, SBE).

To look at these incidents solely through the lenses of individual deficit or, alternately, through a narrow view of violence as a singular action is to signal that these markers of identity are in fact irrelevant. This, as the participants indicate throughout their interviews, is a grave misconception since, “it allows the schools to totally escape dealing with serious problems of sexism and racism and homophobia that exist in their high schools” (Nina, CBE). If the dominant discourses attempt to erase difference and promote commonality, an oppositional discourse starts from the querying point “What constitutes undesirable difference?” and “How is violence in schools linked to this difference?” In other words, there is opportunity for exploring the ways in which difference is “constructed as deviance and inferiority” (Young, 1990, p. 116) and how these “historically constituted group identities [which] are neither fleeting nor chosen” (Hill Collins, 1998, p. 3) determine, as one
participant bluntly stated, “who gets targeted” (Violet, CBE). As Cam, a long time
community-based educator with young people, expanded,

[We need to think about power dynamics [and] who gets represented in schools [and] see where people are segregated... Who is on the outside and who does not ever have a voice in the school? (Cam, CBE)

Consequently, a prominent theme to emerge from the discussions of difference was
the ordering of who is valued in the school or, alternately, who is not of value. Using words
like “invisible,” “marginalized,” and “ostracized,” participants argued that there is a need to
examine the ‘currency’ that socially constructed identities carry or do not carry within
schools. While it is in one sense important to acknowledge that these social hierarchies in the
schools are contextualized, fluid, and shifting, I also firmly believe that it is important to
acknowledge the real and painful implications of this hierarchy in the lives of the students.
For example, Julia (SBE) made reference to the differing currency doled out to roles and
identities when she asked, “And, who comes out on top? Athletes and the pretty girls.”
Further on in the interview, citing personal examples from her own life as a mother to a child
with autism, she expands on the fallout from this hierarchy of status,

[My son] doesn’t understand that all of the kids have birthday parties and he’s never been invited. Ever. And it’s like,...how many times can you say, “Johnny’s mom isn’t having a birthday party for him?”...We have a circle of friends program for my son. Twice a month we take two kids who have to sign up,...and we go into the community or into our house and...he’s still never been invited to someone else’s house....And we’ve been doing this for two years. (Julia, SBE)

As pointed out by many of the participants, this negotiation of the “unspoken
hierarchy” (Maxine, CBE) forces a treacherous balancing for many students as they negotiate
the slippery ground between ‘different,’ ‘normal,’ and ‘cool.’ For example, Mo (SBE)
commented on the dicey process of maintaining or ‘bettering’ one’s place on the hierarchy by
talking about “how difficult it is to be cool and how you can never be cool enough.”
Illustrating this, Calla (CBE) told me about how overweight girls were relegated to the margins of the high school she had attended as a student. In our discussion, it can be seen how she was ever aware of how her own positioning was determined in relation to the ‘different-ness’ of other students.

"I remember this one girl who was...very overweight and I didn’t know her very well...and she had it rough. She had even less friends than I did. I was just so wrapped up in my own thing that I look back and now go, “I probably could have done more,” but at the time I remember thinking “I just have to get out of here. I’m barely getting by as it is.” (Calla, CBE)

In other words, safety in this example is found amidst the elusive normal; the closer one is aligned to the always shifting ‘normal,’ the safer one might perceive him/herself to be.

Lahelma (2004) speaks to the double edged nature of ‘normal’—its appeal and evasiveness—and reminds us that “being ordinary or normal is a safe position for young people in secondary schools, but it is not easy for each student to take this position, because differentness can be constructed from any characteristic” (p. 10).

Two further points need to be made here. First, despite the fact that participants perceived students to be reinforcing these constructed social hierarchies by excluding and dividing each other, many participants were careful and deliberate about pointing out that this needs to be critiqued from a broader perspective and not used as a means towards blaming young people for creating a system of hurting each other. Liv argued this point:

"The hypocrisy of the adults when...our whole culture is predicated on hierarchy. It’s the worst of animal instincts [to be] at the top of the ladder and our whole world operates like that. Yet, we’re trying to say to kids “You shouldn’t operate like that” or “Here’s a limit to how you operate like that.” But adults misuse their power all the time. (Liv, SBE)

Second, in recognizing the hierarchies and boundaries that pull, pressure, and position young people, I am not asserting that these standards are universal, fixed, and impermeable,
nor am I implying that young people are unable or unwilling to transgress these boundaries. Rather, I am arguing that ‘normalcy’ and ‘coolness’ are discourses within which young people can negotiate, and through this renegotiation, be differently repositioned in relation to violence and safety (Hemmings, 2002, p. 293).

In contrast to the dominant discourses that position individuals (and their families) as the sites for blame, an oppositional discourse starts with a critical notion of difference connected to social locations and historically constituted groups and contextualizes this within a hierarchy of social relations which exists within schools. Moreover, as Cam argued, young people need to know that this is not only a hierarchy “that they’re part of” but also one to which “they consciously or unconsciously contribute...and have the opportunity to change.”

**Questioning masculinity as measure and standard**

Borders define outsiders and insiders, but they do much more—they also actively legitimate insiders. (Mohanty, 1997, p. xiii)

An oppositional discourse functions to move masculinity into the spotlight, and in an example of the ways discourses intersect, builds on the previous theme of difference. If the previous theme of difference helps construct an oppositional discourse by asking, “How does difference matter?”, this discourse tenet takes a step back and asks “How can we understand how hegemonic notions of normal are constructed?” If the participants’ stories about difference help demonstrate how difference is constructed as deviance or disadvantage, these same stories also address what criterion determines the circumstances under which one can ‘belong.’ To be more clear, if difference can be used to relegate groups and individuals to the bottom of the ‘pecking order,’ then what determines, as Julia (SBE) asked, “Who comes out on top?” As many of the participants asserted in both the individual and group interviews,
one of the keys to the question is through a critique of masculinity and the accompanying notions and discussions about appearance, worth, contribution, status, and power.

If masculinity is addressed in dominant discourses, the explanations offered are overly simplistic. Any recognition that ‘bullying’ might require a gendered critique is dismissed or watered down through essentialist frameworks; for example, Olweus (1999) writes, “It is well documented that relationships among boys are by and large harder, rougher, and more aggressive than among girls. These differences certainly have both biological and social/environmental roots” (p. 35). However, there are other ways dominant discourses invoke discussions of masculinity that are even more alarming. In his book, *Bullying in schools: What to do about it*, Rigby (1998) argues the following.

But by any objective observation bullies are highly aggressive, tough-minded, even bloody-minded people; insensitive and stupid… but not cowards. It may be unfashionable, but there is much to be said for the medieval ideal of the brave knight of whom Sir Lancelot was the prototype… a man of blood and iron, a man familiar with the sight of smashed faces and the ragged stumps of lopped-off limbs; he is also a demure, almost maiden-like guest in hall, a gentle unobtrusive man… It is this combination of strength, indeed fierceness of the leonine kind, combined with humility and gentleness that we need today…. *We are not going to extol the virtues of wimps* [italics added]. (pp. 144-145)

Here, there is much that is troubling—the essentialist binaries, the fixed one-dimensional characteristics assigned to ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’—but what is important for the purposes of this discussion is the way in which a gendered and heteronormative framework is being promoted within the context of anti-bullying work. Rigby draws only a fine line drawn between the unrestrained aggression of the bully and the heroism of the medieval knight since violence (e.g., “lopped off limbs”) is recognized, in some sense, as socially acceptable. The causes of ‘bullying’ are linked with ‘masculinity in crisis discourse’; in other words, school violence is reduced to a problem of gender formation for boys and young men. This
does not mean that masculinity as a construct is questioned; indeed, notions of masculinity are taken for granted with the caveat that males need to temper or balance these "macho notions of masculinity premised upon biological essentialism" (Blackmore, 1997, p. 83). Furthermore, femininity, within this example, is represented as the demure and gentle maiden without agency or inclination towards violence, perhaps explaining the subsequent eruptions of 'moral panics' when girls are violent (Jiwani, 1997).

In stark contrast, the participants approached a discussion of masculinity in a much different way critiquing notions of masculinity as tools for evaluation, surveillance, and regulation and referencing masculinity as an important signifier in schools. In one of the focus groups, Nina (CBE) spoke to the importance of including masculinity in a discussion of violence stating, "We still live in an environment where those constructs of femininity and masculinity are so strong and so influential...which is bizarre because we live in an age of queer when gender is...undermined [except]...in high school environments."

An oppositional discourse that incorporates a critique of masculinity recognizes masculinity as an instrument of measurement or evaluation for both males and females. Consequently, a study of the ways masculinity plays out in schools demonstrates what is valorized within particular schools and subsequently, what is not. Liv, a school counsellor,

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65 Some authors (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997; Mills, 2001) posit that there are different masculinities which are built both in relationship to one another and around a hegemonic masculinity which claims the highest status and extols the most authority. However, there is critique of this approach. The key argument here is that the cataloguing of masculinities "evokes typologies (different 'kinds' of masculinity or femininity), directly or by suggestion [in which]...new boxes are created, suggesting gender construction to be more fixed than is really the case" (Francis and Skelton, 2001, p.11). These authors argue that the categorization of masculinities suggest "conflation of gender and sex underlying writing on masculinities and femininities" and instead argue that there is "one (notional) masculinity and one (notional) femininity, constructed as oppositional to one another" (p. 11). It is the latter approach to masculinity that this research aligns itself with. Although masculinity is neither static or ahistorical, in current times masculinity mobilizes around physical strength, emotional neutrality, control assertiveness, and competitiveness and distances itself from emotion, subjectivity, cooperation, and compassion (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Mills, 2001).
was the first to introduce a critique of masculinity within one of the group interviews and frames it within the parameters of entitlement and privilege.

*The other thing is this masculinity thing...what happens is you get a kid, especially a male, connected to a sport and what he does is he becomes entitled.... He becomes a swaggering hockey player....there's that dialogue that we're not really having....people in sports are privileged and feel that out of that comes entitlement.*

(Liv, SBE)

She made it clear further on in the conversation that it is not sport itself that she is challenging but the “privileging [of] masculinity within the extreme elitism of competition” (Liv, SBE). Of course, ‘masculine’ traits are contextual and while Liv draws attention to the benefits accrued through sport competition and athleticism, another participant highlighted masculinity as “striking out, taking a stance” (Mo, SBE). In explaining the pull of masculinity, Mo shared his son’s experience and in so doing, points out the fragility of masculinity in which “boys are expected to prove and reprove their masculinity” (Mills, 2001, p. 48).

*He's 19. He lives in great fear. He would be considered cool in his school. He's worked very hard at being cool. He could tell you the day probably that he was called to the music of Tupac*^66^ *and he...was called almost immediately to the cry of...inner city Black. Why? I don't know. He just remembers being called to that. Called into this fucking up other people, defending, striking out, [and] taking a stance....He goes out on a Friday night, they drink, [and] they fuck each other up. He's had knives pulled on him. This is White, upper-middle class White....When my son first heard Tupac it answered all the questions that he didn't even know he was asking. Filled a void; this is who I am...this is what gives me the power.* (Mo, SBE)

In addressing the elite status that those most aligned with masculinity receive in the pecking order of schools, the participants’ critique of masculinity also included the ways masculinity serves as “a form of boundary policing... which serves to normalize ...masculinity while also determining where a boy is positioned within a hierarchical arrangement” (Mills, 2001, p. 4). The participants echoed the boundary-___

^66^ Tupac was a Black American rapper who died in 1996.
confirming influence of masculinity. As Cam, a community-based educator who has worked with many community and school-based groups noted, “We give our kids very definitive roles for gender identity in the school.” Similarly, Rosemary (SBE) argued that constructs of masculinity “affects every boy who likes art more than drama or more than PE—every girl that likes to take metal shop and who is really athletic.” The available gender roles are restrictive and as the participants stress, those individuals and groups who fail to measure up (i.e., by way of athletic ability, appearance, physical size, sexual orientation, ‘able’ bodiedness, etc.), risk being targeted for violence. Liv explained,

“You’re never going to convince a boy that the nicest thing he can do is to continue reading to someone for the rest of his life and that’s how he’s going to fit into school. Through his reading skills? It’s going to be “fag, fag, fag” all over it. That’s where masculinity comes in. Why not be good at...helping your peers?...Because that’s going to be considered faggy. (Liv, SBE)

Rosemary, a school-based counsellor, came at this same point—that masculinity constrains boys and sets the stage for violence and exclusion—by critiquing an anti-violence program that reinforced the hegemony of masculinity.

There’s this program for those that are chronically bullied...and it was run by two male social work students...but every single day they were running it they would take the guys out and throw the ball around. Because the two guys that were running it were jocks. I was looking at this group of boys that were in there and I thought...this is not the football team. These are the kids who are interested in graffiti, or computers. I think that was the facilitators way of connecting and I was really triggered by it. These kids are the kids that get picked on or they have self-esteem issues because they’re not the jocks. If they could toss the football around, they’d be fine but they don’t. They’re huddled over their sketchbooks or they’re making music. I remember three of the guys there had a bluegrass band that would play in the hallways and stairwells and students would pick on them because they were playing the banjo. (Rosemary, SBE, her emphasis)

At the same time as hegemonic notions of masculinity construct criteria for boys in schools, masculinity feeds misogynistic versions of femininity and contributes to “the monitoring of women [as] a . . .routine and everyday practice” (Luschen, 2001, p. 111). Many
of the participants concentrated on this surveillance and regulations of girls specifically around the construction of desirability and the “specific power behind the words” used to label girls such as “slut” and “ho” (Violet, CBE). Violet expanded on this and connects it to what Fine (1988) terms the “missing discourse of desire”:

**Girls are not allowed to have sexual desires. With guys it’s accepted. That’s the norm. So right away by...gender stereotypes, we’ve set up potential conflicts because the goal of the guy is to pursue her. The goal of the girl is to deny that she has sexual desires and to resist because that makes her a good girl...he’s expecting that that’s the way it’s going to be and...his role is to pursue, pursue, pursue, pursue, pursue...instead of doing away with all the stereotypes and just allowing girls to express their sexual desire, “This is what I like. This is what I don’t like. This is what I want to do...this is what I don’t want to do.”** (Violet, CBE)

Similarly, Julia problematized how the construction of ‘sexual reputation’ has become normalized as a means of justifying violence.

**And girls...are victimized with explicit sexual language and those sorts of thing; the girls who dress more provocatively than other girls...well then...it’s okay to treat them like that because well, they’re dressed like that and that must be what they want.** (Julia, SBE)

But, as Maxine, a community-based educator who facilitates anti-sexism workshops in schools, suggested if aligning with masculinity “is the way to be powerful for boys,” then this discourse of masculinity posits that girls need to be desirable while simultaneously avoiding the label frigid or slut. As she pointed out, “being harassed almost means it’s like confirmation that you are desirable or something” (Maxine, CBE).

Calla referred to this same tension between these roles which serve to pigeonhole young women when describing an incident from her own high school years.

*I remember one of the few times I wore, you know, a shirt that sort of fit me to school...Some guy commented that my boobs were like a soft eraser. And I stopped wearing that shirt and my mom didn’t know why and I just stopped wearing it. I was like, “I’m not wearing that shirt anymore,” and it was a nice shirt, too. I liked it but I stopped wearing it because it was easier.** (Calla, CBE)
Further on in the interview, Calla elaborated on this incident capturing the contradictory ways in which this discourse of masculinity implicated her:

*It’s like, I can dress like a girl but I can’t dress up too much like a girl. And if I dress too much like a boy then I’m all of a sudden a dyke and if I dress too much like a girl then,...I’m asking for people to snap my bra strap and comment on my tits and ass and so on.* (Calla, CBE)

Clearly, the ramification for those who fall outside acceptable gender roles is clear. As Ellen explained,

*I think we’re moving more and more to people who are tormented because of how they present themselves. More people are tormented because they appear to be gay,...not because they necessarily are or aren’t gay,...there’s a huge thing in our society about gender. There’s a certain way to present as a female and there’s a certain way to present as a male and if you don’t then you are considered gay and you are considered disposable or worthy of ridicule.* (Ellen, SBE)

The goal of this research is not to fully explore the ways in which a discourse of masculinity functions within schools nor does a critique of masculinity provide a complete analysis of violence in schools. However, an examination of masculinity does provide a template for approaching violence by forcing a focus on how social relationships and hierarchies within schools are constructed and querying how young people are differentially positioned in terms of ‘safety’ by notions of masculinity.

### Constellations, community and citizenship as resistance

*It’s the difference between tolerance and value...between the teacher who smirks and says, “I guess she’s coming in here. Does she have a TA?” and “Cool, bring her in here.”...Citizenship is going to call for relationship, not just rights but relationships...in the lives of kids who live with some sort of disability, in the lives of First Nations kids, with the class of Punjabi kids, or whatever. It’s going to be about constructing classrooms...where we have kids in genuine relationships.* (Mo, SBE)

Although I did not originally set out to study citizenship, themes of citizenship were central within the interviews with participants. The participants’ references to belonging, membership, contribution, and relationship were, at the beginning, more than a bit cloudy to
me. Sure, these concepts were somewhat related to violence but it initially seemed that I was heading down a tangential path if citizenship were to take on a 'starring role' within an oppositional discourse. However, as mentioned in the outset of this chapter, it was only after returning to those stories that marked epiphanic moments for the participants—in which 'old' ideas fell apart or 'new' ideas appeared—that it became clearer how the theme of citizenship pointed to an alternative version of safety and subsequently violence.

The theme of citizenship in this chapter revolves around two fundamental discussions. The first discussion asserts that dominant discourses on bullying frame citizenship in traditional and problematic ways while the second discussion argues that citizenship within oppositional discourses of violence construct citizenship in ways that highlight critical notions of community, relationship, and difference.

Disquieting citizenship

But this stuff that I'm questioning now, even the basis of resource rooms that take the kid out of the middle of science and now he's missed all that science, what we've communicated is that citizenship for you looks like you've got to go somewhere else to get help.... These days... I'm thinking about stepping forward from this rigid age of rights and tolerance... to a position of relationships which says to the teacher, "Look, nobody leaves. We're going to keep everyone in." (Mo, SBE)

The first argument builds from the starting point that dominant discourses about bullying promote an emphasis on individual conformity and personal development. As Chapter Three argues, the dominant discourses are premised on the assumption that violence is because of 'anomaly' (e.g., individual different or family deficits, etc.) and thus the unspoken assumption is that individuals should conform or 'fit.' Nina addressed this expectation of conformity in her critique of the media's coverage of the Reena Virk trial:

It's amazing that they [the media] would pick on the way in which she acted outside of the box of a subservient group, right....So that's really frustrating and I think we're way more interested at looking when a so called subservient group acts
outside of their box than looking at the ways in which dominance gets reproduced. (Nina, SBE)

In turn, and as discussed previously, conformity or ‘fitting in’ are translated into social responsibility and good citizenship. For the purpose of conceptualizing an oppositional discourse to violence, there are several things that are problematic with such a narrow framework for citizenship.

First, meaningful social and political engagement is obscured in favour of individual behaviours such as loyalty, obedience, and conformity. When Nina spoke about the “nationalism that happens in high schools” (p. 122), she was referencing an ideal of citizenship in which individuals are assumed to be the same or equal, or perhaps more accurately, “equally capable of becoming good responsible citizens” (Tupper, 2006, p. 47), where responsibility is framed as compliance with existing rules, practices, or expectations (Tupper, 2006; Kelly, 2003). Referring specifically to the context of ‘special education,’ Mo (SBE) spoke to this expectation of conformity:

The whole legacy of special education is...you belong but not yet...you’re not good enough yet...you have to be able to do this first and you have....to meet our ideals of what the perfect person, what the White culture is,...that whole thing and then, then you will belong, and then you will be part of our community. (Mo, SBE)

At the same time as some participants interrogate the value placed on conformity, other participants critique the value of obedience. Johnson, a community-based educator who has facilitated anti-homophobia workshops across the province, equated obedience with students feeling “nervous” and “reluctant” about offering opinions and engaging in dialogue. This obedience seemed to signal something a bit more threatening or disturbing to him:

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67 Refer to Liv’s comments about her school’s social responsibility committee in Chapter Three (p. 103). In her critique of her school’s take on social responsibility, she argues against the conflation of social responsibility with “conformity” and “compliance” (Liv, SBE).
When they’re treating me as an authority figure, they’re scared, they’re nervous. That’s not a safe place... and that to me makes me [ask]... what is the administration doing? How have the teachers been teaching? And what have their experiences been with each other? (Johnson, CBE)

Maxine, another community-based educator who teaches anti-violence and anti-sexism in schools, also queried the value of obedience and told me of an incident in which the classroom teacher proudly described the girls in the class: “The teacher said, ‘The girls, they’re like the perfect students... they are really good. They do their assignments and they don’t ask many questions.’ And I could tell. They were really mellow and really obedient.”

As Osborne argues, this obedience or passivity has underpinned the dominant framework for citizenship in schools in which the primary message is “Sit down, shut up, this is important, it will be on the test” (1991, p. 3).

The second criticism of a traditional citizenship framework is the idea of ‘token’ or conditional citizenship (see Meekosha and Dowse, 1997). By this, I refer to the notion that citizenship, as broadly played on in schools, is not evenly distributed and, for some, can be partial or conditional. To illustrate, Julia, a school-based learning resources educator, talked at length about the various ways disabled students are ‘allowed’ access into schools but barred from a deeper membership.

It’s subtle, teachers will prepare work for everybody else in the class but not for the child who needs an adapted or modified curriculum. The teacher will greet other children in the class but not a child with severe or multiple disabilities. It’s this... subtle modeling of unacceptance. Every day and all day. Teachers will overtly tell you, “I don’t want that kid in my class. You can’t put that kid in my class.”...[And] other kids can say, “Well, this teacher doesn’t want that kid in the class so that tells me something.” (Julia, SBE)

Following this, she described her graduate work that involved soliciting anonymous comments from her colleagues:
It was a shocker to me the actual comments that teachers wrote about my students and my work and how devalued it was. "This was just a babysitting service for these parents whose children shouldn't be here. They're a waste of money, a waste of time and effort" ....and for me it was really disconcerting and it was actually very hard for me to go to work everyday and think that...nobody wants my students in their class and everyone thinks that what I'm doing here is a waste of time and money. (Julia, SBE)

This specific example is but one that suggests many disabled students never move beyond the most superficial levels of membership (e.g., attendance). Mo (SBE) echoed this point when describing a student who "never got beyond what the literature calls proximal relationship. "Hi Ron.’ ‘Hi.’ ‘How ya doing buddy?’ ‘All right.’ That’s it. That’s his membership.” (Mo, SBE).

While I have used the notion of disability here to highlight the ways in which token citizenships are constructed, I would argue that this applies to numerous social groups in schools.68 Mere access to education or attendance in a classroom, in and of itself, does not automatically pave the way for fuller participation or what Rizvi and Lingard (1996) term, "social cooperation" (p. 21).

Restoring a critical perspective of citizenship

It is imperative for educators to reassert the discourse of critical citizenship, public participation, and democracy as central to the meaning and purpose of schooling. In part, this means challenging the most basic tenets of neoliberalism.... (Giroux, 2002, p. 1149).

The second argument related to citizenship in this chapter is that a reframing of citizenship is a crucial part of rethinking violence and safety. As the research project progressed, it eventually became clearer to me that participants were theorizing different ways of understanding membership and belonging. If a traditional framework for citizenship assumes sameness and "creates 'universal' conditions for citizenship while masking the

68 For example, see Kelly (2000) who speaks to the ways in which teen mothers are marginalized in schools and Herr (1999) who explores one lesbian student's experience with marginalization in schools.
inequities that exist” (Tupper, 2006, p. 45), the critical redefinition of citizenship points to what one participant called a “social fabric” constructed in the midst of the complexities of difference. In particular, two themes around re-envisioning citizenship appeared.  

First, the reframing of citizenship pointed to a deeper meaning of membership and belonging. More complicated than a blanket acceptance or “uncritical inclusivity [that] reifies the Other and reinforces the status quo” (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2006, p. 98), these participants are hinting at a membership in which individuals from marginalized groups find a meaningful place in schools. In a particularly telling example, Mo referred to membership which, for him, marked a transformative moment in which a female student with autism belonged to a group relationship outside the parameters of a charitable or helping relationship. In this particular instance, ‘Stephanie’ was part of a group of girls “at war” with another group of girls in the school:

*Stephanie...could not talk, could not write, [and] didn’t understand the abstract notion of girls fighting. She was just part of the group. They brought her... during lunch. She could have stayed with the classroom assistant but...they wanted her there. She was going to contribute something. ... They took her to the library. They got down her favourite book on trucks. So she was...looking at her magazines on trucks and the others were composing the letters for the other group [of girls].....What it said to me was...she was a part of the group. It wasn’t about fixing her or being nice or feeding her food or you know doing the helpful things. She was one of them. Had she not been there...somebody would have been missing....She had forged her way into the social networking in such a profound way that she needed to be there. (Mo, SBE)*

The point here is that an alternative discourse to violence suggests a form of citizenship in which participation and connection are central (Tupper, 2006). This is a form of ‘place making’ or, “an acknowledgement that ‘being seen’ is necessary” (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2006, p. 97).  

69 Clearly, a critique of citizenship in schools is a rich field of inquiry (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Richardson & Blades, 2006).
Two starkly different examples illustrate this influence of visibility/invisibility on the construction of citizenship. The first example demonstrates a restrictive citizenship in which difference is shamed and excluded. Here, Julia discussed the tensions that develop in September “when classes are assigned and teachers are finding out who is in their class and so and so has a disability.” She stated,

[The teachers] are assuming that the child... really can’t contribute. I had a band teacher [and] we put two kids—two kids with profound multiple disabilities—in the class and she came to me and said, “You can’t put these two children in my class. It will create a circus-like atmosphere” [emphasis added]. (Julia, SBE)

In contrast, the second example highlights the potential of a critical citizenship in which citizenship promotes notions of a “personally empowered individual” (Kelly, 2000, p. 134) or, more specific to this example, spaces in which historically unequal relationships are transgressed and spaces for acknowledgement and representation are found or claimed. In this example, Drew (a school-based drama teacher) placed a grade eight boy with “marginal learning disabilities” in a central role in a school drama production usually reserved for students in higher grades with strong acting skills.

Nobody liked this boy in grade eight.... He’s real nervous and everything... and I purposely put him in this group..... I knew [that if he had not received this role], they were going to have him be in a dance instead ... that didn’t work for him. He’d just get lost in that. I just needed to give him a bit more power... to just even it out. Oh, what a difference. By the end he was so confident when he walked around. (Drew, SBE)

For some, sustaining a focus on difference, social location and hierarchy is clearly linked to moments and relationships of validation. While one participant referred to the presence of gay straight alliances and multicultural or anti-racist clubs in schools as validating or “reaffirming that there is a need for space in schools” (Cam, CBE), another participant, Calla, gave a more personal example. After years of being harassed and targeted
at school, she was invited to join a community-based organization as a youth consultant in
her final year of high school and as she explained, this space provided her the opportunity to
talk about the violence she was experiencing in her high school. She marked this time as a
turning point in many ways, one which demonstrated to her a version of belonging that,
unlike her experiences in school, was not based on conformity.

_I felt validated...when I wanted to vent about something. I wasn’t made to feel like,
“That’s really nice but...you shouldn’t make such a big deal about it.” When I had
something to say, and I needed to say it, it was like, “Okay, this is your problem.
What can we do to help you fix it?” ...[It was] a feeling of validation of how I felt
and how I saw the world. And how I thought things should and could be changed._
(Calla, CBE)

These above examples guide us to the second theme of critical citizenship raised by
the participants: contribution and value. If—under traditional frameworks of citizenship—
contribution and value are measured along the standards of masculinity (i.e. competition,
toughness, sexual desirability, etc.), then participants here are calling for a different
framework for contribution. As Julia illustrated, “It happens a lot [that] you end up saying,
‘Just because that child has a disability doesn’t mean that they don’t have something to
contribute to your class.’” (Julia, SBE).

Ellen gave another example—one which, as she explained, has ‘stuck’ with her and
caused her to question what she could have done differently—in which normative ideals of
contribution, value, and worth determined a student’s sense of belonging or, more accurately,
rejection.

_He wrote in his journal every single day about being overweight. He was always
dieting but he would write to me every single day about his weight issues and how he
was coping with it. And he finally left the school because he just did not feel accepted
there, that kid felt oppressed. And he felt kids didn’t like him, [wouldn’t] pick him to
be a partner. There were things that happened that made him feel like he didn’t fit in._
(Ellen, SBE)
Similar to the points made by others that citizenship too often hinges on economic contribution (Rizvi and Lingard, 1996), Ellen and many of the other participants looked to a framework for violence in which contribution and worth is viewed beyond narrow definitions of academic contribution, athletic contribution, or other forms of participation which traditionally garner privilege or entitlement in schools. Maxine, a community-based educator, argued that we need to look at everything which “enforces all the things in the hierarchy.” As she explained, “It is important that there [are]…other ways of succeeding, like having responsibility and cooperation…which aren’t hierarchical.”

Equally important to the ideals of membership, belonging, and contribution, participants cited the need for young people to be recognized as politically active, engaged and aware citizens within the school and larger community. To elaborate, while not a criteria for participation in this study, the vast majority of participants at the time of the interviews were working in some way to foster youth activism and leadership. All eight of the community-based participants and five of the seven school-based participants ‘sponsored’ youth activism or leadership groups, or helped facilitate opportunities for young people to engage in social change. This is a key theme in the articulation of a counter-hegemonic discourse. If traditional bullying frameworks construct young people as both the target and cause of panic and restrict their positioning to that of bully/victim/witness, an oppositional discourse opens up more space for social and political engagement. Regardless of whether the young people who collaborated with the participants were planning anti-racists events, acting in plays challenging dominant assumptions about violence, speaking to younger students about sexism or facilitating workshops on homophobia, the students and participants
were extending or, perhaps more accurately, resisting the traditional framework of citizen as symbol of obedience and conformity (Tupper, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Re-visiting violence and re-imagining safety

There shouldn't be just one day of peace on November 11th. (Ellen, SBE)

Taking a step back from the themes in the preceding section, I have wondered about what the participants discussed and did not discuss in the interviews. There was some talk, but not much, about overt physical violence, gangs, ‘girl violence,’ or other things that have captured the attention and fascination of the media and larger public. Rather, the participants were pointing to something much broader, quieter, and more long-lasting. In this section, I contend that, in weaving together themes of citizenship, masculinity, and difference, the participants were revealing a version of safety that included, but extended far beyond, the narrower frameworks of safety that appear in the highly-charged dominant discourses about bullying. Once again, I argue that for those committed to decreasing violence in schools, there must be clarity about the values and assumptions underpinning frameworks for violence and safety. This discussion also revisits and builds on the arguments laid out in Chapter One, namely that violence cannot be separated from the institutional and systemic contexts nor can violence be analyzed apart from social groups, practices, and processes.

Safety as starting point

In Spain, for example, the opposite of violence in schools is convivencia, which could be translated as coexistence, but which encompasses ideas of solidarity, fraternity, cooperation and harmony. (Cremin, 2003, p. 933)

If as has been argued in previous chapters, dominant discourses about bullying reduces notions of safety to protection from physical harm; safety within an oppositional discourse encompasses something far broader. While zero tolerance policies, swift
punishment, codes of conduct, and modes of surveillance (e.g., weapon checks, hallway monitors, police presence in schools, etc.) might be the primary indicators of safety through the lenses of the dominant discourses, an alternative viewpoint hearkens back to the major themes of an oppositional discourse to explore other markers of safety.

First, safety is connected back to the acknowledgement of difference and the conscious intention to not gloss over how difference structures inequality. For some participants, the signs of an unsafe environment were subtle but telling. For example, Maxine (CBE) talked about organizing a skit with students in a school that would be performed for anti-racism week:

_We actually had them [act] what they experience in schools....and it was so much more subtle. Its teachers screwing up their name,... not able to remember their name for an entire year...because it's not a traditional name. Or they mistake people because they're the same race. It is so horrible an experience [for] some kids that they've changed their name to a more western name because they didn't want to experience the embarrassment at every single attendance._ (Maxine, CBE)

In another example of how critical notions of safety are related to a school’s willingness or reluctance to connect difference with injustice and inequality, Anderson (CBE) discussed the murder of a Filipino student in a school and the fallout that occurs when the principal refuses to acknowledge the role that ‘race’ may have played:

_At ‘Springer’ school, when the Filipino kid got murdered...the Filipino kids were so isolated. There were none of them in the workshop. There were kids from all over the... racial map in the workshop...none of the Filipino kids were there. And they make up a pretty high percentage of the school. Those are real signals of something. They were scared and you saw that in the halls. And so when the principal...got on television and said, “Yes—this is terrible but it’s not a moment of racism,”, it was just an appalling moment and ... I know because I talked to [the students] later....They felt so betrayed in that moment._ (Anderson, CBE)
In a similar example, Liv also presented her critique of a school district in British Columbia that severely limited the ways in which homophobia could be addressed within its schools. This is the same school district in which a young male student, after disclosing in a note the homophobic violence he endured, committed suicide.

*The crime was the...school board and their whole business of promoting homophobia in that district which made it harder and harder...for individual teachers to do anything and yet [the school district] could claim they did everything....They were saying “Oh, we did a lot....We had someone to come in and talk about bullying. We had someone come in and talk about suicide.” But I bet you that there wasn’t a mention of homophobia...and yet this boy had lived that for four or five years. Imagine how much more isolated he felt. His friends could only be supportive to a certain level and the school is silent....Then he jumps off a bridge and everyone is saying, “Be nice to each other.” (Liv, SBE)*

In these two examples, and in many other stories that the participants shared, the point was made that the notion of safety had to be constructed within the context of social structures (e.g., racism, homophobia, etc.) which permeated and framed the lives of students. Attempts to make schools safe without addressing societal arrangements and hierarchical power relations are hollow. In other words, safety is equated with being cared for and acknowledged within the context of the various identities in which young people are located.

Second, there were obvious connections between safety and a version of membership, inclusion, or belonging that did not hinge on sameness, conforming or fitting in. As Maxine (CBE) put forth, this begins with acknowledging that “there are certain people who won’t succeed in the ways that our society endorses.” Belonging, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is about fostering relationships between students and the need to “help find ways that kids can actually connect with each other on their own terms...in meaningful ways” (Mo, SBE).

At the same time, safety was also clearly about building relationships between adults and young people. Drew expanded on this:
For me it comes down to relationships because...say all I can do is follow procedures, so if somebody does something and I'm like "Stop it!...If you do this I'm going to report you to the principal"...[It] would become an administrative problem—not my problem. If I don't know the person, then they're an idiot and they don't like me and they think I'm an idiot. There's no relationship. It's so empty and it's a band-aid solution...But if it's somebody I know and I work with them, then it's a very different type of story. (Drew, SBE)

These participants articulated a framework for safety that accounts for the benefits that individuals derive from their inclusion and membership from relationships and social networks. As Noguera (2001) explains,

If we were to take the time to contemplate safety without the encumbrances created by the prevailing discourse on school violence, we might actually envision school safety is a natural by-product of social relationships premised on respect and responsibility. (p. 206).

Space and opportunity for controversy is the third marker of safety. Ellen (SBE) expanded on the notion that, contrary to the assumptions of dominant discourses, safety does not mean the absence of conflict or controversy.

If a school is a safe enough place to allow controversy to happen then kids will... feel safe there because they know that they will be included and that their view will not be shut down. There's a whole lot of teachers who really want peace...[yet] sometimes there's a lot of fear around controversy.

Clearly, it can be confusing to both educators and young people when controversy and dialogue are suppressed or seen to be incompatible with safety. In an example of this, Maxine commented about a workshop she facilitated. In the workshop, the students engaged in a discussion about racism and, at the end of the workshop, she concluded, "that [the students] were relieved to have a place to talk about it." But, the classroom teacher challenged her and raised doubts by asking, "Is it safe? Are they okay? Can they go home like that?"...It made me doubtful because I was like, I hope nobody got hurt or anything. But,
at the same time, it's okay that [racism] is happening but it's not okay that they're talking about it?” (Maxine, CBE).

This pressure to ‘shelter’ young people from dialogue directly links to the ways in which young people are recognized/not recognized as fully active and engaged citizens. A number of the participants argued this point that an unsafe school stifles dialogue; the underlying message then is that an unsafe environment is one which deems young people incapable of engaging in so-called ‘adult’ or controversial topics.

However, it was perhaps the lack of openness within traditionally conservative school districts that garnered the most critique. Quite ironically, a school district that professes to make safety for students a priority was the same one that was often discussed by participants in ways that clearly marked the school district as unsafe. In a telling example, one school-based participant who worked within a school district known for its conservative attitudes (e.g., limiting gay straight alliances) requested that I turn off the tape recorder before he would speak about his own efforts at anti-homophobia education in his school. He commented, “Well, this is ‘Fraserview’ school district, and in ‘Fraserview’ school district, you have to be careful.”

In many ways, this oppositional discourse flips and reverses traditional notions of safe schools. Within an alternative discourse, school safety includes, but becomes much more than the absence of physical violence. If the notion of safety has traditionally invoked images of obedient students uniformly behaved and ‘in their place,’ the participants suggested something quite contrary to that picture: a place in which difference and equality are centred, social networks are fostered, independent thought is nurtured, and opportunities to “explore,
challenge, revise and the critique the world as it is, and create a world not yet” are ample (Fine and Smith, 2001 p. 261).

**Violence: A sequel**

I am, in effect, working backwards and arguing that the participants—in constructing an oppositional discourse—were perhaps more keenly attuned to exploring the under-theorized notion of safety and in so doing, pointed to the ways they were thinking about violence. In the first chapter, I outlined a framework for violence which rested on the systemic, the social and the everyday, and I return to this framework with an increased focus on the contextual ‘nature’ of violence. By this, I am emphasizing a point made throughout a number of the interviews: violence towards and amongst young people cannot be divorced from the contexts in which the violence is constructed. Young people are trying to define themselves within structures and relationships of violence and inequality and consequently, it is these same contexts that need to be critiqued.

These contexts that the participants underscored were varied. Some called to attention the context of school policies (e.g., accountability measures) or school cutbacks. For example, Mo (SBE) called attention to,

*Christy Clark who talked about safety when she was Minister. She was talking about safety in schools. These were some sensational moments because somebody had just been beaten up...a response to these isolated terrible sad dramatic moments but...we weren't able to speak more deeply about what happens to community when we increase class sizes or we take supports away. (Mo, SBE)*

For many, hierarchical power relations (e.g., ageism, sexism, etc.) helped determine the specific backdrop for analyzing violence. But for the majority, it was not a concentration on one particular context but a reminder to see the interconnectedness between multiple contexts.
For example, Anderson drew connections between violence in schools, violence in the environment, and other broader social issues.

_How can there be work on issues in schools when the kids know that the climate in the planet is falling apart and they’re concerned that there is no future? How can we work on violence in the schools when they’re becoming really aware that it doesn’t matter how hard they work, they probably won’t get into university and [will] be working at McDonalds when they’re 40. There is no real separation between issues.... Somehow there has to be a way to integrate... violence with the other stuff._ (Anderson, CBE)

Equally important to the reminder that violence is “not divorced from the larger sociocultural environment in which school operate” (Herr, 1999, p. 2), is the contention that violence extends beyond the physical. The privileging of physical violence as the definition of violence within dominant discourses is a point that has been made elsewhere in this dissertation but it is one that bears repeating. As Herr notes, “while there are exaggerated claims surrounding some forms of violence, other manifestations remain virtually invisible” (2003, p. 416).

As a result, this research argues that an oppositional discourse pushes other expressions of violence into a more central position. More specifically, the major oppositional themes articulated by the participants—citizenship, difference and masculinity—draw attention to the various ways young people can be marginalized or positioned on the outskirts of a school’s citizenry. If oppositional frameworks of safety counter this marginalization by promoting a critical look at membership (as one route to ‘safer’ schools), then the flip side of this suggests that it is the violence resulting from alienation that needs to be targeted. In other words, a critique of token citizenships (i.e., those groups who have ‘access’ to schooling but remain on the fringes of school engagement) foregrounds institutionalized alienation as a form of violence that occurs when an individual
is deprived of opportunity for growth via curricular gaps and systemic exclusion (Van Soest & Bryant, 1995). To illustrate, under this expanded framework for violence which accounts for alienation, Liv’s earlier story, in which a boy with a learning disability is excluded from the grade eight retreat, is no longer a mere act of oversight but gets recast as a significant act highlighting the ways schools make themselves unsafe for particular students.

**Open-ended and organic: Implications of an oppositional discourse**

An oppositional discourse that redefines violence to incorporate a violence of alienation and reframes safety to encompass membership and controversy broadens the scope of anti-violence work. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, this process of reframing violence and safety is far from definitive but is presented here in the ‘open-ended’ spirit promoted by the participants. Before turning to the following chapter which maps some of the ways in which the participants strategize resistance, I conclude this chapter by tracing some of the implications of an oppositional discourse.

First, contextualizing violence reveals how membership in particular groups shapes configurations of violence and how differential group power shapes the understanding and experience of violence (Hill Collins, 1998). Simply put, if a dominant discourse pathologizes individuals who are marginalized (e.g., the framing of victims as ‘provocative’ or ‘passive’), an oppositional viewpoint troubles the relationships and processes which mark a student as ‘other’ or ‘marginal.’

Second, maintaining a focus on the various contexts which help construct violence (e.g., power relationships, political climates, etc.) broadens the scope of critique and as a result, broadens the base of responsibility. With the focus shifted away from ‘individual badness,’ there is, as Anderson (CBE) described, more space for “humanity.” In reference to
an anti-violence play he wrote and directed in collaboration with high school students,

Anderson further explained,

_There was a human being on the stage struggling with issues in their life...with tremendous humanity who is doing things you can't condone....That was the power of [name of play] because the guy who is being so violent, we like him. He was a really nice guy doing terrible things...I'm not talking about not having the discussion. I'm talking about not creating an environment where there's the good boy and there's the bad boy. (Anderson, CBE, his emphasis)_

In other words, when violence is viewed as relational and not as an individual deviant action (Jiwani, 1997), the goal for anti-violence work becomes more humble. Rather than simply ‘curing’ young people or claiming a universal solution, participants promote a stance of humility. While some participants contend that adults must readily acknowledge that we do not have the answers, other participants argue the foolishness of trying to ‘eliminate’ violence between young people when young people, and all people, are located amidst violence. As Ellen commented, the focus must be on “disrupting” and not “eliminating.” Consequently, teaching against violence “is never finished in a lesson or a unit or even a semester rather, it should be an ongoing many-faceted project, part of the very fabric of the life of a classroom” (Ayers, Michie & Rome, 2004, p. 126).

Third, foregrounding a critique of masculinity and the ways notions of masculinity reinforce and shape power relations reveals a host of issues and tensions obscured within dominant discourses such as sexual harassment, marginalization by appearance (e.g., weight), and the significance behind the words ‘ho,’ ‘slut,’ ‘fag,’ and ‘dyke.’ For example, it is through a critique of masculinity in schools which leads some participants to question “the contradictory...notions of femininity” (Nina, CBE) in shaping the panic of girl violence. If stories of ‘girl violence’ serve to further fuel dominant discourses, superimposing an analysis of masculinity leads us to question the influence of prescribed gender roles in constructing
the crisis of violent girls. As Violet argued, "It's seen as an aberration or something completely unnatural when girls are part of our culture just like boys are...but when they act out of their gender role, people are shocked...‘Oh my god!...What are they doing?...Girl gangs!'".

Fourth, an exploration of school ethos or culture becomes more telling and urgent within an oppositional discourse. A multi-layered look at citizenship in schools and the violence of alienation sheds light on what Maxine (CBE) calls "the micro cultures" created within schools. For example, what does it indicate about the practices and relationships within schools (and society) when Mo, in reference to an incident in which a disabled student was harassed, stated:

_I was so thankful that this was a principal who would actually speak to a child who was from a disability label and actually said "I'll speak to him" like he's any other kid....This was great because many of the principals ...would rather the special education teacher speak to him._ (Mo, SBE)

Exploring this further, what does this particular instance reveal about the philosophy of this particular principal and the ripple effect that this philosophy may have on the school? And, alternately, what does it say about a school's ethos when an administrator is reluctant to handle student affairs involving disabled students?

Fifth, an oppositional discourse grounded in the recognition that violence is systemic, relational, and contextual disrupts the belief that bullies/bullying can be simplistically read. To be clearer, an oppositional discourse challenges the notion that an essentialized bully and victim exist. As Hill Collins (1998) argues,

_There are no absolute oppressors or victims. Instead, historically constructed categories create intersecting and cross—cutting group histories that provide changing patterns of how violence operates as a location of intersectionality (p. 935)._
Similarly, a reconstruction of violence which stretches definitions of violence and safety to include everyday practices of alienation, repression and/or omission (Van Soest and Bryant, 1995) resists and challenges the assumptions of a 'bullying' or 'violence' spectrum model. For example, a focus on the alienating and traumatic aftermath of 'name-calling' contests the popular idea that name-calling is harmless and instead positions labels as major mechanisms for controlling and policing boundaries (e.g., gender and sexual boundaries). As a result, traditional definitions of bullying become more suspect since actions categorized as harmless in dominant discourses take on heavier significance and meaning.

Sixth, the bullying add-on approach (e.g., adding on ableism to the bullying models) flounders under an alternative construction of violence and it becomes impossible to treat each set of power relations separately. Within an oppositional discourse, the participants' discussions about exclusion, belonging, difference, and hierarchy conceptualizes violence in such a way that the social and political nature of violence and safety cannot be obscured or 'tacked on.' Whereas the term 'bullying' conflates and trivializes oppression and systemic injustice, reframing what is currently understood as bullying to violence located within a counter-hegemonic discourse provides space to center social critique and social change.

Finally, an oppositional discourse refocuses the critical gaze away from students and their families and instead shifts this gaze onto the role of schools and society. It becomes impossible to separate school violence from violence that happens outside the schoolyard. A counter-hegemonic discourse troubles the popular viewpoint that 'bullying' is a school problem and instead argues that systemic violence permeates social structures, institutions, and norms and hence, the notion of a 'bully-proofed school' is seen to be both misguided and artificial. But, perhaps more importantly, when the critical gaze is shifted away from students,
young people are understood to represent multiple subject positions and are no longer constructed as psychological case studies or symbols of perishing morality.
CHAPTER FIVE:

PROGRESSING BEYOND BULLYING: STRATEGIES FOR DISRUPTION AND SPACES OF POSSIBILITY

*I'm able to take little spaces and stretch them, hopefully try and stretch them a little bit wider... put a different light on them.... That's radical in its own right I guess.* (Rosemary, SBE)

Schools are too complex to be regarded as simply tools in the hands of an elite seeking to maintain their privileged position. Schools are not solely agents of reproduction.... They are sites upon which meanings are produced and contested. (Mills, 1997, p. 38)

This chapter pays homage to the various ways the participants in this research project are able to "craft rich and fragile spaces" (Weis & Fine, 2001, p. 498), for cultivating alternative anti-violence strategies in schools (Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 1999; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2002). While Chapter Three outlines both the power and pitfalls of the dominant discourses about bullying and Chapter Four traces the tenets of an oppositional discourse, this chapter explores the strategies and opportunities taken up by the participants as they teach against the pull of the dominant discourses. In these moments of interruption, they are edging towards an alternative vision of peace and safety in schools. With these goals in mind, this chapter centers on the question: What spaces, opportunities and practices are participants cultivating in their efforts to disrupt the dominant discourses70 while promoting a framework for safety based on critiques of membership, citizenship, and hierarchical power relationships?

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70 As a reminder, Chapter Three highlighted four dominant discourses about bullying: discourse of psychology, discourse of production and reproduction, discourse of amalgamation and conglomerate, and a discourse of tokenism and tolerance.
In many ways, schools can find themselves precariously positioned by bullying discourses. The role of the school appears throughout mainstream literature; it is the identified site where ‘bullying’ takes place at the same time as it is held responsible for perpetuating violence. In response to the common-sense belief that bullying is ultimately a school issue, this chapter, alongside the previous chapter, seeks to reframe the role and influence of schools.

As such, this chapter is housed within a broader assertion that responsibility for violence within schools should not solely rest with schools; it is overly simplistic, as well as erroneous, to demonize schools by implying that the primary responsibility for causing and solving violence rests with the schools. Given this, I acknowledge that this may perhaps appear to put this chapter on ‘slippery ground’: at the same time that I critique the dominant discourse on bullying for positioning school violence as a school problem, this chapter looks primarily to school-based spaces and opportunities as the sources for information, experience, and inspiration. However, this research builds on the work of those who contend that schools, while complicit in reproducing inequalities, can also be a site where social relationships can be re-imagined and hegemonic discourses can be resisted (Mills, 1997; Noguera, 1995). In other words, how are participants able to sustain the major work of translating anti-violence theorizing into meaningful ‘on the ground’ actions of the everyday?

As a broad overview, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section helps set the groundwork for discussing ‘spaces of possibility’ within schools by juxtaposing the idea of “counterpublics” (Fraser, 1993) or alternative spaces with participants’ notions of ‘community.’ The second section highlights seven strategic themes that were woven throughout the participant interviews: finding ‘backdoors’ and seizing moments of
opportunity; going organic or building responses from specific contexts; rewriting relationships; ‘dancing with the dominant’ and playing with the panic; aligning with allies; and preserving and maintaining hope. It is important to state that these common pedagogical practices are not presented as an alternative ready-made anti-violence toolkit. To do so would contradict the call to situate violence and safety in both broader socio-political contexts (i.e., hierarchical power relationships) and specific narrower contexts (i.e., school-specific issues). To a certain extent, each strategy or practice is connected to, and illustrative of, the specific larger aims of an alternative discourse about school violence outlined in Chapter Four but, at the same time, I refrain from narrowly presenting these as anti-violence strategies per se. Instead, this chapter is founded on the underlying assumption that these practices are connected to the construction of “counterpublics” (Fraser, 1993).

I highlight these strategies or “disruptive pedagogies” (Mills, 1997), not to suggest that each strategy has as its primary objective the interruption of violence, but rather to argue that each (on its own and together) expand and contribute to the spaces and opportunities in which alternate anti-violence actions, discourse, and representations can emerge. In other words, as much as these strategies speak to the ‘doing’ of anti-violence work in schools, they also speak to the process of constructing counterpublics within and connected to schools.

The Magic and Making of Counterpublics

Given that this chapter centers on the creation of, and possibilities within, counterpublics or “free spaces” (Evans and Boyte, 1992; as cited in Weis and Fine, 2001, p. 499), it is important to explore what this means and extending this, to connect how notions of counterpublics recast frameworks for community in this research. Two points underpin this connection between counterpublics and community. First, I acknowledge that community has
been used in a plurality of contexts/meanings within this research and in this way, traditional notions of community—as geography or the artificial distinction marking the distinction between school and the ‘outside’ world—have been given weight thus far.

Second, as discussed in the previous chapter, the social justice educators in this research have pointed towards a vision of community as a primary source for hope and action in their anti-violence work. However, in light of their commitment to the tenets of an alternative discourses, I would argue that when the many participants talk about ‘creating community,’ they are in fact supporting or aligning with notions of counterpublics.

To explore further, Fraser (1993) proposes counterpublics to be “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” which offer space and opportunity for the “recast[ing of] needs and identities” (p. 123). In the context of this study then, “counterpublics linked to schools and beyond schools can serve both to nurture individuals, as they shape their identities in dialogue with others, and to educate and encourage individuals to engage with the wider public world” (Kelly, 2003, p. 127). These alternative discursive spaces then potentially give rise to “reeducative possibilities”, “new ways to produce ‘common sense’” and opportunities to “challenge the very exclusionary practices currently existing in public institutions” (Weis and Fine, 2001, p. 499).

At the same time, traditional notions of community have been critiqued for perpetuating myths about universality (Young, 1990) and thus appear to be out of synch with the idea of counterpublics premised on agitating or contesting these same myths. However, I contend that for the purposes of this research, ‘community’—a version which does not

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71 The creation of community schools needs to be briefly mentioned here. Community schools are designed to help merge the traditional divide between schools and communities and serve as learning and service ‘hubs’ within a community for all community members.
assume homogeneity but encompasses recognition of, and interaction with, difference (Young, 1990)—is not necessarily in tension with the recognition and promotion of counterpublics or alternative spaces in which excluded students can be repositioned as valued members (Fitch, 2003). Rather, in their acts of building schools as communities or, perhaps more accurately, building communities within schools, the participants’ commitments to relationship building across and in the midst of difference, marginalization, and social locations, illuminate the ‘making of’ counterpublics and spaces for something different when it comes to anti-violence work.

**Alternative action and progressive practices**

So they do what they can, taking small steps, creating little disruptions, trying all the while to keep their eyes on the bigger picture, the road ahead. (Ayers, Michie, and Rome, 2004, p. 128)

In critiquing and rethinking taken for granted notions about bullying and safety, the participants interviewed also shared the actions they have taken in helping along a discursive shift about violence in schools. While I do not attempt to package a ‘quick fix,’ this section puts forth a number of practices and pedagogies that agitate the hegemony of the dominant discourses and help locate possibilities to approach anti-violence work in ways which keep a dialogue about power and difference front and centre. Seven such strategies are discussed here and range from the ways participants work alongside young people, collaborate with others, manoeuvre their ways through structured curriculum, and sustain their own hope.

**Finding ‘backdoors’ and seizing moments of opportunity**

In a thousand different ways, deliberately and accidentally, explicitly and implicitly, by example and by instruction...teachers help students to arrive at a way of seeing and interpreting the world. (Osborne, 1991, p. 117)
The first strategic theme addresses the many forms of institutional, administrative, parental, and societal resistance which the participants in this study encountered in their social justice work. As a response to the numerous ways that participants have been “raked over the coals,” and had their “hand slapped and...been told ‘don’t do it’” (Jasmine, CBE), the participants have, as Osborne’s (1991) quotation above suggests, found numerous ways to seize moments of opportunity. As one might imagine, the barriers in promoting alternative frameworks for violence grounded in principles of social justice are many. In addition to overcrowded classes, mounting ministerial accountability guidelines, an era of political conservatism, and administrative reluctance, there was much that could discourage these educators: school districts bow to parental resistance refusing to distribute a publication about dating violence to its students; drama educators are censored from producing plays or skits that speak to racism or homosexuality; anti-violence curriculum written by a participant referencing homophobia is blocked; funding for guest speakers addressing myriad of social justice issues dries up; counsellors and educators are prevented from starting gay-straight alliances; and disabled students are excluded by students and teachers alike.

To counter this, these educators have devised or fashioned many ‘back doors’ through which they can enter so that they can, as Rosemary (SBE) suggested, “put a different light” on the possibilities of anti-violence work. For some, the search for ‘back doors’ is literal. As Jasmine (CBE) explained,

*I've had to find back doors, so even in the community centre we don’t have sexual health pamphlets. We don’t have information on drugs and alcohol, alternative

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72 For example, one participant, a school-based drama educator, had a play censored by school administration because it included a kiss between same gender students. In another example, a school administrator threatened to cancel a school play because the play centered on racism and in the view of this administrator, implied that there was racism within this school.

73 In Chapter Three, Ellen (SBE) discusses her experience developing a BC Ministry of Education anti-bullying resource (see pp. 101-102).
lifestyles, nothing! So they’re on the back of my door. Unfortunately, they have to come into my office. That’s unfortunate, because that’s based on an established relationship, I can be on the phone or on my computer and they could be picking up pamphlets which is great. I’m not watching what pamphlets they’re taking. But that still to me is wrong because in ‘Mountview,’ we’re still not at that place of openness. (Jasmine, CBE)

For others though, ‘seizing the moment’ or ‘finding back doors’ alludes to the way the participants mine the nooks and crannies of possibility. One common strategy is to ‘shape shift’ or to become the role that is needed. A participant with little theatre experience worked with students on a series of skits about racism and homophobia which eventually toured various schools. A community-based educator confronted a fear of speaking in front of large numbers of people to address the racism in mainstream media coverage of the Reena Virk trial. Another participant joined as many school committees as possible to ensure that homophobia was on the agenda as often as possible. Liv, a school-based educator, commented on this notion of multiple roles and multiple responsibilities:

How it works for me is, thank god, I’m there for some of the students and whether it’s sponsoring the [Gay Straight Alliance] and trying to raise awareness, whether it’s taking the times with students and giving them information that they’re not getting anywhere else. Or reading the riot act sometimes or trying to dig a little deeper sometimes with the kids who are seen as troublemakers. (Liv, SBE)

These efforts at ‘stepping up to the plate’ can also be seen in Clint’s actions. As a school-based educator in a school district known for its conservative policies, students in his school were hard pressed to find a teacher willing and able to support a gay straight alliance (GSA). Clint, a long time organizer of anti-racist and multicultural activities within schools, was approached by a student to sponsor the GSA and he agreed to house it under the umbrella of his anti racist/multicultural work. Similarly, this pressure to stretch oneself to accommodate multiple roles is echoed by Cam (CBE), a community-based anti-racist
educator, who feels compelled to grab hold of opportunities by “offering what [schools] need at that time and pushing them a bit further to do a bit more.” He explained further:

So it might be the school saying, “We want a presentation about the history of racism.” And that’s great... We’ll put that one together. Or it could be a school saying, “You know what, we want to get together a social justice club.” So, we’ll want to make sure that students are you trained and such. Sometimes, someone might call and say, “We’re a multicultural club and we’re having a multicultural night, can you come out for it?” (Cam, CBE)

Many of the participants are acting on the notion that anti-violence work does not just happen within the structured, narrow, rigid boundaries of one time anti-bullying or anti-violence workshops. Rather, participants are responding to the perceived need to approach violence and exclusion in schools from multiple fronts. More specifically, participants are hesitant to rely on just one audience, venue, or mode of instruction for challenging dominant frameworks and advocate an emphasis on the teachable and ‘grab-able’ moment which carries with it the potential for reconsidering or reflecting upon violence. To summarize, it seems the educators are dedicated in their efforts to work against token anti-violence curriculum by ‘casting a wide net’ and embedding violence education throughout the teaching opportunities available to them.

**Going organic**

I’m running a youth network and feeling that I’m not connecting with them so today we just played games and that was all that we needed. It was for me to let go of my curriculum and what I wanted to get done and just relax and go to where they wanted to be at first. The ability to abandon your agenda is really important. (Johnson, CBE)

The second pedagogical practice—a theme acknowledged in previous chapters but one that bears repeating—is the recognition that anti-violence work needs to be constructed as part of an organic and context specific process. The participants consistently worked against the idea that they can predetermine what anti-violence work will look like, and in turn
identified moments of opportunity located in grassroots approached and connected to particulars of time, geography, demographics, and so on. In other words, grounded in a critique of power and privilege, the participants worked from the assumption that context influences action. These educators discussed the need to recognize the specifics—such as the marginalization of a particular group in a school, political climate, or degree of parental influence or collaboration in a school—in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the opportunities available. Cam, a community-based educator often invited to work with schools on issues of racism, illustrated an example:

*We were asked to go into a school. There was tension around a large South Asian community not just between students but conflicts between newer immigrants, between the understandings and experiences of young South Asian females and that of the rest of the [school] population. So, there was conflict not in terms of...physical conflict but there was conflict in the sense that there was complete segregation. (Cam, CBE)*

As he explained, the decision to initiate a series of workshops and a long term support group for young women in this school was a course of action attentive to a specific set of hierarchical racial and gender relationships and particular anti-immigration discourses of the day.

For at least a few of the participants, foregrounding organics also means straying from a structured or assumed agenda. Mo reflected back on his urgent desire to help a disabled student change behaviours that targeted this student for much harassment in his school. He said, “I was telling somebody today that I should have just relaxed and just enjoyed him much more. I was so busy trying to fix him....And...help him.” Looking at this instance further, allowing for an organic or ‘untainted’ response may have been more transformative since constructing a relationship on ‘joy’ (versus ‘fixing’) carries the potential
to shift a relationship towards more reciprocal ground while helping to establish a more inclusive public space (Fitch, 2003).

**Working “sideways”: Transforming the potential of formalized curriculum and structured programs**

Justice is to be got, I have found, by ducking and weaving. (Griffiths, 2003, p. 127)

Third, informed by and building upon the first two strategies, the educators in this research project pushed the evolution of preset curriculum and structured programs. Not satisfied working on the outside of curriculum or in the teachable ‘grab-able’ moments that unpredictably appear, educators are creating points of departure within structured programs and curriculum which carry mainstream credibility and authority. In so doing, these educators are approaching anti-violence work, as Mo (SBE) phrased it, in a “sideways route” ; in other words, they are introducing the tenets of an oppositional discourse in an indirect and roundabout way as a tangential part of other learning experiences.

As an example, a number of participants explored the possibilities of incorporating critical discussions about difference and power within a ‘formal’ or ‘academic’ curriculum addressing, as Giroux (2002) writes, the “need for educators to use their classrooms not only to help students to think, critically about the world around them but also to offer a sanctuary and forum” (p. 1142). Many of the school-based educators talked about incorporating themes of marginalization and violence through course subject such as English and Social Studies.74 Illustrative of this, one participant, a Black school-based educator, talked about using his Social Studies curriculum as a springboard for discussions about race and how difference is used to exclude or limit participation:

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74 Alternately, other educators saw opportunities outside a ‘humanities’ curriculum to weave in discussions of oppression and discrimination citing opportunities within subjects like Biology to address racism within discourses about HIV and AIDS.
Yeah, like last week I asked them, “Is there racism in BC?” And they said, “No, everything is fine here. There’s no problem. Black is cool.” So I said “Okay, do you think I would elected Minister of Education if I had just grade 12? Or if I had two years of university?”...Because we were talking about the current administration and the past administration, and some of them have two years of university and some of them only have grade 12. Do you think a person of colour would be elected Premier or Minister of Education with only two years of university or grade 12? (Clint, SBE)

More than half of the school-based educators in their individual interviews referred to the mandatory Career and Personal Planning in schools (CAPP) as a “perfect kind of class to do issues like...racism and homophobia and prejudice” (Rosemary, SBE). Ellen also used ‘personal planning’ curriculum to rehearse and role play with students so they could “start to learn a new language” in response to discrimination and violence:

I tell [the students]. I know you can deal with this. It’s just a matter of learning a few new things and...practicing. Would that feel comfortable? Can you say that? Do you think that would make sense? Would that sound normal? Sometimes teachers will role play with kids where they’ll role play out these scenarios but the kids will say, “No one would ever talk like that. That’s useless.” And so what I say to the kids is, “You go make the role play and come back and show us what you say.” (Ellen, SBE)

Hearkening back to a framework for violence that accounts for hierarchy and alienation, Ellen also discussed the possibilities that evolved from centering the classes she teaches on a framework for ‘belonging’ not centered on being the ‘same as’ but incorporating lessons about belonging and difference throughout the classes she teaches. In this way, English for the students “isn’t just about reading novels and asking how character is developed” but also, in the act of reading a novel, “thinking deeply about inclusiveness,...being in touch with your feelings and understand[ing] how those feelings

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75 Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) is a government-mandated course for students in grades eight through twelve which strives to integrate students’ personal development with life after/outside high school (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1997).
76 Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) has fairly broad prescribed learning outcomes including healthy living, mental well-being, family life education, child abuse prevention, substance use prevention, and safety and injury prevention (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1997).
affect behaviour,…understand[ing] the other person’s perspective…and cultivating a grey area” (Ellen, SBE) so that controversy, conflict, and dialogue is encouraged.

The participants also shed light on the significant shifts that can happen in structured programs within extracurricular programs such as school athletic programs, drama productions and peer helping. Illustrating this potential of structured programs to become more than what they were intended, Mo, a learning resources teacher, discussed the ways in which he was able to stretch the space provided by peer helping and peer tutoring programs to challenge the deeply embedded traditional roles of helper/helpee. In striving for the oppositional discourse themes of re-visioning citizenship and critiquing hierarchical social relationships, Mo shared how he uses charity or “relationships configured initially as helping relationships” to facilitate a wider space for querying disability and the broader values underpinning who or how one is included.

[The students] came to us as peer tutors so they came in as helpers…and that’s not what I wanted but it was a beginning point. It was a beginning to accessing a relationship. I hoped eventually that [they would] begin to see this person as a peer and then connect them back to their own constellation, to their own network. If you can facilitate it the right way and if the person is the right kind of empathetic person, slowly they being to…realize that this is not somebody to be cared for but that this is actually a person, that they have a life with dignity and choice.

Further on in his individual interview, Mo’s strategies via peer helping programs demonstrated his success in creating “a safe and private discursive arena…where members of subordinated groups can explore who they are and what they want to become” (Kelly, 2006, p. 41). This is a space in which students were encouraged to explore the expectations and assumptions that others had of them and reciprocally, that they had about others.

They were volunteers so they were doing something that they volunteered to do…. I didn’t have to confront them with memorizing things…there were no course requirements. It was all relationship [and]there were a lot of magical things. There were many kids that hung in there for just two days, but many stayed and many felt
confident and many found purpose.... It was sort of sideways. It wasn’t about confronting their issues,... but we could ‘sidebar.’ We could talk about some of the difficulties they were having at home or when they saw somebody do something mean to other kids with disabilities. And in some cases,... kids were invited into becoming peer tutors after they themselves had teased, and so we would invite them in just to talk to them, get them connected and... more often than not, they became much more sensitive and much more powerful advocates. (Mo, SBE)

Mo further details this strategy of housing anti-violence work within the arena of his extracurricular work and shares a significant example of a shift in relationship that took place from violence to ‘safety’ through relationship and ‘constellation building.’ In this example, he talked about inviting a boy named ‘Nick’ into his classroom after ‘Nick’ targeted another boy, ‘Mike,’ who had autism.

[Nick] came in and began to work with some of the other guys who live with more severe disabilities and then slowly, began to connect with [Mike]. They found an area of joint interest which was this amazing collection. This is going to sound bizarre but ‘Mike’ had an amazing collection of Christmas tree lights. It turns out that the ones made in Korea are different from the ones that are made in Taiwan... and [Mike] had set up his own display... in his basement which flickered and were on timers... And this guy [Nick] loved it. So they found community, not through an act of charity although I had to build it that way [emphasis added]... but actually through a joint interest in Christmas tree lights.” (Mo, SBE)

The strategy here rests on a space, in this case a peer tutoring/peer support program for disabled students, traditionally inhabited by charity and volunteerism and expropriated for something broader and more subversive. Mo explained it as “trapping altruism” and “guiding it... beyond that as soon as you can to construct something different.” In this way, educators like Mo are pushing the boundaries of citizenship in school as outlined by Westheimer and Kahne (2004).77 If, as these authors argue, citizenship in schools has centered on models characterized by personal responsibility and volunteerism, the participants are finding ways...

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77 Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describe three models of citizenships promoted in schools. First, there is the “personally responsible” (p. 239) citizen, a model aligned with character or moral education. Second, the authors describe a model of “participatory citizenship” (p. 239) which focuses on the workings of government and community participation. Last, there is the “justice oriented citizen” (p. 239) who is motivated by social change, social injustice, critical analysis and collective work.
to stretch this into an alternative, or what Westheimer and Kahne term the "justice oriented citizen," concerned with collectivism and equality.

Rewriting ‘adolescence’ and reinventing relationships

How can you say that our students are our greatest assets when you’re basically lambasting the people who are trying to involve kids? (Clint, SBE)

One of the most fundamental strategies for disrupting the hegemony of dominant discourses about school violence centered on the idea of transformative/transformed relationships. In this fourth strategy, participants continually contested the ‘common-sense’ representation of adults as ‘all knowing’ and referred to the unwillingness of schools and communities to locate expertise in youth. If, as Chapter Three argues, dominant discourses about school violence blame and pathologize young people, an oppositional discourse, as discussed in Chapter Four, rests on the “meaningful social and political participation” (Tupper, 2006, p. 45) of young people.

As more than one participant argued, if educators disrupt the idea that adults are all-knowing and similarly dispute the representation of youth as “organized conspiracies of defiance” (Schissel, 1997, p. 12), opportunities for partnership and dialogue are revealed. This larger strategy, reinventing relationships, encompasses three ‘sub themes’ introduced by the participants—engaging with/for young people, sweating the ‘small’ stuff, and bordercrossing—that, in many ways, guided their collaborative and reciprocal approach to working with young people.

Engaging with/for young people

Thus, whilst in many instances students struggle on their own to have their interests considered, if disruptive students receive the support of disruptive teachers, ... they are less likely to be subdued or intimidated by the resistance they will experience. (Mills, 1997, p. 46)
Acting against a culture that devalues partnerships with youth and trivializes the contributions of young people, the participants foregrounded the need to work with young people in ways which were neither tokenistic nor pathologizing. This was broadly referred to as engaging with/for young people and embodied a commitment to a particular way of constructing relationships with young people.

First, engaging with/for young people refers to the overarching principle of dialogue with young people in which critical notions of safety and empathy (i.e., a version of empathy that takes into account difference, social location, etc.) merge. Many of the educators referred to this process of “engaging in dialogue that challenges critical thinking” (Clint, SBE).

Johnson (CBE) shared an example:

I remember when I was doing workshops in one of the high schools in North Vancouver and one of the gay straight alliance groups had done up posters that had said ‘gay is good.’ It was all over the school and the next day, posters were up that said ‘straight was better.’ And, I loved it. I loved it only because someonetook the chance to create dialogue and that really created an environment where the teachers were talking about it and students were talking about it in their classrooms. (Johnson, SBE)

Similarly, Ellen talked about how dialogue forms the basis of engaging with young people, “planting seeds” for different ways of acting, valuing and believing. In an example of this, Ellen discussed, in detail, an incident in which a student approaches her to discuss a friend who was questioning his sexuality:

And I said, “How does that make you feel?”, and she said, “Well I’m kind of worried... the other kids are going to be mean to him.” And I said, “Okay, but you know that it would be really important to, to not hurt his feelings.” And she just, she kind of looked embarrassed and I thought that stuff has been going on. And I just kept on working. What I feel is that it’s better to help kids ‘save face,’ you know, start writing on your blackboard or something but keep the dialogue going. You’re having this dialogue that’s very intense and you’re planting seeds, planting seeds in the kid’s mind that this kid might need help from his friends. (Ellen, SBE)
As overused or cliché as the term ‘open dialogue’ might be, there is something important and meaningful here: in the act of engaging with students and protecting moments for dialogue, Ellen was able to instil safety through a ‘ripple effect.’ She built safety for the student who felt validated in her own conflicted emotions. At the same time, both this student and Ellen built support and safety for the student who was questioning his sexuality and encountering harassment in the process.

Second, another common strategy for engaging with/for young people was to personally connect with difference or, as Johnson (CBE) termed it, “give yourself up”. Here, participants demonstrated a willingness to position themselves within discussions of power and difference and in so doing, disrupt the dangerous notion that violence is neutral or depersonalized. For example, Clint (SBE) talked about bringing his own ethnicity and experiences of racism into classroom discussions while Julia (SBE) talked to students about the barriers imposed on her own son who has autism as one way to address the way students who are disabled in her school are marginalized. Johnson (CBE) explains the importance of ‘giving yourself up’ saying, “I wouldn’t have been able to connect with 50 [GLBT] youth who come on a Friday night if I wasn’t able to tell them about my life” (Johnson, CBE).

Third, engaging with/for young people recognizes that young people are often positioned as the gateway through which other young people and adults are exposed to counter discourses. The educators in this research project explained this practice in two ways. First, young people in schools (e.g., youth in school-based groups such as multicultural clubs or gay straight alliances) are the ones who help community-based educators gain access to schools via invitation for guest speakers. Second, these educators spoke quite clearly about
how teachers and other students will listen to other students in ways that they would not
listen to the participants.

Engaging with/for young people, closely linked to the practice of encouraging youth
activism—in which students are active in social critique and challenging injustices—thus
proves to be beneficial to the participants. As a few of the educators readily acknowledged,
part of the value in nurturing youth is that it ‘saves’ educators and makes their jobs easier or
more effective by helping educators reach an audience that might otherwise be unwelcoming.
Rosemary (SBE) explained: “Some teachers are bored with it. They don’t want to hear me
talking anymore but they will listen to young people [just as] middle school students will
listen to senior high students.”

In talking about the various ways young people engage others, educators—
particularly community-based educators—are acknowledging a dependence of sorts; their
own engagement with the schools is linked to the participation, leadership, and commitment
of students. Johnson told me how he was able to get into a notoriously “closed” school
district because, “the students organized it and that’s why we got in.” Similarly, Violet, a
community-based educator who worked in an organization that conducted workshops about
sexism and dating violence with students, also recognized the ways her own engagement
with schools relied on youth engagement. In her interview, she discussed how “using senior
students in a peer educating model is very attractive to schools...There is a real willingness
[for schools] to work across those lines. There is a real draw for that, otherwise you don’t get
in at all” (Violet, CBE).

Fourth, engaging with/for young people addresses the responsibilities that fall upon
educators to ensure that adults do not become complacent in forcing young people to ‘solve’
their own problems. As Johnson, a community-based educator working in the area of anti-homophobia education aptly notes, “We’re expecting kids who are being bullied in schools to solve the issues with other students, and we’re not even teaching them the … skills to do that.” This point parallels Liv’s stance that engaging for young people means saying, “I will go to bat for you” (Liv, SBE).

Therefore, engaging with/for young people means not leaving young people involved in social justice initiatives and/or anti-violence work alone, without training and without ongoing support. Cam, a community-based educator heavily involved in collaborative youth projects and anti-racist initiatives, stated that, in teaching young people to educate other young people, “the goal must not be to create a bunch of experts in eight days” and spoke strongly about those who exploit young people as “mouthpieces” (Cam, SBE) without giving them adequate support, leadership and/or training.

As part of engaging and preparing student activists, participants made efforts to teach power analysis and critical thinking to students noting that that, “students are not taught to question, not taught to examine, not taught to reflect on systemic privilege and the kind of hierarchy that results in the isolated kid, [or] the kids who are stigmatized” (Liv, SBE).

Closely related to this is the importance of what one participant called “doing media literacy” (Johnson, CBE) with young people. Participants discussed the connection between media messages and the exclusion and alienation they see happening in schools. As a result, participants argued that it was important to teach young people how to “think for [them]selves” (Maxine, CBE) and to talk with young people about “really critically looking

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78 For an in-depth exploration of the relationships between media, education and young people, see “Popular Media, Education and Resistance,” a special themed issue of the Canadian Journal of Education (Stack & Kelly, 2006).
at media...who controls the media and who owns media and what is media telling them” (Johnson, CBE).

While the topic of fostering youth activism and youth leadership is a vast and significant topic in and of itself, the point here is two-fold. In contrast to the dominant discourses which assume that young people are passive recipients of anti-violence education, this strategy is reflective of the commitment to centre the contributions and participation of young people as a focal point for alternative anti-violence work. As Blackburn (2004) notes, “it is the job of educators to tap into students’ agency for the good of the students, and to create school communities that allow students to be themselves and work for social change” (p. 102). The educators interviewed seem to be up for this challenge; at the same time as young people are ‘conduits’ for a revived anti-violence discourse, the young people working with the participants are being “given the tools to teach knowledge that they already have” (Nina, CBE). In turn, as Jasmine indicated, others are able to find other sites to “build awareness beyond a small nucleus and who knows how that can grow?”

Sweating the so-called ’small’ stuff

In his interview, Mo (SBE) stressed that although bullying is a word “much parodied by kids themselves,” it is still associated with “some dangerous hard things.” Arguing that educators need to pay attention to the very real effects of violence on the lives of young people, the participants advocated for attentiveness to the so-called ‘small’ stuff. By this, the participants contended that much which is significant and painful can be too easily passed over, missed, and dismissed and subsequently, adults need to remember to find ways to recognize and acknowledge pain. Different from the dominant discourses in which danger potentially becomes the catalyst for increased panic, the participants are also working against
the larger tendency to dismiss the experiences of children and youth or strip actions or feelings of any important meaning (Loach and Bloor, 1995). And, significantly, in recognizing that the violence young people live with is meaningful and worthy of attention and action, the participants are also sending the ever important message that young people should not have to grow accustomed to living with pain and hurt.

Calla, a community-based educator who addressed violence in schools within her role as a volunteer for a community organization connected to the legal system, recounted her own experiences with harassment in high school.

If you add everything up together, you wonder why the person spends every free period they have...either at the library or at home. It's all the little, little things and if the teacher were to see it once or twice they might think, “Oh, it's nothing.” But if they were to think about it and...add it up they might go “Oh, wait a minute. That person [is] being systematically tortured.” (Calla, CBE)

The other participants advocated a similar stance and cited the need to be ever vigilant of signs, ever aware of the fallout from missed opportunities, and ever committed to ‘connect the dots’ about that, which at first glance, might not be immediately visible. Ellen, in the moment when a student shares his/her pain, told me that she makes sure to remind herself “You cannot lose this moment. Don’t lose this moment by messing up here.” This pressure to ‘not mess up’ is similarly voiced by Rosemary:

It is exhausting and I desperately don’t want to miss something. I don’t want to, when a kid comes to me and says, “Oh, they’re making a weird noise,” or whatever and have it escalate and have me not notice it. Sometimes I wonder if the student has some inkling that this is something they feel safe telling me about and [I question], if there is more under the surface. (Rosemary, SBE)

If ‘sweating the small stuff’ means ensuring that educators try to piece together meaning behind actions, which initially might appear insignificant, it also means recognizing that there is significance in the small actions or opportunities available to educators. Calla,
reflecting on the inaction of the educators in her school when she was a target for harassment at her school, argued that small actions can translate into big changes, even if they do not necessarily address the systemic reasons for the violence:

_Just move me to another table. That would have been nice. Even if [the teacher] hadn’t punished the guys, just move me to another table. That would have been like saying, “Hey, I know what’s going on. I’m going to help you the way I can. I can’t help you too much but I can do this.”_ (Calla, CBE, her emphasis).

In speaking against the dominant, the educators are striving for a balance of sorts; if the dominant discourses can be faulted for ignoring the structural reasons for violence, then these educators nurturing a counter discourse are balancing the need for a larger, broader, more critical analysis with the awareness that they are also situated within the hurt and pain of everyday acts. Tackling violence in schools requires a simultaneous attention to the immediate pain and loneliness of a student while also reading for the reasons that a student may be targeted. As Clint explained when talking about witnessing the alienation of a boy in one of his classes, “You can’t say right away that it’s racism. But at the same time, it needs to be in the back of your mind. It should be there at the same time.”

**Bordercrossing**

In acts of reinventing relationships, the participants also referred to the potential spaces for stretching spaces of resistance via bordercrossing or crossing over the traditional boundaries and roles of school/community, private/public, knower/learner or formal/informal support. In perhaps the most illustrative examples, the participants working with students with disabilities spoke about various initiatives that crossed and blurred boundaries between community, home, and school. For example, Julia (a school-based educator working with disabled students) spoke about being involved with classroom learning, as well as social outings, sports meets, family visits, community/employment visits, and other projects that
melded the space between public and private, or school and community. As Julia elaborated, this is a bittersweet opportunity since “nobody wants these kids. They're not coping anywhere they go. So you have an opportunity to make a real impact on them and their quality of life” (Julia, SBE). Mo, a school-based educator, also provided several examples of how he has pushed the theoretical, discursive, and territorial boundaries within which school-based educators must manoeuvre. In the first example, Mo relied on the more traditional approach of formalized network building adding a more critical spin. Here, Mo discussed a student, still in the land of service where he still needed to be planned for, where there still needed to be criminal record checks for anyone who worked with him...where what we needed for him was school membership and what that school membership looked like was what [the other students] had. We wanted him to chill, to get dirty... so in the absence of nothing going on, why not try this network building. [We had a meeting] at this guy's house. The mom cooked cinnamon buns and some nice food and we spread the word, come and be part of this particular friendship circle. And we would invite some of the peer tutors to come ...and they would bring their friends and their own connections. And they would build a social life for kids and would take on just one commitment. They would say, “Okay, on Thursday, I play ball hockey in my apartment complex. Would [Tom] like to come?” They would all take on things that they really liked and it wasn’t going to be an act of charity. It was going to be just inviting [Tom] along and maybe just be a door opener [to] sustaining that relationship. (Mo, SBE)

By crossing over into the ‘out of school’ life and relationships of the students he teaches, Mo was able to create safety—through social networks, friendships, and meaningful relationships—in schools for these same young people. Perhaps, these spaces that arise from the blurring between public and private is, as Giroux (2001) notes, the search for space for critical conversation. As Giroux explains,

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Formalized network building is a planning strategy or intervention primarily targeted towards disabled individual with the intention of broadening a disabled person’s support and social system (Bigby, 2004). While the intention is to increase the range of people and activities in a person’s life, this intervention or process has been also been critiqued for potentially reinforcing disabled individuals as targets for charity or ‘volunteerism.'
It is increasingly difficult for young people and adults to appropriate a critical language...that would allow them to translate private problems into public concerns or to relate public issues to private considerations. For many young people and adults today, the private sphere has become the only space in which to imagine any sense of hope, pleasure, or possibility. (p. 1151)

Mo has also taken this same strategy of facilitating students to support one another in other instances.  

He talked of another student who was violent, worried about his own drug use and “going off the rails” (Mo, SBE). Mo, along with the friends of this student, was invited to his house to “vision set” and his friends “committed as a planning group to working with him over the year,...to be there for him” (Mo, SBE). As this participant stated, it was “in relationship with kids” that this student was “transformed” and, as he further explains, “We didn’t deal with his anger directly. We got at it...by build[ing] community” (Mo, SBE).

Perhaps these examples work to highlight the outcomes of this larger strategy to reinvent the relationships between adult educators and young people. First, reinventing our relationships queries and agitates a discourse of professionalism and expertism which distances adults from young people, “hinges upon the binary opposition of teachers and students” (Mills, 1997, p. 45), and “depoliticizes work activity” (Young, 1990, p 77). Second, in deepening or broadening the ways in which these educators work with young people, they are, as Mo phrased, working to give young people opportunity to construct positive relationships “unfettered by...adults, on the terms of the kids themselves.” Third, regardless of how the participants choose to transform relationships with young people, the result is similar. In contrast to the dominant discourses which construct youth as central to the cause

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80 I am aware that there may be implications (in terms of school policies etc.) that may hinder the limits to which educators can be involved in the out of school lives of students, however, I use these stories as examples of approaching violence in alternative or non-traditional way.
of the problem, the strategies here instead position youth as pivotal to the creation of
counterpublics and the work of safety-making in and around schools.

**Dancing with the dominant and playing with the panic**

Speakers are empowered by their ability to access and strategically deploy the
dominant discourses of the day. (Miller, 1993, p. 358)

A fifth practice that the educators used as a means to nudge forward an oppositional
discourse was to strategically, and ironically, ‘flirt’ with dominant discourses. With this, the
educators are not only aware of the moral panics surrounding bullying, but are intentionally
playing with this panic as a way of garnering attention for a counter-hegemonic framework.
In other words, at the same time as some of the participants argued that ‘bullying’ is a word
that “we should stop using all together” (Nina, CBE), many of these same participants also
acknowledged that they capitalize on the drama and potency that the word, and all that it
implies, carries.

In particular, many of the community-based educators recognized a utility or
pragmatism with the word ‘bullying’ despite the unease with all of its associated ‘baggage.’
To be more specific, community-based educators saw value in associating themselves with
dominant discourses in order to gain entry and access (a source of ongoing frustration) into
schools to do their work. As Johnson (CBE), whose community organization has been
stonewalled by certain districts because of their explicit discussions about sexual orientation
and homophobia, succinctly explained, “We call it bullying because that’s how it gets
bought.” Violet, a community-based educator who has spoken extensively in schools about
sexism and violence against young women, also acknowledged this same tactic and stated,

*As much of an umbrella term as [bullying] is, I would hesitate to just toss it aside
altogether because at least it gets your foot in the door. But to do away with it*
altogether would take away your advantage to hook into a mainstream audience.
(Violet, CBE)

This ‘selling’ of an alternative discourse packaged in the words of the dominant discourse is recognized as a contradiction, but ultimately the rationale is all about pragmatics. Nina, a community-based educator whose anti-sexism work in schools overlaps with Violet’s, elaborated:

I guess I struggle with [using the word bullying] a bit because it is a useful way to get into schools. In fact, it’s one of the best ways I’ve found getting in. It’s the same with sexual assault. If you want to talk about healthy relationships, then no problem. If you want to talk about dating violence, they’ll think about that. If you want to talk about sexual assault, well, that’s a little scary and has connotations of feminist thinking. (Nina, CBE)

But if the educators are ‘playing a hand’ that takes advantage of the anxiety that bullying produces, they are also clear on the ends which, for them, justify this ‘dance with the dominant.’ If panics stir up anxiety (Thomson, 1998), the participants piggy back upon and ultimately try to subvert the responses drummed up by the panic, or redirect the panic to the underlying systemic reasons for violence. As much as some of the participants relied on dominant discourses to gain permission into schools for their programs, these same participants were clear that, once in schools, their work with students centered on unpacking ‘myths’ about bullying. Nina explained what happened within the first few training sessions with her students who were being prepared to speak to younger students about gendered violence.

The first day of the [name of workshop], we’re training the high school students to be facilitators for the younger students. I would go in and we’d talk about power in society and we’d talk about violence first and...do a big web on the board about what is violence, what does it look like and where does it happen. But then we’d talk about power and what gives someone power including talking about sex and race and money and sexuality. Then we’d talk about who has power and we’d do another web about who has power....And then we’d look at some statistics that were related to bullying [that] the BC government has popped out, like bullying happens x number of
minutes in the classroom or whatever. But then I would [say]...“So when we talk about bullying, what are the roots of that?”...[The students] also had a section in their manual called deconstructing bullying...that talked about when bullying is used, it's often the term [that] is covering up something that is really going on around sexism, racism, or homophobia. (Nina, CBE)

This flirtation or playing with the panic was not isolated to community-based educators. School-based educators also admitted to harnessing the anxiety produced by discourses about bullying. While school-based educators may not have exactly the same concerns regarding entrance or permission to work within schools, school-based educators must also be similarly concerned about administrative support and as Rosemary said, “getting people’s attention.” For example, Ellen, whose work with homophobia and other social justice issues had invited controversy, spoke to the way school-based social justice educators ‘tailor’ the panic:

I think that schools and school boards are a bit afraid of the media, a bit afraid that the media will blow things into huge proportions so they’re known as the district that has bullying. So there’s a lot of worry about how people will think of our school. (Ellen, SBE)

Further on in her interview, she continued:

'Bullying' has become the educational word, and principals hear it. [The principal] will say “Well, there’s no fighting” but [I’ll reply] that leaving a girl out of a group every single day for every school year is alienation and...that’s a form of bullying. Then she starts to realize, “Wow, that’s serious.” Before it was just, “Oh, [the student] is getting left out. Maybe she caused it.” Lots of excuses... but I think when the principal saw it as bullying, then [it’s], “Oh, we have a problem on our hands.” It had to be labelled bullying before the principal really said, “Okay, this is serious.” (Ellen, SBE)

These participants are then betting on the panic; in order to make deeply embedded and normalized violence visible, the participants place themselves in the midst of a paradox. If, as noted in Chapter Three, the anxiety produced by bullying pushes administrators to be seen to be ‘doing something’ about bullying, then some of the educators are willing to risk
shrouding themselves in partial fragments of the dominant discourse in order to introduce
what they see as critical components of social justice and anti-violence work.

But, as part of this attempt to subvert dominant discourses, the educators also
recognized that the weight that the word bullying may carry with educators, parents and
administrators is not transferable to students. If ‘bullying’ is a word that brings educators
administratively closer to working with young people, it is also a word that can alienate
educators from students in high schools. Johnson addressed this point:

None of the youth...call it bullying. It's discrimination. It's oppression. Those are the
words that they use and not necessarily because they're at a higher level of
understanding but because to them bullying always meant 'school yard bullying.' It
didn't include things like exclusion. It didn't include manipulation and all those
things. (Johnson, CBE)

In other words, part of this strategy of ‘dancing with the dominant’ is to know when to step
away and distance oneself from the traditional rhetoric. If some educators argued that tapping
into discourses about bullying proves useful in some areas they also argued that it is a
stepping stone which is limited and purposeful.

Of course, there is concern that this flirtation with dominant discourses is a double-
edged sword. Are educators risking further cementing the panic about bullying and adding
credibility to discourses premised on the notion of pathology and individualism? Perhaps this
is the risk. For example, Anderson, (a community-based theatre educator), resolutely stated,
“I don’t know why we call it bullying. I won’t use that language anymore. I don’t do it. It's
violence and we should call it violence.” In fact, his tactic is, in many ways, the opposite of
what has been profiled here; instead of ‘riding’ the panic, he purposefully chips away at the
panic. At the same time, Anderson is judicious about what he wants to label “violence” given
that friction and conflict are inevitably a part of human social interaction and relationships.
Kids are going to jostle against each other as a natural part of their development and if that is criminal behaviour then I think we’ve become unclear about where the boundaries are. What is normal behaviour? And what needs to set the alarm bell? Not everything needs to set the alarm bell off. (Anderson, CBE, his emphasis)

To be clear, he is not buying into the ‘bullying is good for you and merely a part of growing up’ refrain, but he does entertain the notion that “there are things that kids are going to do as part of their natural development and...[perhaps] not everything is a problem” 81 (Anderson, CBE).

Regardless of the potential risks in reifying the panic by playing with the panic, many of the participants, in effect, argued that the ends justify the means. Borrowing the hegemonic power of bullying discourses was, in the opinion of these participants, a way of subverting this same hegemony. There is extraordinary power in the “dominant discourses of the day” (Miller, 1993, p. 353), and perhaps the participants are tapping into an “underdog skill” (p. 366) of survival and strategy. To further explain, starting from the theoretical notion that “all talk involves struggle of meaning” (Miller, p. 36, emphasis in original), Miller elaborates by positing that the key to underdog strategies “is the way actors learn to manipulate the political appearance of their practices...[and further points out that] underdogs are especially attentive to talk’s politicality because they have to be” (p. 368, emphasis in original).

Aligning with allies: Cultivating coalitions as a way in to/out of violence

Safe schools work with communities so that social and ethical transgressions by youth become moral lessons for community building and individual development, they become opportunities to support rather than purge.” (Fine & Smith, 2001, p. 261)

81 While Anderson’s points may stir up debate about what types of conflict and interactions between individuals need to be considered “a problem,” I would also argue that there must be caution about assuming violence is innate. Yes, conflict is and may always be pervasive, but if—in the effort to avoid pathologizing individuals—we fall into ‘naturalizing’ violence, then it would severely restrict the scope of critique and action and potentially render the injustices that young people encounter as insignificant.
Sixth, the educators in this research both embodied and emphasized a commitment to building and working with partnerships, alliances and coalitions. This was a key strategy of resistance which appeared throughout the interviews and was one which seemed to highlight the marriage of pragmatics with philosophy. Over and over again, participants referred to the practical benefits that came with having formal/informal and school/community allies. At the same time, they spoke clearly to the need for collaborative responses as a means of challenging the assumption that school violence is an issue which places the burden of solving the problem on the ‘bad’ student/family/school. To go further, these alliances that involve multiply positioned individuals, groups, and organizations is perhaps the best ‘evidence’ and the best inspiration that each of us, regardless of our own role, can find a way to challenge violence in schools.

This section explores some of the different ways the educators referenced working with allies, in which ‘ally’ very broadly refers to those that believe in the need to involve themselves in changing the status quo and use the resources and opportunities available so that they can, themselves, be ‘part of the solution’ (Bishop, 2002; Lott and Webster, 2006). It is important to note that, for the most part, the participants are not referring to formal, large scale community/school partnerships or initiatives in which there is formalized or long term structure or funding.\(^{82}\) As will be explored here, collaboration more often than not refers to informal, shorter term or ‘one-off’ efforts in which individual educators or schools/organizations are working in tandem with each other towards structural change.\(^{83}\)

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\(^{82}\) For example, the partnerships or relationships between secondary schools and universities, BC Safe Schools, police departments and so on are not the focus here.

\(^{83}\) Casella (2002) categorizes three different types of community/school relationships which focus on violence in schools. The first, school policing, focuses on the role of ‘partners’ which assist with “patrolling, controlling and sometimes arresting students” (p. 364). The second type of relationship, social interventionism, “focused on youth as the ‘root cause’ of violence and therefore recommended...forms of counselling, mentoring, psychodynamic activities, and behavior modification” (p. 356). The third type of alliance or partnership, and the
Undoubtedly, the participants are sustained and comforted by the presence and support of many types of allies and clearly the support comes in many forms. Many of the participants referred to individuals they came across in their work lives who were of ‘like minds’ and the educators spoke often of these colleagues who went out of their way to encourage, refer, debrief, and comfort them in discouraging moments. For example, Julia, the school-based educator who works with disabled students, credits the teaching assistants in her schools with “keeping her afloat” by “all believing” (Julia, SBE) in the students as she does. This companionship should not be undervalued given that advocacy on behalf of the disabled student in schools is, as Julia phrases, a “lesson on how to be unpopular 101” with colleagues. Similarly, Liv, a school-based educator active in anti-homophobia initiatives made special mention of her coworkers who participated during the school’s “Day of Silence” which she had a key role in organizing.84

But beyond a discussion of emotional support, the participants also point to the strategic and pragmatic value of allies in creating a more vigorous counterpublic in which alternate forms of anti-violence work can be maintained. This discussion of alliances is further detailed in the following two sections. The first examines the value of alliances between school-based and community-based educators and the second section looks at alliances and connections that occur in unexpected ways.

type which is the foundation for the conversation about alliances in this chapter, occurs through community/school partnerships that “[seek] to …broaden programs to account for structural inequities” (p. 358). It is this latter form of alliance that is the focus here.

84 “Day of Silence” takes place in April to symbolize the abuse and marginalization of GLBTQ students in schools. Those who participate take a vow of silence for the day and consequently, teachers who support this initiative gear their teaching and curriculum accordingly.
Of protection, gatekeepers and mouthpieces: Alliances between school-based and community-based educators

While partnerships and alliances came to the participants in many forms and the topic of allies is in and of itself a vast topic, it became quite clear that the opportunities educators helped build for each other are significant and formed a solid foundation from which dominant discourses could be challenged. While these informal alliances and collaborations presented its own set of challenges (curricular time pressures, funding cuts, etc.), a collaborative relationship between school-based and community-based educators helped to position the issue of violence in schools as a larger societal concern and responsibility while also helping to tackle the numerous challenges that faced these social justice educators. However, it is important to note that a community/school alliance is not, in and of itself, a strategy of resistance or a precursor to an oppositional space since there are many school/community partnerships that could further reinforce dominant discourses by solely targeting the wrongdoings of young people. Rather, the community/school-based alliances profiled here queried power and difference, encouraged different ways of recognizing membership or citizenship, and worked against a narrow, individualized, and pathologized view of violence.

Foremost, for the community-based educators, school-based allies helped pave the way for entering the often impermeable gates of the school. Johnson, a community-based facilitator of anti-homophobia workshops, not only discussed his difficulties finding an entry

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85 For example, participants referred to academics connected to universities who helped raise the profile of community or school programs, administrators who helped bend the rules for programs, and community organizations which took strong stands against censorship in schools.
86 For example, see “Developing Social Justice Allies,” a special themed issue of the journal, New Directions for Student Services (Reason, Broido, Davis, & Evans, 2005).
point into schools but also what eventually made it easier for him to find an audience within schools:

*Individual teachers are [inviting us as speakers]. First, we sent out information to principals and vice principals and very few responses came back, so we decided to send information to counsellors and we started doing that. And all of a sudden you now have one teacher who saw it...and teachers have networks all over the place. I didn’t realize the networks.* (Johnson, CBE)

Nina also readily recognized classroom teachers for her ability to work in schools and stated, “Most of the time when we were in a classroom it was because the teacher actively sought us out so, we could kind of count on them to be allies.”

Similarly, numerous community educators acknowledged the all important tasks that school-based educators took on in paving the way for the work of community-based educators within schools; school-based educators were credited with obtaining administrative support and permission, and funding, and organizing the often daunting issue of parental/caregiver consent. But in addition to this, and perhaps of equal importance, school-based allies help to sustain an ‘afterlife’ for the work of community-based educators. To elaborate, a number of the community-based educators were keenly appreciative of school-based educators who, long after the community-based educator had left the classroom, continued to role model and reinforce the messages introduced by the community-based educator. Maxine, a community-based educator who facilitated anti-violence and sexual assault workshops for young women in schools, spoke to this ‘afterlife’ when I asked her to talk about the highlights or positive experiences she encountered in her anti-violence work.

*It’s when I’m invited into a classroom and the teacher loves what [I am] doing and they are with the students on a daily basis. They will be there and continue on and pay attention and use the same language that I use in the workshop. They continue with it and support it. This is great. [We] can do it by ourselves in one room but the moment we leave the room, [the students] can face danger. But there are teachers who are*
there for the workshop and they use the stuff. You feel like you are part of more persistent work. (Maxine, CBE)

If school-based allies served as the ‘keeper of keys’ to school audiences and acted as intermediaries between students, administration and parents to carve a path for the community-based educators, the community-based educators reciprocated by acting as mouthpieces and ‘courters’ of controversy for their school-based counterparts. Recognizing that school-based educators are more vulnerably positioned to receive backlash from school boards, school administration, colleagues, and parents, both community and school-based educators acknowledged the value in having an ‘outside’ person speak to social justice issues which, as Nina noted, is a “perspective that isn’t very easy to get across from within the system.” Nina (CBE) goes on to acknowledge her role as a ‘megaphone’ for ‘hot’ topics:

I think that’s often how people like me end up in a class because there are teachers who...feel constrained in what they can say but they have to say it and if it gets them in hot water, they can just blame it on me. It’s good that they’re at least seeking someone out to do that if they don’t feel like they can do it themselves. (Nina, CBE)

But, for Johnson, it mattered less who first introduces an oppositional view or a social justice perspective; as he indicated, he often goes into a school to substantiate the messages that a school-based educator had already introduced into her/his classroom.

The thing is that it builds more of a rapport. I think it’s important for that because not only are students seeing that teachers are wanting to talk about it [the students] are also understanding that there’s all the community resources that are available to them. (Johnson, CBE)

But, it may be Violet—a community-based educator at the time of the interviews—who was best able to describe the tensions, expectations, pressures, and conditions faced by both school-based educators and community-based educators. A former secondary school teacher for ten years, she left school-based teaching for a community organization which focused on addressing sexism and violence with girls in schools. In speaking about her dual ‘insider’
status rooted in her community-based educator and school-based educator experiences,

Violet referred to the pragmatic upshot of community/school alliances. From her vantage point, she was able to speak about how she, as a school-based teacher, appreciated the work of community-based educators and, alternatively, how she, in her current position ‘outside’ of the school system, relied on the work of school-based educators:

*Not every teacher [in schools] has the big picture and I think teachers are relieved to have somebody else come in to the class. Not everyone is equipped to deal with sexism and without guest speakers you’d have teachers leaving things out that they didn’t want to, or feel comfortable talking about. The thing that is great working in a non-profit setting that [works in] the schools is that there’s a little bit less pressure coming from the outside because you don’t have any history or baggage with the students. And you don’t really have any... allegiance... to the staff either to teach [the students] this or not teach them that....But now I think the important piece for me is to... get somebody on staff to buy in...and...once you get a teacher to buy in...then that teacher advocates to the admin and because that teacher is already on staff they have weight. They have validity. They have a history with the admin and that there’s going to be an easier time...making that leap of faith if a staff person from inside says, “Well, I would like to bring this group into my classroom.” That teacher is already aware...and they know that this is important stuff and they might not feel capable to take it all on themselves but they’re more than happy to do what they can to support you while you’re there (Violet, CBE).*

It may seem that I am suggesting a very base or simplistic relationship between school and community educators in which each, in some way, is using or taking advantage of the other. To be clear, this is not what I am advocating or describing; rather, this is, as Lott and Webster (2006) discuss, about small wins, pooling resources, and reducing risks. If anything, the reciprocal relationship of the community/school-based alliances appears reflective of many things: a deep rooted empathy for the barriers that the other faces; humility in acknowledging that this work requires the actions of many; and a collective commitment across disciplines, responsibilities and opportunities.
Creating connections ‘off the beaten path’

For both community-based and school-based educators, the work of the other helps safeguard or shepherd a space within schools in which an oppositional discourse can be introduced. At the same time as the significance of school/community-based alliances was underscored by the participants, there were other ‘from the ground up’ key alliances and connections mapped out by the educators that helped make an alternative framework for violence in schools more meaningful to the lives of the young people in schools. Responding to their own critique of standard, top down one size fits all solutions, participants told stories of local home-grown connections that became powerful catalysts and sites for changing violence.

Mo shared a particularly noteworthy example in which a student’s out of school connections played a pivotal role in strategizing against violence. In this detailed example, Mo tells of working with an Aboriginal female student whose “behaviour and anger were so extraordinary” (Mo, SBE) that all conventional avenues of discipline and learning assistance were exhausted. Even though this student was “well within the academic range” (Mo, SBE), she was referred to Mo (a learning support teacher for disabled students) who started working individually with her and helped harness the power of the relationships in her life.

She was just plumb fed up and really angry, very aggressive with teachers in the classrooms....In the beginning we just met in the library...and she trusted me and then it became a little bit better....I instituted this person-centred planning thing....so we went to her condo and they had just moved down from (name of hometown). The mother moved her down from the (name of First Nations band) because there were drugs and ....she was losing her daughter....and she thought, “We’re going to start brand new and this will be a bigger, better future for us.” Well, it kind of backfired on her because ‘Pam’ missed her friends, she missed her dad. But when we gathered at the home, the grandmother came down.... Her grandmother was very, very powerful. Pam’s’ brother... wanted to give her advice and she was fed up with his advice, but, in the context of that of that circle, she actually listened. Because the grandmother was there, her mother, and then her friends, some of whom came down
from [name of town] were there. So, that’s when we were cooking with gas, because we had found the community connections ... some of whom – all of whom are not paid ... but ... we found the people that matter. [Emphasis added]. And, when the grandmother said, “I want you to stay in school,” ... she said it in such a quiet voice. But... when she said it, there was actually complete silence.... And so when it went down on paper, it was profoundly different than any other IEP. I’d ever written where the students could care less about the words. These...words were connected to the grandmother.... ‘Pam’ was violent. She was pissed off. ... It took all that work of putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, to get her to feel better about herself, to give her something she could handle. That girl went on. She graduated... but ...as a school we have to be willing to do that... and that I think was extraordinary. (Mo, SBE)

This event is illustrative of significant aspects of a counter-hegemonic discourse: an organic response which accounts for both social and individual contexts. In glaring contrast to a ‘ready made’ response, Mo (and his school) fashioned an approach constructed starkly different from one rooted in punishment, discipline, or family pathology. Indeed, as Mo noted, he:

Just bumped into this idea-the idea that we need to hear voices that love her and I bumped into the realization that this was where the power is. In this case, there was no discipline program, no behaviour management program that was going to touch her. (Mo, SBE)

This incident points to the possibilities that can come when working with individualized connections (e.g., culture, friends, and so on) in ways which unlock possibility while, at the same time responding to the challenge of reworking notions of community to encompass notions of belonging, “family, kinship, rootedness, localism and collectivity” (Mirza & Reay, 2000, p. 67).

In another illustration of creating unexpected but meaningful connections as a counter-hegemonic strategy, participants also spoke of the possibilities that came from working within, or alongside, dominant forms of masculinity and ‘coolness.’ In the midst of

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87 IEP is an abbreviation for Individualized Education Plan. According to the Ministry of Education, this is a document “developed for a student, which describes the program modifications and/or adaptations for the student and the services that are to be provided” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d., para 5).
critiquing hierarchical relationships in school and the currency that hegemonic notions of masculinity carry, many of the participants also seemed to locate and work within counter-hegemonic spaces and opportunities for social critique found within the very sites that reinforced marginalization and exclusionary relationships.

Participants spoke of the need to align themselves with ‘toughness’ and ‘cool’ in order for their work to be credible to some young people. Drew, a school-based educator active in theatre work, made the argument that educators need to work with those “at the top of the hierarchy” and to “get as many of the leaders of different cliques … to buy into a different philosophy” (Drew, SBE). Nina made a similar argument that, in acting against violence in schools, educators need to also be very mindful and respectful of the same relationships and roles that these educators may have been trying to disrupt. For example, Nina commented that the gendered roles within schools are so pervasive that “young men may not feel safe to… put down the posture long enough” to sustain or facilitate re-educative work in schools.

The answer, for at least some of the participants, comes with the willingness to connect and make allies with ‘masculine credibility.’ Here, Mo elaborated on the potential that came from working with prized forms of masculinity:  

_The question then is how do we move into the ranks of young boys in high schools? I do a lot of coaching of soccer and with these boys you use a vehicle and you come at this stuff sideways. You don’t confront them with “speak to me about your feelings.” It doesn’t work that way. You’ve got to come around it and… get into a place where you’re feeling a bit safe and you talk to each other and you may not even look in each other’s eyes,… it’s sidetalk._ (Mo, SBE)

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88 This example clearly overlaps with the third strategy “working sideways.” In one sense, Mo is talking about working sideways in that he is using competitive sport as a starting point for talking about social justice; as he explains, this is “sidetalk.” At the same time, this is also an example of creating connections off the beaten path; he is finding opportunity and space through sport and masculinity to work at relationships that would, otherwise, be harder to develop or sustain.
He talked further about this saying,

*It'll amaze you but the most amazing things happen in places like the rugby team. The rugby team: highly valued, highly militaristic, [and] highly violent. But there are such deep, deep, male traditions there. Stand up for your buddy. Speak your mind. It's a very powerful male moment. If you have the right rugby teacher you can go way beyond drinking beer. You can get those guys to a place where they're safe. I think that, ironically, rugby might be the place to start talking about peace--because they're safe. (Mo, SBE)*

Dramatically different from packaged workshops and toolkits, the examples the participants shared about creating and cultivating connections—or, “intimate community” (Ayers, 2004, p. 41)—in the lives of the students as a practice of resistance are difficult templates for duplication; each example rests on idiosyncrasies particular to specific relationships and contexts as well as shifting notions of safety. However, there are broader reminders here that can serve as a foundation for anti-violence strategizing; in particular, there is the reminder that education for every young person can take place “outside the bounds of formal schooling” (Weis & Fine, 2001, p. 498) and that each young person, in some way and in some form, has a world outside the classroom that can be acknowledged, honoured, and integrated into acts of building safety.

**Notes on preserving and maintaining hope**

Even the smallest victory is never to be taken for granted. Each victory must be applauded, (Audre Lord)

*I think it's real difficult to do this type of work because, in the end, there is no short cut. (Drew, SBE)*

This seventh strategic theme alludes to the disappointments and difficulties experienced by the participants in their efforts to challenge dominant and conservative frameworks about violence. In comparison with the preceding themes, the strategies or practices outlined in this section may not seem so clearly connected to the 'growing' of
counterpublics. However, I argue that it is; simply, the oppositional sites sustained by these educators requires that their hope is kept afloat. Consequently, this section queries how the participants—amidst conservative politics, the potency of dominant discourses, and increasing panic over 'bullying' and violence in schools—have been able to sustain and practice their commitment to a different way of understanding violence and safety in schools in an era when “the biggest challenge … becomes holding on to hope… when the discourse surrounding teaching and schools is so unendingly pessimistic” (Ayers, Michie, and Rome, 2004, p. 127).

The sources of discouragement are all too plentiful and are not to be dismissed lightly. The educators spoke of critical incidents or meaningful events that initiated them to the difficulty of working ‘against the grain’ of dominant discourses. These were instances when they were disappointed and betrayed by colleagues and administrators, disheartened by funding cuts, and overwhelmed by community/parental/administrative resistance. Despite the cumulative commitment to activism and social change, it is clear that the participants were sometimes taken aback with the magnitude of what they thought still needed to be done. One participant offered a window into one such disheartening moment:

*I'll tell you a situation where I was scared and I was frozen and to this day I couldn't tell you how to do it differently….There was a situation—twice in my teaching career in high school—where the word goes out from the principal that a gang has arrived in cars…and…we’re going to have to clear the area … kind of like a lock-down….you know at one level… I mean I’m working in lala land…getting kids to work together and suddenly there’s guys in black firebirds with baseball bats…and…. It seemed awful. I couldn’t tell you how else I could have possibly have established peace dialogues when it looks like this and those guys are so angry and… I’m… just shaking and it felt like a dream….It just felt… I felt so insufficient. Like, what else could we do? (Mo, SBE)*
Given the discouraging moments like this, what collective wisdom is drawn upon when hegemonic discourses seem all powerful and oppositional moments and spaces—as vibrant and hopeful as they might sometimes appear—seem insufficient?

The need to think in terms of ‘two steps forward one step back’ was common to many participants. Participants seem to caution against feeling too comfortable or complacent with what seems to be ‘progress.’ With the familiar reminder that, “the more things change the more things stay the same. As soon as you start to make a change, you get this resistance,” (Rosemary, SBE), Rosemary talks about feeling proud with her efforts at disrupting sexism and homophobia in her school only to find that at Halloween, “you get a guy [who will] dress as a pimp and have four or five of his hoes and they think that’s cute and funny.” Perhaps, more specifically, participants recognized the need to redefine success, revise expectations, and celebrate successes and small victories. Anderson (CBE), active in community theatre, highlighted this:

Is a play going to solve the problem of violence in schools? No. Absolutely not. And, should it be expected to? No. If that’s the goal, it’s going to fail. If the goal is to open up as honest a dialogue as possible about the issues then whatever is going to happen from then on will happen. (Anderson, CBE)

Quite wisely, participants sent the warning to be cautious of appropriation and to guard against being co-opted by conservative and individualistic frameworks. For some, this meant ensuring that initiatives, committees, activities and projects maintained their ‘critical’ edge while others advocated vigilance to ensure that one’s own thinking and practice did not get ‘hijacked’ by a victim-blaming approach.

There was also the familiar reminder from the participants to choose battles carefully, and perhaps surprisingly, to play the game of credibility with patience. For community educators, this meant waiting to build credibility with schools. As Johnson noted, building
credibility was akin to 'softening the appearance' of his language as the situation required.

He explained,

I've learned to use my language very carefully....I've learned that if I use the term 'power' and 'privilege,' you know saying that I come from a perspective where I understand power and privilege in society and where it comes from, that scares people. And so I think I've learned to play the bureaucratic game while trying to remain grassroots on the inside. (Johnson, CBE)

Similarly, many of the school-based educators talked about the importance of "the permanent contract" (Rosemary, SBE), "establishing yourself and being comfortable with your curriculum" (Julia, SBE), and surviving the first couple of years.

Participants also made reference to an evolving 'bottom line'; this was about asserting boundaries around their work and realizing where they will no longer tread. For some participants, this meant saying 'no' to opportunities to address violence in schools in which a discussion of homophobia/racism is not permitted or when expectations placed on the participants far exceed the resources given to the speaker (e.g., one participant was given only 45 minutes to debrief and work through a contentious incident about racism with an entire class).

Finally, several participants made reference to starting anew. Participants acknowledged the need to sometimes completely remove oneself from situations in order to do the work they needed or wanted to do. For some, this has meant removing themselves from committees whose philosophies were in opposition to their own. For others, it translated into more drastic change—leaving positions in their school or organization. One participant talked about leaving his position as a high school counsellor after feeling forced to spend more time discussing homework than getting “to the heart of what’s going on” (Drew, SBE). Another community-based educator left an organization which, according to him, failed to
live up to their commitment to work collaboratively with young people. A significant final example of this is another school-based participant who, in her work as a learning support teacher for disabled students, was ultimately discouraged "know[ing] that you're sending this student to this teacher's class and that they're modeling for the other children that these children are not equal to other children" (Julia, SBE). During her first interview with me she said that she saw herself "exiting the school system and not going back" (Julia, SBE). Indeed, she has since left her job as a school-based educator to work with a community-based organization that targets violence towards disabled students.

Concluding Remarks

Radical change is the ultimate goal, but if the available options are reformist acts or political paralysis, the choice seems clear. Incremental change should be valued as the means to a goal; the global begins in our backyard but obviously does not end there. (Hall, 1993, as cited in Ayers, Michie, and Rome, 2004, p. 129)

In highlighting some principles for action and reflection, I hope that I have not in any way implied that teaching against violence is straightforward and unproblematic for those committed to social justice. Indeed, there is little that is concrete and formulaic, standard, and mechanical; rather, the 'best practices' of the participants are grounded in the contexts of their individual schools, social locations, and definitions of social justice (Kumashiro, 2001). If anything, remembering that the participants argued against the notion of absolute safety and instead advocated for a version of safety and respect characterized by space for conflict and controversy, the detours and variations in learning and teaching are the very thing that is predictable. Perhaps, as cliché as it might seem, the lesson is thus: in striving for the elusive goal of safety—a version marked by reciprocity, citizenship and membership—the participants are, in the process, constructing and nurturing that which, in itself, is safe.
CHAPTER SIX:
RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND
ONGOING CURIOSITIES

Until we have more equity, more fairness in life—whether in the family, the school, or in our culture—we are going to have violence. It’s that clear. (Liv, SBE)

As stated in the opening chapter, I hope that this research helps make “counter-hegemonic noise” (Roman, 1996a, p. 168). In the time that it has taken to conduct and write up this research, the panic and calls to action about bullying and school violence have, in my opinion, not subsided. I worry, perhaps more than I did at the outset, that the pain many young people experience is being dismissed or trivialized in the very name of keeping them safe. Yet, at the same time, I am somewhat more buoyed by the possibilities the participants found in which to create unexpected and inspiring moments of inclusion, relationship, collaboration, and safety.

This research centered on three questions: What counts and does not count as bullying and what ideological assumptions mould popular notions of bullying? How are educators who teach for social change thinking about school violence differently in ways that account for social inequality and identity? And how, and to what degree, are these educators able to nurture an oppositional discourse? In answering these questions, I critique four dominant discourses in Chapter Three and outline in Chapter Four an emerging oppositional discourse that centers critical citizenship, a critique of masculinity, and attention to

89 Since the start of this research there has been much attention given to school shootings (as discussed in Chapter One) and ‘cyber-bullying’. For example, the Canadian Teachers Federation unanimously voted to ratify a policy advocating the criminalization of ‘cyberbullying’ on July 12, 2008 (“Cyberbullying should be criminal offence”, 2008, July 12).
hierarchical social relations. In so doing, I have tried to stress the deeper complexities behind violence in schools and asserted that school violence must be explored with an eye towards the social, cultural, economical and political. Mindful of Griffiths’ (2003) message, also echoed by many of the participants, that “complexity is hard to keep in mind, especially for anyone in the thick of having to make many difficult and instant decisions every day” (p. 143), I turned in Chapter Five to practices of the ‘every day.’ These do not come in the form of ‘neat and tidy’ best practices, but messier, less straightforward strategies that draw on the possibilities that come from community/school relationships, ‘grab-able’ moments of relationship building with and for young people, surprising collaborations, and organically grown efforts.

Premised on the arguments laid out in the first five chapters, the goals of this concluding chapter are four-fold. First, I begin this chapter with a short discussion of some “take home messages” (Griffiths, 2003, p. 143) or learning moments that I encountered in this research. Second, I return to my own professional roots and highlight the implications and significance of this study for social workers. There is a dual purpose here. While the focus is to draw out the potential for social workers to practice towards social justice in schools, the simultaneous goal is to provide one example of how those situated on the ‘outside’ of the formal school system can fit as allies for those working directly in/with schools. Third, I explore some questions from this research that I still carry with me and, in the process, discuss some of the implications for future study that arise from these ongoing curiosities. Last, I discuss the policy implications associated with this research. In this section, I briefly return to my theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two in order to explore the implications for policy and violence/safety in schools.
From the outset of this research project, I hoped to contest the ways in which schools are burdened with the sole responsibility of ‘curing’ violence amongst young people in and beyond schools. I am not asserting that schools be absolved of all responsibility; clearly, schools should be accountable for ensuring a level of well-being given that young people are expected and required to attend school. But, other social problems—such as poverty, addictions, sexual exploitation, and suicide—manifest in schools and, in these instances, schools are seen as but one avenue to challenging the issue. ‘Bullying’ is seen differently: violence that happens between young people, regardless of whether it occurs in schools or out of schools, seems to suggest that the solutions rest squarely with the schools.

Given that this prevailing attitude faced by schools does little to serve young people, their families, or their communities, while also setting up educators and school administration for failure, the implications profiled below focus on some of the ways that this base of responsibility and action can be shifted and broadened. While Chapter Five centered on strategies of resistance and implications for the practice of community and school-based educators, the following sections hopefully prod others to examine the possibilities presented to each of us so that taking on the task of fostering safety in schools is better shared.

Light bulbs and ‘take-home’ lessons: Implications for my own learning

It may be more commonplace to put forth the significance of this research for others and while hopefully other parts of this research do this, this section varies slightly to review some of my own ‘aha’ lessons or learning moments. While this may be viewed by some as researcher ‘navel gazing,’ this is not my intention. Rather this is, as Fine, Weeson and Wong (2003) encourage, a “retreat from the stance of dispassion” (p. 202) and a step towards claiming a space for discussing the impact of this research on my own practice, interests, and
commitments. I discuss five reflections or shifts in thinking that have given me pause and served as ongoing themes within this research.

First, as Loach and Bloor maintain, “what we are predisposed to at the outset determines in large part what we will find and what we will do later” (1995, p. 18). This may seem simplistic, but it is a powerful reminder to intentionally trace the practice ‘interventions’ or methods I choose back to the assumptions about the cause of the problem or the source for blame. I can see many a time where my practice methods were mismatched with my stated goal of social justice.

Second, as Maxine (CBE) attests, “This is never ending work,...and this is messy work.” And as alluring as it might be to have a universal ‘theory for everything’ discourse as a response to a deeply entrenched moral panic, a blanket theory cannot account for the range and diversity of behaviour, motivation, relationship, and conflict that young people or, more accurately, all people experience. Reminding myself of this throughout the analysis, the pressure to try to see an all-encompassing oppositional discourse in the participants’ stories that would help ‘explain away’ violence eased. Relieved of that demand, I was left more inspired and moved by their resistance and theoretical journeying.

Third, violence is not and should not be solely ‘owned’ as an administrative issue of punishment, surveillance, and discipline. At the same time that I question the absence of administrator perspectives throughout this research (as discussed further on in the chapter), I also wonder how much I have internalized the commonsense assumption that administrators serve as the primary gatekeepers for issues of violence (regardless of whether or not administrators want this). Likewise, and as questioned throughout, what are the possibilities that open up when violence in schools is seen to extend beyond the responsibilities of schools?
I think the assumption that schools and violence in schools are inextricably and singularly linked as an administrative issue is a difficult, but necessary, assumption to unlearn. What a move it would be to reposition violence and safety and all that this may encompass—relationship, dialogue, human rights, and inclusion—from the realm of the punitive or disciplinary to the realm of pedagogy, curriculum, and school ethos.

Fourth, I have been reminded that much can happen if we start with the end goal and work backwards. In the case of working against violence in schools, this may mean starting with a vision of safety and peace and seeing what understanding of violence this reveals. While this may oversimplify the relationship between violence and safety (i.e., by suggesting that one is merely the antonym of the other), this ‘light bulb’ was key in helping me realize the significance in what the participants were drawing me towards. For example, the violence of alienation and marginalization that targets some disabled students came through more powerfully when some of the participants first spoke about what they did to build safety and relationship for these same students.

Fifth, I take away a very important reminder that resistance comes in many, sometimes contradictory, forms. I admit that I started with a strong bias; I was convinced that little good could come out of using a simultaneously loaded and watered-down term like bullying. I still lean this way, but I am more respectful of the nuances that come with such a word, a secret that many of the participants already seem to be ‘in’ on. I come away with the lesson that there needs to be much more clarity, in meaning and in intention, about what we mean by bullying, violence, peace and safety. We need to be particularly strategic, and ever aware, of how and when we use bullying to explain violence, always mindful that ‘bullying’ carries with it the power to give—and take away—space for progressive social change.
Last, I need to remember and not underestimate the teaching/learning potential of moments and opportunities that seem at first to have nothing to do with social justice or, alternately, with violence and/or safety. Thinking back to my Master of Social Work research that looked at anti-racist student activism in high schools, a major learning moment came from recognizing the importance of context when judging the so-called ‘progressiveness’ of a particular program. For example, at the time I tended to easily dismiss programs that focused primarily on traditional multicultural education in favour of more radical anti-racist initiatives. Of course, I soon realized that context makes a difference; raising the issue of culture or ethnicity—even in what might seem to be the most innocuous way—is indeed risky if students are working within conservative environments much invested in masking difference. I wondered then at the impact of my biases and there was a similar reminder in this study. When I reflected on the stories of the participants and the transformative, creative and remarkable moments of safety building that came out of seemingly conventional spaces (e.g., peer tutoring), I was amazed at how these same spaces—at first glance—seemed to have nothing to do with violence or social justice. I questioned what missed opportunities have come my way and, to restate this more hopefully, I wonder at the possibilities that this learning opens up.

**Thoughts about social working social justice with/for schools:**

**Implications for social work**

“Social justice has provided a thread of historical continuity running through social work practice.” (Dominelli, 1998, p. 4)

I ultimately believe that many people—in various locations—need to be concerned with violence in schools and, as a result, have attempted to write for a broad audience. But, in
this section, I am going to narrow my focus temporarily and speak more specifically to, and about, the role of social work. I do this for two primary reasons. First, given that my professional and academic home base rests with social work, it was important to me to try to stay attuned to the relevance of this study for social workers.\textsuperscript{90} For all the drawbacks of the profession, I am deeply rewarded in my work and count myself as fortunate that I have found a space in which to learn, rage, collaborate, commiserate, and hopefully, contribute. Second, and perhaps most significantly, in focusing on the possible ‘fit’ between social work and anti-violence work in schools, I am also making a case for how other disciplines, groups, and so on can align themselves with an oppositional discourse. In other words, I hope this section encourages others to examine the possibilities, professional or otherwise, to act as allies.

Regardless of where or how social workers intersect with the school system,\textsuperscript{91} many social workers are uniquely positioned to help foster spaces of possibility and safety in schools for young people in numerous ways. First, as Proctor (2002) points out, social workers can potentially add much to the understanding of violence given that much of our professional work centers on challenging, interrupting, and preventing violence. Our history in varied community settings (e.g., with child welfare organizations, transition houses, residential care settings, international aid organizations, etc.) means that social workers

\textsuperscript{90} Social workers, at a minimum, have a Bachelor of Social Work degree and, in British Columbia, are regulated by the Board of Registration for Social Workers in B.C. (Board of registration for social workers in B.C., n.d.). The British Columbia Association for Social Workers (BCASW) is the professional social work association (www.bcasw.org).

\textsuperscript{91} School social workers are common in certain provinces in Canada (e.g., Ontario), as well as other countries such as the United States (see www.sswwa.org/). Schools in British Columbia, for the most part, do not routinely employ social workers as part of their regular or core team. This is not to say that social workers cannot be found working with or within schools. The distinction here is that while social workers may not be regularly or directly employed by schools/school districts, they are based in schools as part of other organizations, or employed under more specific contracts/projects working with ‘inner city schools,’ substance abuse programs, multicultural support, parenting/pregnancy programs, or other programs targeting marginalized or so-called ‘at risk’ groups.
confront child abuse, violence against women, elder abuse, and various manifestations of violence in multiple contexts.

Second, with a well-developed history in community development and grassroots community organizing (Shragge, 2003), social workers can help bridge the boundaries between school and community. Situated in a range of organizations—including those that focus on addictions, mental health, poverty, immigrant settlement, child welfare, disability advocacy, sexual health, violence prevention, criminal/legal system, pregnancy, and parenting to name a few (Hick, 2006)—social workers have many opportunities to connect with young people and their families, both in and out of schools.

Third, social workers work with and amidst moral panics. Working with ‘the addict,’ ‘the mentally ill,’ ‘the teen mom,’ ‘the immigrant,’ ‘the homeless,’ and the ‘welfare cheat,’ social workers are working with the so-called different and deviant ‘others’ constructed by panic and ‘crises.’

Fourth, similar to teachers in schools, the everyday work of social workers is vulnerable to, and shaped by, funding cuts, neoconservative critique, demonizing discourses (e.g., the discourse of the lazy public servant), and the subsequent public backlash. These changes in social work and education include the predominance of neo-conservatism and individualism, the primacy of ‘managerialism’ or the privileging of business and market skills, the enduring influence of positivist approaches to policy, the ‘deskilling’ of the profession, and increasing privatization or corporatization (Carniol, 2000; Dominelli, 2004; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Giroux, 2002; Kelly & Brandes, 2008; Mullaly, 1997). In short,

92 By “positivist approaches to policy”, I am referring to conventional notions of policy as a technical or rational process that reproduce positivist ideals of universal truth, impartiality, and value-free research (Rosaldo, 1989; Taylor, 1997). I return to a discussion of policy approaches further on in this chapter.
both the social work and teaching professions are—at this particular juncture—undergoing similar stresses and crisis and as a result, there is much potential common ground.

Fifth, the roots of social work are firmly anchored in helping those marginalized, and simultaneously there is a lengthy history of a commitment to and actions towards social justice (Carniol, 2000; Fook, 2002). Although not always uncontested, one of the primary principles underpinning social work has been to recognize and address both the private trouble and the public concern (Carniol, 2000; Mullaly, 2002)

To be absolutely clear, despite the fact that the above five points seem to imply that social workers are automatically well-suited as allies to those advocating alternative ways of practicing anti-violence, this is not what I am suggesting. For example, just because we work with moral panics does not mean that we are not acting in ways that cement the panic, nor does our work with many forms of violence mean that social workers are immune from concentrating on individual acts of physical violence “while other forms of violence go unchallenged” (Van Soest & Bryant, 1995, p. 549). Working with marginalized groups does not mean that we are not further entrenching their marginalization, nor does the fact that the profession grew out of the margins protect us from becoming, as Fook (2002) describes, “bureaucratic social welfare institutions with traditional policies and clinical interventions” (p. 33). And, despite the profession’s stated commitment to social justice, it would be misleading to portray a unified framework of social justice.

Given these above cautions and the range of theoretical and practice orientations across social work (Payne, 2005), it is not surprising that social work responses to violence in schools can look like many things. To be more clear, despite a stated ‘end goal’ of social

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93 For example, the Canadian Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics (CASW, 2005) claims that a social worker is obligated to advocate for social change, equal access and equal distribution for peoples who are discriminated against and must work to promote social justice.
justice or social change, many social work responses to school violence are largely reflective of dominant discourse assumptions. For example, Astor (2005) writes, “School social workers have reported a wide array of violence intervention programs and services, which included counselling, crisis intervention, skills training, peer programs for students, community programs, teacher programs and security measures” (p. 20-21). In addition, social workers can be routinely involved with other common school responses to violence, including: parent conferences; peer mediation; meetings to discuss expulsion, suspension, or school transfers; or referrals for learning support or ‘special education’ (Astor, 2005; Proctor, 2002). In other words, regardless of whether we are employed with the school, government, or community organization, we can easily find ourselves—with the intention of doing good for those we are working with—unintentionally reinforcing the individualizing, exclusionary, or pathologizing assumptions underpinning the dominant discourses that were highlighted in Chapter Three.

In light of the above caveats, I firmly believe that social workers and any others committed to helping bring about a more robust oppositional discourse to school violence need to, as first stated in Chapter One, “challenge our own orthodoxy...rethink basic principles, [and]...storm our own headquarters” (Ayers et al., 2004, p. 124). For social workers, I believe that the metaphorical ‘storming of the castle’ needs to happen with a clearer articulation and commitment to working anti-oppressively.
I choose to highlight anti-oppressive social work\textsuperscript{94} as one example of improving the goodness of fit between social work and an oppositional approach to school violence for two main reasons. First, anti-oppressive social work is, at this moment in history, undergoing a reinvigorated critique (Baines, 2007; Dominelli, 2002) and I would like to believe that this represents a renewed interested in an “explicitly political perspective [that] intertwines theory and practice in order to produce knowledge aimed at both interpreting the world and changing it” (Baines, 2000, p. 5). Maintaining an anti-oppressive perspective reminds us that it is not always the person who needs to adapt to the situation, but larger society that needs to change and move towards a “more inclusive understanding of the links between various forms and expressions of oppression” (Macey & Moxon, 1996, p. 309).

Second, I would argue that a developed anti-oppressive framework—one that accounts for a relational and distributive view of social justice—expands the possibilities and potential of counter-hegemonic social work practice with schools. Anti-oppressive social work can encourage social workers to extend beyond the “distribution of income...and the disbursement of public funds” (Young, 1990, p. 19) to start locating violence in schools in practices, relations and processes at “the personal, cultural and structural levels” (Mullaly, 2002, p. 69).

I return then to my original statement, now somewhat revised: social workers, \textit{with a clear view of how our theoretical orientations impact intervention in schools}, are uniquely

\textsuperscript{94} With the increased discussion and popularity of anti-oppressive social work (AOSW) perspectives, many authors have noted that anti-oppressive social work may be “becoming a bandwagon term...and risk[s] becoming meaningless” (Langan, 1998, p. 214), watered down or murky. While limited space within this chapter prevents a detailed explanation of AOSW, it should be noted that there are wide ranging definitions and applications of the term (Baines, 2007; Burke & Harrison, 2002; Mullaly, 2002). For the purposes of this discussion, AOSW does not reflect one individual theory or perspective but is reflective of a broad stance for theorizing and practicing social work that centers structural inequalities, a relational and distributive view of social justice, and the need to explore relationships and divisions of power and difference (Baines, 2007; Carniol, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; O'Connor, 2003; O'Neill, 1999).
positioned with much potential to be collaborative allies. Given that social workers are not, as a routine, directly employed by schools in British Columbia, I believe the options and opportunities to be community-based educators, advocates and allies with/to/for schools are opportunities worthy of finding and seizing. In all of the support, administrative, advocacy, and counselling roles available to us—with communities, families, and youth people—we will, at one time or another, be in the position to question dominant assumptions and commonplace interventions. What counts and does not count as school violence? What is the threshold for what violence is tolerated to whom and by whom? What violence is being overlooked and what are the consequences of this? What version of safety are we working towards? Who or what is seen to be the problem? Who is ‘at the table’ in search of what solution, and perhaps more significantly, who is not ‘at the table?’ How is the violence in question being talked about (i.e., what words are being used), and to what ends? Are contexts—for example, social and material relationships—accounted for? Are we ensuring balanced attention to both the private trouble and the public concern? And, finally, who is venturing towards something different, and how can we support and be part of it?

**Hopes, questions, and roads not taken: Validity, credibility, and implications for further research**

It perhaps goes without saying that I hope my research is both relevant and responsible. Of course, what constitutes responsible research, or as Skeggs (1997) terms it, “respectable” knowledge is highly debatable and involves judgments about research worth and debates about positivism, neutrality, and objectivism. While Chapter Two clearly outlines why the methodological underpinnings of this research falls ‘out of line’ with positivist standards, this tension does not mean that questions of credibility and validity are
irrelevant. Drawing from Skeggs (1997), I approached validity to mean research that is “convincing, credible and cogent in which the analysis made can be evaluated as rigorous and responsible and the account given substantial and satisfactory” (p. 32). As a result, I tried to build ‘safeguards’ or ‘checkpoints’ at various points in the research process (as outlined in Chapter Two). Multiple methods and sources of data (in this case, document analysis, individual interviews and focus groups) helped confirm or disconfirm analytical assumptions. I sought feedback about my analysis regularly (with colleagues and my research supervisor) (Wolcott, 1990), and participants had opportunities to review material with me (Fine et al., 2003). I have tried, as Wolcott (1990) advises, to “let readers ‘see’ for themselves” (p. 129) by including detailed examples of primary data, both in the text of this research as well as in the appendices. I have endeavoured to be transparent by ‘owning’ the assumptions I have carried with me and describing their effects on the research decisions I have made. And I have maintained a commitment not to leave my analysis in the realm of discourse and language but to anchor the analysis in the particular realities of the participants, those they work with and the “underlying structures, material conditions, and conflicting historically-specific power relations and inequalities” (Roman, 1993, p. 280).

I have also attended to two other criteria of validity, namely, coherence and fruitfulness. With specific attention to the validity of discourse analysis, coherence is the wholeness or ‘fullness’ of a discourse, while fruitfulness refers to the “explanatory potential of the analytical framework” (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 125). To this end, I have described four dominant discourses—deficit and deviance, production and reproduction, amalgamation and conglomerations, and finally, tokenism and tolerance—that together make up the everyday ways in which violence in schools is interpreted. I have traced the
implications of these discourses and explored the power of these discourses to hijack social justice efforts, conceal or trivialize the pain of many, and render invisible the effects of unequal social and material relations. At the same time, the participant interviews produced an oppositional discourse in which bullying in schools is re-scripted with a focus on a more rounded version of safety that accounts for inclusion, critical engagement with difference and meaningful citizenship. In other words, I believe that this research has the explanatory potential to critique and provide an alternative to the ruling discourses.

Despite this and the "happinesses" (Spalter-Roth & Hartmann, 1999) that have come from doing this research, I have no doubt that there are different ways my research could have been fruitful or generative. These research roads not taken make up a research ‘wistfulness’ of sorts (“I wonder what I would have learned if I had....”) and point to possible directions for future research.

First, and I believe the most important, there is a need to explore the opinions, critiques, and actions of multiply positioned young people in relation to this research. As mentioned in Chapter Two, due to issues of time, recruitment, access, and permission, I chose to concentrate on adult educators. This was a difficult decision since my initial hope was to find ways to incorporate and engage with the ways various young people make sense of violence in schools. Consequently, I strongly believe that a parallel or integrated study of sorts needs to happen with young people to explore how young people, in diverse settings/roles/identities, make sense of dominant discourses and respond to or challenge them. This is not to suggest that ‘youth participation’ makes for ‘youth representation’ or that youth are a unified category. Rather, I am referring to exploring the different ways young people—
with their various and conflicting locations and experiences—live, engage, understand and/or resist the ‘bullying crisis.’

Second, and associated with the first, how are young people and adults collaborating across sites and settings to resist dominant discourses? My research only flirted with this and touched on leadership projects, peer education, drama productions, and forms of activism, but I am ever curious to learn more about collaborative or youth-facilitated anti-violence projects. While this research assumed alliances with young people to be important catalysts for change, I think much more attention needs to center on the spaces and practices that encourage a youth/adult allied resistance.

Third, as Weis and Fine note (2001), much happens “outside the bounds of formal schooling” (p. 498) and, given this, I think community-based acts of resisting dominant discourses on school violence need to be explored. While this research focuses on school-based resistance, many of the participants refer to programs, projects and initiatives positioned outside the school system that respond to violence both within and outside of schools. I wonder about both the possibilities and limitations that come with initiatives grown outside school walls (and out of the bounds of school district approval or curricular time pressures, and so forth).

Fourth, I am concerned that my research gives the impression that school administrators do not function as allies or that there is this unilateral or unified administrative resistance to the tenets of a counter-hegemonic discourse. Clearly, this is not the case. Further studies need to focus on the specific tensions administrators work with, and within, when confronting and resisting dominant discourses of school violence.
Fifth, while I am attentive to the impossibility of fully accounting for diversity within a study, I am also aware that a class-based analysis of discourses about school violence is limited in this study. Given that the current hostile socioeconomic times play themselves out in schools, subordinating and marginalizing some young people more than others, more attention needs to be paid to how discourses of money and class are linked to vulnerability and violence and the ways in which violence can be “understood from the subject positions as they actually strive for wealth, respect, competitive advantages and other manifestations of power over their lives” (Hemmings, 2002, p. 306). Similarly, in a time when pathologizing discourses about Aboriginal people are ever-numerous and awareness of the ways in which schools have failed and harmed Aboriginal students is hopefully increasing, a critique of the ways in which school violence discourses position and further marginalize Aboriginal students is crucial.

Sixth, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, I am inspired by the potential of conventional spaces. While Chapter Five sketched out several examples of participants finding disruptive space within seemingly liberal initiatives, I know there is much more to be learned here. How do educators, students, administrators, parents, and others transform seemingly ‘ordinary’ programs into extraordinary moments? And, how are educators critically engaging young people, querying violence and otherwise ‘making messy’ the seemingly straightforward, non-threatening programs of the day (e.g., peer counselling or mentoring, athletics, student council, and so on)?

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According to Hemmings (2002), a discourse of money is “a central category of everyday discourses” and perpetuates the message that those with money “have the power to purchase goods, influence, status, freedom, and even more power” (p. 299).

For example, in June 2008, the federal government officially apologized to Aboriginal peoples for residential schools and the legacy of abuse and forced assimilation that these schools caused (“PM cites ‘sad chapter’”, 2008, June 11).
Seventh, there is an ongoing need to critique dominant and influential discourses of the day. While this research examined four specific discourses that currently carry weight in shaping how violence in school is framed, these discourses may fall out of fashion and there is little guarantee that an oppositional social justice discourse will take their place. For example, how prevalent is a discourse of naturalism (e.g., the belief that violence is innate) and how do commonsense assumptions that aggressive or exclusionary behaviour is ‘biological law’ undermine the degree to which adults tackle the complexity of inequality or marginalization in the lives of young people? Will recent calls to legislate ‘cyber-bullying’ reinforce a discourse of criminality that sees, as Nina (CBE) first pointed out in Chapter Two, more and more issues of violence in schools “farmed out to the criminal justice system”? Or, will the increased attention to cyber-bullying help break down the assumption that violence that happens between young people is primarily an issue for schools? It is important that further research continues to track the impact of discourses about violence on the lives of young people and articulate the implications of these and other emerging discourses on policy and practice.

Finally, I would like to see an ethnography in a school trying to ‘do’ anti-violence work differently. My initial intention in the early stages of my studies was to ‘get at’ an oppositional discourse by doing this very thing; I hoped to find a school that, in policy and in practice, was attempting to find an alternative way of working with violence in schools. Again, due to the question of locating and accessing such a site, and my own aspiration to focus more attention on dominant discourses, I opted for the current research format instead. However, I think an ethnography would be a rich ‘next step’ by fostering a deeper and broader understanding of where an oppositional discourse finds cracks and has cracks. Where
are the contradictions and where does an alternative discourse to violence falter or flourish 'on the ground'? What generates enthusiasm and hope? And, where are the moments of tension, collaboration and change in the interplay between administrators, parents/caregivers, educators, community members, and young people?

Making meaning and shifting focus: Implications for policy

Policies embody claims to speak with authority, they legitimate and initiate practices in the world and they privilege certain visions and interests. (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997)

I wavered about the role that I wanted policy to play in this dissertation. In the early days of this research, my hope was to conduct a more thorough analysis of policies about school violence (in addition to the original plans to analyze more media stories, more curriculum, and so on). But while I realized that there would be much value examining the ways in which policies targeting school violence problematize young people and reinforce the moral panic, I had to, for the sake of completing this research, scale back plans.

In this section, I outline some of the implications for approaching policy work about school violence that stem from this research. First, I briefly examine how school violence policies were framed by the participants. Second, I revisit some of the core tenets from my theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two and advocate a framework through which to view and address school violence policy. Following this, I talk more specifically about some of the ways in which a discourse of resistance can find a firmer foothold through work on new and existing policies.

Meaningless and meaningful: Two faces of school violence policy

For the most part, participants referred to policies on school violence as meaningless, ineffective, "top down" (Violet, CBE), and "band-aid solutions" (Drew, SBE). As Cam (CBE)
explained, "Policy is one thing where you can actually...say, 'Hey, everyone take a look at this policy.' But what that looks like on the ground is virtually meaningless to students." As discussed in the critique of dominant discourses (in Chapter Three), generalized policies promoting tolerance or declaring schools 'bully free' zones were often framed by the participants as a superficial panacea, or as a symbolic 'show of action' on the part of administration/school districts/politicians. In short, there seemed to be little confidence that policies were precursors to positive change.

Although participants seemed to shrug off the impact of school policies as mostly immaterial, three exceptions were noted in which policy registered as meaningful (in either a positive or negative way). In the first example, zero tolerance policies were deemed noteworthy and were the focus of much active disdain, concern, and unease. Some participants worried that schools use zero tolerance policies as a way of avoiding difficult issues, while others were concerned that zero tolerance policies encouraged a false sense of complacency and implied that a solution had been found. Yet others argued that a 'no tolerance' climate shuts down teachable moments; as Ellen (SBE) noted, "if you have zero tolerance ... people will just learn not to say [things] around you... but it doesn't really help them deal with the issues."

Broader policies that had a negative effect on teaching and learning conditions were the second example of meaningful policy pointed out by the participants. For example, policies pertaining to class sizes, teaching accountability measures, and funding cutbacks were criticized and linked to decreased opportunities for building safety in schools. At the same time, participants also discussed broader policies—for example, policies about world trade and minimum wage—and connected these back to the issues of safety and violence.
Third, policies clearly aimed at interrupting inequality and visibly aligned with social justice goals were the final example of policies that garnered the attention (and, in this case, the hope) of the participants. For example, policies in certain school districts that explicitly addressed homophobia and the protection of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students were encouraging to participants. Ellen (SBE) explained that these policies were different from “those kind of mission or vision statements [stating] that everyone is protected” because they specifically acknowledged the violence facing a historically marginalized group.

These three examples of policies, in some way deemed significant by the participants, together illustrate a crucial point: the disconnect from policy that participants might be articulating in the interviews is perhaps not a result of an overall disenchantment with the potential of policies but a reflection of the general dismay at the ways in which school violence is framed. If, as the dominant discourses suggest, the social problem of ‘bullying’ is framed as individual deficit, family dysfunction, or an issue of tolerance, then the ensuing policy created to address the social problem will be unpalatable for the participants. However, as illustrated by those policies deemed to be progressive, there are also examples of meaningful and hopeful policies that represent a decidedly different framing of the ‘social problem’ (i.e., one that is able to critically and relationally address difference, citizenship, social location and power).

This brief overview of the way policies were engaged with in the interviews reveals two points that help frame the implications for policy that I propose here. First, policy is not merely a detached or neutral response to a clearly defined social problem. Rather, policy responses help give shape and weight to particular framings of problems and, through the

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97 Less than ten school districts in B.C. (out of over sixty districts) have adopted specific policies that aim to protect GLBT students (Gay and Lesbian Educators B.C., n.d.).
gaps and silences, render certain people and certain problems more invisible and less worthy of attention (Miller, 1993). Second, policy should not be seen as a process centralized in the value-free labs of researchers or offices of policymakers but rather as evolving and ongoing (Taylor, 1997). As Ellen pointed out when talking about the “huge, uphill battle” she knew she would face in trying to get a safety policy for LGBT students in her school district, policy gestates in many arenas and is vulnerable to power and control at various levels.

**Rewriting school violence policy**

As a result of the above points, the policy framework proposed in this section seeks to “problematize how policy problems are constructed and how they are framed,” unearth “how problems get to be on the policy agenda” (Taylor, 1997, p. 30), and name the dominant ideas that “becomes the horizon of the taken for granted: what the world is and how it works” (Hall, 1988, p. 44). Both post-structuralism and post-colonialism, major tenets of my theoretical framework, play a role here. With post-structuralism’s attention to language, meaning, discursive regimes, and focus on fragmented power, the notion of policymaking shifts from policymaking as a technical process and a privileged arena for professionals and knowers, to one that frames policy texts as symbolic of the struggles over claims making and problem framing. At the same time, post-colonialism’s focus on citizenship and meanings of belonging could, if applied to a reading of bullying policies, shed light on who is deemed unacceptable and undesirable. Moreover, the silences and gaps in bullying policies also proved meaningful, signifying either those individuals deemed ‘non citizens’ and relegated to the “sphere of privacy” (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997, p. 67) or revealing issues that proved too divisive to be mentioned (Edelman, 1988).
Relying both on the participants' critiques of policies as well as the framework for working through policy outlined above, I offer the following suggestions for approaching policies about violence and safety in schools. First, there must be a rigorous analysis of current policies pertaining to school violence. Much like the valuable critiques of the ways in which zero-tolerance policies unfairly affect and disadvantage youth of colour (for example, see Akom, 2001), there needs to be a sustained and focused critique of a range of existing bullying policies as they impact young people situated in a variety of circumstances and locations. In so doing, special attention needs to be paid to the framing of the problem implied by the policy and the various ways policies construct young people. For example, what does a non-negotiable suspension suggest about the ways in which the contexts in which violence occurs are ignored? How do policies of suspension and expulsion disproportionately ignore students with privilege and disadvantage poorer or other marginalized students? And how do mandated dress codes or designated bully-free 'safety zones,'⁹⁸ proposed as a means towards curbing violence, trivialize the complexity of violence that young people experience?

Second, silence needs to be read and invisibility needs to be investigated when critiquing current policies. Who or what is not present in a particular policy and what could this indicate? For example, as I explored in Chapter Three, does the relative silence about violence and disability in schools indicate that it is not a perceived problem or that the threshold for violence against disabled students is different? Or, could this suggest that violence, alienation or marginalization has been 'naturalized' as a given for certain students in schools?

⁹⁸ See "Facing Our Fears-Accepting Responsibility" (British Columbia Safe Schools Task Force, 2003).
Third, the intersections of policies that impact safety—a broader and richer version of safety—in schools needs to be explored. These may not be the policies that explicitly speak to violence in schools but are policies that shape what safety looks like in a school. For example, how do policies that measure school accountability affect teachers' abilities to build citizenship in their classes? How does mandated peer conflict resolution or peer mediation (which, in effect, assumes a 'balance of power' between students) affect those students in situations where there is no choice and no balance of power? How do recent funding cutbacks to programs for students with disabilities further label disabled students as 'burdensome' and as non-citizens, thus further deepening marginalization? And, in a broader example, how do wider social policies that scapegoat and cast public suspicion on already marginalized groups (e.g., individuals on welfare, refugee groups, etc.) affect the well-being of the school and the safety of these same students?

Finally, if policies that obscure a critical analysis of systemic violence are critiqued and resisted, what can be promoted in their place? Given that I am arguing that there needs to be multiple sites for 'intervention,' policies need to be developed at multiple levels—schools, governments, professional teaching bodies (e.g., the BC Teachers' Federation), student associations and youth groups, parents advisory committees (PACs), and other professional associations—that are attentive to the same principles and assumptions argued in the two previous chapters. Namely, policies need to be developed with and for young people that speak to violence and marginalization while very clearly promoting principles of equality, power analysis, citizenship and inclusion.
Conclusion

While some may critique this research as one that absolves young people of individual responsibility, this is not the case. In arguing against a purely individualized reading of bullying, I am not arguing that the micro- or individual-level is not important. Yes, absolutely, it is. Accountability and consequences for harmful actions are important and necessary. Solutions that focus on individual support and personal change are needed and valuable. But, these should not be the only solutions, nor should they be the default solutions. An oppositional discourse does not undermine the reality that young people do hurt each other in sometimes horrendous and shocking ways. However, the participants’ stories about the alienation, isolation, violence, and pain in the lives of students also clearly remind us that, in the midst of holding individuals responsible for their own actions, we cannot and should not forget the larger societal contexts which shape and maintain violence within schools.

Similarly, others may perceive that I am merely arguing for a change in words and suggesting that changing language on its own equals significant movement towards social justice. Again, this is not the case. The removal of the word ‘bullying’ from our vocabulary does not, in and of itself, create safety. Rather, I contend that a critique of the school violence discourse needs to be anchored in the nuanced, complex realities of young people and the people who work with and for them.

To that end, the participants’ attempts at working towards safety in schools are significant. Grounded in messy and complex everyday moments—and committed to colourful ways of building relationship, critical inquiry, and justice—the participants foreground the myriad opportunities available to us as educators, parents, administrators,
community members, and multiply positioned allies, and remind us that each of us should not retreat from the collective possibilities to prevent violence and nurture safety.
REFERENCES


Williams (Eds.), *Preventing violence in schools: A challenge to American Democracy* (pp. 1-14). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.


Making the school safe from bullies. (2002, March 27) [Editorial], *Globe and Mail*, p. A16


O'Neill, B. (1999). Social work with gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of racial and ethnic minority groups. In G.-Y. Lie & D. Este (Eds.), *Professional social work delivery in a multicultural world* (pp. 75-91). Toronto: Canadian Scholar Press.


APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your experiences working against violence in schools?

2. As somebody who educates against violence, what do you hope to accomplish?

3. Can you tell me about any experience that has proven challenging/rewarding in accomplishing these goals?

4. Can you tell me about current anti-bullying projects/initiatives that you are involved with/know about? What are your thoughts about this? What is done well and what is missing?

5. Case scenarios (e.g. a student calls another student a ‘retard’ or a ‘fag’, how do you see this addressed in your school? What are your thoughts about this?)

6. Can you tell me about a time when you experienced any conflict or tension between the approaches of your school district (with respect to bullying) and your own view about violence?

7. Can you tell me about a time recently when you felt that violence in schools was not handled well in the media/in a school/in the community?

8. Can you think back to an incident in which ‘bullying’ was dealt with in a way that you agree with? That you consider a ‘failure’? If you were involved, how would you go back and handle it differently? What do you think prevented you (or the persons involved) from doing things differently at the time?

9. What, in your opinion, is the best way for schools to stop violence? What would be an effective anti-violence approach for schools to take? What is your ‘wish list’? What prevents this from happening? What would help?
10. Can you tell me what you have seen, done or heard of that is conducive to new ways of looking at violence in schools?

11. Is there something that you wanted to talk about related to school violence that has not been covered in the interview?

12. Are there any questions that you think I overlooked? Any changes/feedback that you can suggest?
APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca
April 19, 2004

Disrupting bully talk: Progressive practices and transformative spaces for anti-violence work in schools

Dear ________________:

You have been identified as someone committed to social change and challenging violence and exclusion in schools and I hope to learn from your views and experiences. As both an educator and learner, I want to learn how the current focus on bullying in schools can inadvertently blame and pathologize young people and, in so doing, direct attention and efforts away from social justice, equality and oppression. I am interested in how violence and exclusion in schools can be reframed to promote a more progressive approach that incorporates social change and critique. This research will be conducted to fulfill, in part, the requirement for a Ph.D. in Educational Studies from the University of British Columbia.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in an exploration of how progressive educators think about and work against violence in schools. More specifically, I want to learn how educators teach and practice their commitment to social change within an environment that may emphasize individual and interpersonal solutions to violence.

As a participant in this research project, you would be asked to participate in two individual interviews each between one and a half to two hours in length. You will also be invited to a group interview in which educators will be encouraged to share thoughts and reflections. Given the open nature of group interviews and the difficulty with scheduling group meetings, I realize that not all participants will be able or willing to attend a group interview and, therefore, participation in the group interview is not required to be a participant within this study. The total amount of time required for participation in the research should range from 5-8 hours (depending on participation in the group interview and the degree to which you choose to review transcripts etc.). Interviews will be scheduled beginning May, 2004. I anticipate that the focus group (should you choose to participate) will be scheduled for sometime in early fall. Second individual interviews will be scheduled for late fall in 2004.

I am aware that I am asking someone who, given your commitments to critical and transformative teaching, is very busy. However, I am hopeful that you will be interested in
sharing your experiences, thoughts and practices with me and with other educators. If you are interested in participating in the study, I would ask that you contact me by April 30, 2004. I can be reached by email at lcmoy@interchange.ubc.ca, or by phone at [REDACTED]. My research supervisor is Dr. Allison Tom of the Department of Educational Studies and she can be reached at (604) 822-5361. If you know of any other school or community based educator who may be interested in participating, please pass on this information or please let me know.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Lisa Moy
Ph.D. candidate, University of British Columbia
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Disrupting bully talk: Progressive practices and transformative spaces for anti-violence work in schools

***RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED***

I am looking for individuals who are....
* educators in the public high school system
  or
* community practitioners/educators whose work brings them into high schools concerned about social justice and working to raise awareness about racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia and/or classism
* interested in discussing their views on violence, bullying, exclusion and harassment in the school system.

The objective of this doctoral research project is to gain an understanding of how educators interested in social justice and anti-oppression education understand and challenge violence in schools. This study involves participating in 2 interviews each lasting approximately 1 ½ hours. Participants will also be invited to participate in a focus group interview of approximately 2 hours in duration. The total amount of time required for participation in this research project should not exceed 10 hours.

If you, or someone you know, may be interested in participating, I hope to hear from you. Please contact me by April 30, 2004. I can be reached by email at or by phone at. My research supervisor is Dr. Allison Tom who can be reached at (604) 822-5361.

Lisa Moy, Ph.D. candidate Dr. Allison Tom
Student Researcher Principal Investigator
Dept. of Educational Studies Dept. of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia University of British Columbia
APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca

Disrupting bully talk: Progressive practices and transformative spaces for anti-violence work in schools

May 26th, 2004

Dear

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your interests in social justice and challenging violence in secondary schools. This research is for a graduate degree in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia and the information will be used as part of a dissertation which will be a public document as well as for future scholarly publications.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to study how educators in high schools incorporate their commitment to social justice within their own anti-violence work. Given the increased attention that ‘school bullying’ has received, this study is particularly concerned with alternative ways social justice educators frame and challenge violence that occurs in schools.

Study Procedures:
If you agree to participate in this research, you will be one of up to twenty educators whom I will be interviewing. The individual interviews will take place between May 2004 and December 2004. As a research participant, you will be involved in two individual interviews each lasting approximately one to two hours in length. All of the interviews will be audiotaped and you will be given a copy of the transcript of each of our individual interviews for your review.

After the first individual interview, you will also be invited to a two-hour focus group session that will encourage reflection and discussion among all of the participants about the issues that were explored in the first interview. Participation in the group interview is not required to be a participant in this research. Separate consent forms for each of the two individual interviews and the focus group will be given to you for your signature at the time of each activity.
The total amount of your time required for this project should not exceed 8 hours.
Confidentiality:
Interviews will be transcribed verbatim by a third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement. Computer files will be password protected and the transcripts and tape recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. You will have a choice to be identified by name in the dissertation or to have your identity kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym. You can revisit your decision to use a pseudonym at any time during the study. Excerpts from transcripts will be used in a manner that protects the identity of the subject, unless a participant indicates that she/he does not desire measures aimed at maintaining their anonymity. The only people who will have access to the interview data are the Principal Investigator (Dr. Allison Tom) and the Student Researcher (Lisa Moy).

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire information with respect to this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Allison Tom, at (604) 822-5361 (email allison.tom@ubc.ca), or the Student Researcher, Lisa Moy, at (email omitted).

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598.

Consent:
This is a consent form for the first individual interview. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing yourself or the research.

Please indicate your consent to the first individual interview by signing the original of this letter and keeping the copy for your own records.

Lisa C. Moy, Ph.D. Candidate  Dr. Allison Tom
Co-Investigator  Principal Investigator
Dept. of Educational Studies  Dept. of Educational Studies
TEL: (number)  TEL: (604) 822-5361
EMAIL: (number)  EMAIL: allison.tom@ubc.ca

Your signature below indicates that:
1. you consent to participate in the study
2. you consent to the interview being tape recorded
3. you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Signature  Date

Printed Signature of Participant
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Department of Educational Studies
Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604-822-5374
Fax: 604-822-4244
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca

Disrupting bully talk: Progressive practices and transformative spaces for anti-violence work in schools

July 22, 2005

Dear

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your interests in social justice and challenging violence in secondary schools. This research is for a graduate degree in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia and the information will be used as part of a dissertation which will be a public document as well as for future scholarly publications.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to study how educators in high schools incorporate their commitment to social justice within their own anti-violence work. Given the increased attention that 'school bullying' has received, this study is particularly concerned with alternative ways social justice educators frame and challenge violence that occurs in schools.

Study Procedures:

For this stage of the research project, you are invited to a focus group session that will not exceed 2 hours in length. The focus group will be composed of up to five educators who are participating in this study. The focus group will encourage reflection and discussion among all of the participants about the issues that were explored in the first individual interview. Participation in the group interview is not required to be a participant in this research.

The total amount of your time required for all stages of this research project should not exceed 10 hours.

Confidentiality:
Given the nature of focus groups in which participants are encouraged to discuss opinions and reflections with each other, confidentiality is limited within a group setting. All participants who choose to participate in the focus groups are asked to keep all information shared in the group setting confidential. However, individuals who participate in the focus group should be aware that researchers cannot guarantee full confidentiality of what is said in a group setting.
Interviews will be transcribed verbatim by a third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement. Computer files will be password protected and the transcripts and tape recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. You will have a choice to be identified by name in the dissertation or to have your identity kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym. You can revisit your decision to use a pseudonym at any time during the study. Excerpts from transcripts will be used in a manner that protects the identity of the subject, unless a participant indicates that she/he does not desire measures aimed at maintaining their anonymity. The only people who will have access to the interview data are the Principal Investigator (Dr. Deirdre Kelly) and the Student Researcher (Lisa Moy).

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire information with respect to this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Deirdre Kelly, at (604) 822-3952, or the Student Researcher, Lisa Moy, at ______________________ (email ______________________).

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598.

Consent:
This is a consent form for the focus group. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing yourself or the research.
Please indicate your consent to the focus group by signing the original of this letter and keeping the copy for your own records.

Lisa C. Moy, Ph.D. Candidate
Co-Investigator
Dept. of Educational Studies
TEL: ______________________
EMAIL: lcmoy@interchange.ubc.ca

Dr. Deirdre Kelly
Principal Investigator
Dept. of Educational Studies
TEL: (604) 822-3952
EMAIL: deirdre.kelly@ubc.ca

Your signature below indicates that:
4. you consent to participate in the study
5. you consent to being audio taped in the focus group
6. you agree to keep all information shared in the focus group confidential
7. you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
8. 

_________________________  ______________________
Participant Signature               Date

_________________________
Printed Signature of Participant
APPENDIX F: UBC ETHICS APPROVAL

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services and Administration
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

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Institution(s) Where Research Will Be Carried Out

Co-Investigators

Moy, Lisa C., Educational Studies

Sponsoring Agencies

Title:
Disrupting Bully Talk: Progressive Practices & Transformative Spaces for Anti-Violence Work in Schools

Approval Date: FEB 13 2004
Term (Years): 1
Documents Included in This Approval:
Jan. 17, 2004, Contact letters / Consent forms/ Nov. 12, 2003, Advertisement / Assent form / Questionnaire

Certification:
The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:
Dr. James Frankish, Chair,
Dr. Cay Holbrook, Associate Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.
APPENDIX G: UBC ETHICS APPROVAL EXTENSION

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services and Administration
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

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Dr. Cay Holbrook, Associate Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair

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